

CONNOR

connections

A quiet
garden for
everyone
in Ballymoney
page 14





The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, stepped out to wish the cyclists all the best as they passed the See House in the early stages of the 83-mile loop.

Oh la la! Pedal push around Antrim RD

David Holmes, Parish Reader in St Bride's Parish Church, Kilbride, has raised more than £2,500 for Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke through a sponsored cycle around the churches in Antrim Rural Deanery.

The cycle, with the very French title of 'L'Etape du Deanery,' took place on September 4, starting and finishing at St Bride's and following a route which took in all 14 churches in the rural deanery.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, met the riders at the gates of the See House, a short distance into the cycle, and wished them well on their journey.

They were greeted by clergy and parishioners at a number of churches and

were very grateful for water and snacks, as well as moral support. St Jude's even laid on a troupe of young dancers!

Simon Wells from Christ Church, Ballynure, Peter Gates from All Saints', Antrim, and David from St Bride's did the entire route, joined at the beginning by Lisa Holmes and Yvey Wells from Christ Church, Ballynure, who cycled as far as St Jude's. Lisa and Yvey appeared again at a number of points along the way to give encouragement.

David said: "It was quite a dull day and the sun made only an occasional appearance, but overall conditions were good for cycling - with the exception of a strong headwind over the hills from Kells to Ballynure which made progress a little slower.

"By the time we reached St Bride's again, we had covered an overall distance of 83 miles but were all still in high spirits, having accomplished a very worthwhile fundraising event."

David is a keen cyclist and a former rugby player. He had hoped to organise something like this last year, but had to defer due to the pandemic.

"With so many people taking to bikes since Covid-19 started, it is growing in popularity as a sport," he said.

David expressed his thanks to everyone who has contributed to the charity by supporting 'L'Etape du Deanery.'

Marathon walk creates special family memories

The Graham family raised more than £23,000 by walking a marathon in aid of the work of Macmillan Cancer Support.

As reported in the summer issue of 'Connor Connections,' the Rev Canon Kevin Graham and his sons Jamie and Luke had planned to take part in Macmillan Cancer Support's 'Mighty Hike' along the north coast on June 26.

But when the event was cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions, Kevin, Jamie and Luke secured the charity's blessing to go ahead with their own fundraising marathon, and walked from St Bartholomew's, Stranmillis, where Kevin is rector, to St Colman's, Kilroot, and back - a distance of 26.2 miles

The change of plan meant the family

was able to add something very special to their day, because at the half-way point, Kevin and his wife



The Rev Canon Kevin Graham and his wife Cheryl with their sons Jamie and Luke, after Kevin and Cheryl renewed their wedding vows in St Colman's, Kilroot.

Cheryl renewed their wedding vows in an intimate family service celebrated by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, in St Colman's, where they had shared their original vows almost 25 years ago.

Kevin was inspired to sign up for the marathon hike after Cheryl received a terminal cancer diagnosis last November, and Jamie and Luke agreed to undertake the challenge with their dad.

Kevin said that the walk with his sons and the intimate family service at which he and Cheryl renewed their vows had been very special. "We wanted to create special memories as a family, but other people will benefit too," he said.

Autumn 2021

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Cover photo:


Little Norah enjoying the colours and scents of the flowers in the new community Quiet Garden beside St Patrick's Parish Church, Ballymoney. See story on page 14.




Please contact us if you would like to contribute to the next issue of 'Connor Connections.'

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A chance to bless those in need



Slowly and steadily, we seem to be moving towards some sense of normality in church life again! Although there is still a long way to go, as I write this letter, many of your Select Vestries and organisation leaders have been carefully considering the appropriate next steps for parish life as we move into the autumn.

These decisions will have been made carefully and with the aim of minimising the risk to everyone's health as we begin to enjoy meeting together in the various activities hosted by our parishes. Do please work with your leaders and remember that things may have to be done a little differently to the previous pattern.

I hope that as you read the articles which Karen has compiled for this edition of 'Connor Connections,' you'll be inspired by many of the things that members of the diocese have been doing in recent times. It's inspiring to see the wide variety of ways that people are living their lives of Christian service, sometimes in challenging circumstances.

By the time you are reading this, the NI Executive's 'High Street Voucher' scheme will be rolling out. Over the next couple of months, every adult in Northern Ireland can receive a prepaid card to the value of £100 to spend in local businesses. Many of those businesses will be glad of the extra support that this will provide to them after a

very challenging 18 months. Many people will also find the voucher gives a welcome help to family finances at the moment.

However, if you find yourself looking at the scheme as a 'bit of a bonus,' can I suggest that you might like to use your voucher to bless those in need? Imagine the good that we could do if we used some, or all, of that money to buy items to donate to a local food bank or to a Baby Basics' centre.

That act of Christian charity would allow you to bless those in need in the run-up to Christmas, as well as the businesses from which you buy the items. It's just a thought - but some of you might choose to use your voucher in this way.

"Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land.'" Deut 15:11 (NRSV)

Yours aye,

+George

Farewell to Church House receptionists

Church House recently said farewell to part-time receptionists, Helen Conville and Margaret Treanor.

Helen was a member of Church House staff for 25 years, working in a variety of roles serving both the Diocese of Connor and the Diocese of Down and Dromore.

She began as receptionist, before joining the diocesan secretarial team, and was later personal assistant to the Diocesan



Margaret Treanor is taking early retirement.

Accountant. Helen has worked in reception on a part-time basis since 2016, and is moving to another job.

Margaret, who is taking early retirement, worked as part-time receptionist from 2016. The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, paid tribute to both Helen and Margaret at two separate coffee mornings hosted in Church House.



Bishop George wishes Helen Conville all the best as she leaves Church House for a new job.



International success for Giselle

Eighteen-year-old Giselle Coulter has been making waves on the international rowing circuit, picking up a gold medal in the Women's Junior Irish double at the Ireland Championships in Cork in August.

This is on top of winning a silver medal for Ireland in the Women's Quadruple sculls at the Coupe de la Jeunesse 2021 in Linz, Austria.

Now Giselle, a member of St Stephen's, Belfast, is off to the USA on a four-year rowing scholarship at UCLA in Los Angeles, reading Economics and Mathematics.

A past pupil of Methodist College, Belfast, Giselle's connection with St Stephen's goes back several generations, and she has been a regular attendee at both parish and diocesan events, including the parish youth fellowship, Shine, and Connor Youth Council, which she has been involved with for four years.

"Throughout this time, I have learnt so much about my faith and I have become much closer to God from being at youth events, such as Summer Madness," Giselle said.

"Being a member of the Connor Youth Forum has allowed me to work with other young people from across the diocese. One of our biggest successes as a group was producing our own devotional book called 'Journey.' I am very grateful to have been involved in this process, as it allowed me to dive deeper into my relationship with God and learn so much from the leaders and others on the team."

Giselle, a member of Belfast Boat Club, only started rowing in October 2017, following in the footsteps of her older sister Claudia, who was already a keen rower. "She encouraged me to try it out and I am so glad I did!" said Giselle. But she admits it is a demanding sport, with training six days a week, including two 'gruelling' sessions most days. Training involves a mix of water, weights and Erg (indoor rowing machine) sessions.



Giselle Coulter, right, and her partner Patti Mullin after winning gold in the Women's Junior Irish doubles.

And Giselle is really making a name for herself! "The highlight of my rowing career so far is winning an international silver medal for Ireland in the Women's Quadruple sculls at the Coupe de la Jeunesse 2021 in Austria," she said.

'It was an incredible feeling to see all of my perseverance and hard work pay off'

"This season, I also won a National Title in the Women's Junior Double at the Irish Championships 2021 in Cork.

"Following such a difficult year, being stuck at home training alone in my garage on the rowing machine, it was an incredible feeling to see all of my perseverance and hard work pay off in those moments on the medal podium."

Giselle's other achievements include being five-times National Erg Record holder; winning a gold medal at the Irish National Indoor Championships 2021 for 500m and a bronze medal at the Irish National Indoor

Championships 2021 for 2km.

"I love the serenity of the sport," Giselle said. "That feeling - when you are on a flat, calm, river in your boat, just thinking about the stroke that you are taking - is indescribable. It's a feeling all rowers can understand - those blissful moments when nothing else matters but rowing, it can be magical."

Something else she enjoys is a little harder to understand... "This will sound weird," she admitted, "but one of the things I enjoy is the pain of a long, hard, training session or race. I love that feeling when you cross the finish line in a race or at the end of a training piece and you can hardly breathe and your legs are in agony, but you've given it your all, you've done well and you have achieved a goal. The pain that comes with a success is the best of all!"

She added: "I love rowing because I feel most myself when I am training or racing."

Giselle said she is very grateful for the opportunity to further her rowing career and to study at UCLA. "My hope is that I can become a stronger and faster athlete during my time there. I look forward to racing for the university in competitions against the top university boats from across America. I would also like to make the Irish National Team again and compete at the World Under-23 Championships.

"For me, attending UCLA is a dream come true. I am excited to move to LA and strive towards becoming a champion, in both my rowing and academics at the prestigious, world-renowned UCLA. "I do feel nervous for the big move across the world, but I know that this is right where God wants me to be and I know he will be with me as I venture into this new chapter of my life. When making the decision to go to America, I had to lean into God and pray for wisdom for making the right choice.

"I am moving with the knowledge that I am strengthened by him and that he will always be there to guide me."

Agherton families on 'Crest of a Wave'

Mental health was the focus of a big family weekend organised by Agherton Parish and funded by an Education Authority grant.

The rector, the Rev Malcolm Ferry, said the 'Crest of a Wave' weekend had been full of joy, with around 70 people taking part, made up from the Sunday Surfer families

The project received a grant for £5,965. "Funding was to focus on physical, spiritual and mental health of young people, and so our focus was on physical activities, healthy eating and a creative project," Malcolm explained.

"We wanted children to feel that they were being uplifted, and they received t-shirts with the word 'Hope' printed on the back. There were activities for all ages, and we made sure parents were participating, rather than helping out, so we staffed all activities with sports and creative facilitators. We made some tremendous connections, there were many excellent micro-conversations over the three days. It was like doing a year of Sunday School and youth work in three days flat for our Sunday Surfers!

"We now know a lot more about our children and families and have put the promotion of good mental health firmly on the agenda."

Most of the activities, which ran from Friday



The banner crafted during the weekend.

August 20 until Sunday August 22, took place outdoors, while inside, those working on a specially-created banner wore masks and maintained social distancing in line with Covid-19 guidelines.

'Crest of a Wave' was a great success, and Malcolm shared a pictorial record of the weekend in church on Sunday August 29 through a series of videos.

A large number of parishioners had worked hard behind the scenes. On the first evening, there was fun for all ages, with outdoor games, crafts, music and a barbecue. A big draw was a petting farm. "The children were fearless of every creature, even the friendly snake," said Malcolm.

On Saturday afternoon, the parish's younger Sunday Surfers had a great time, with activities including a singing challenge, tennis lessons, an obstacle course and some very healthy snacks. That evening, for the older Sunday Surfers, there was volleyball and a barbecue around the fire pit, with a visit from Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie. The evening ended with a game of rounders in the dark, the pitch lit only by car headlights!



The petting farm was a big hit with everyone - even the slippery snakes got lots of attention!

On the Sunday, a special service was held in the marquee. "The whole weekend was a conversation around mental health. During my address, I made a seven-tier layer cake of summer fruits and fresh cream," Malcolm said. "We learned how our lives have different layers but only God knows us truly in all our parts. It was lovely to have the families worshipping together and at the end of the day, the cake was eaten to the last crumb!"

After worship, every child got an award, before heading outside for an afternoon of fun and games. "We had a wonderful afternoon in the sun as God's people celebrating together," Malcolm added.

Over the course of the weekend, the families contributed to a new 'wet felt' banner, depicting the Agherton Parish logo. "Everyone played their part because each of us had to layer tiny strands of wool over and over and over to create the picture," explained Malcolm. "It took many hands, young and older, to do this task. The banner symbolises the 'Crest of a Wave' project, showing that together we can support each other in the promotion of good mental health.

"As the picture grew and grew and came together as a wonderful piece of art, it says to us that the families of Agherton stand side by side, strand by strand, to support each other, and we should celebrate that."

Malcolm, supported by Agherton's Parish Nurses, said the whole weekend had been family orientated. "That was our desire - family should be the first port of call for a child who needs to say 'I am not happy.' Mental health was implicit and explicit throughout the weekend, with opportunities for children and parents to talk and share."



Connor Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie and some of the leaders of the Agherton Parish 'Crest of a Wave' weekend ensure they are in the frame!



Mr Robert Yarr BEM.

60 years at the organ in Ballinderry Parish

"I can't believe it's been 60 years." Robert Yarr shakes his head slowly. He is speaking of his 60 years at the organ in Ballinderry Parish Church, where he was baptised, confirmed and married.

"I've enjoyed it, I would be nervous the night before a big service, but it always gave me pleasure when I got through it." He smiles. "Making music is lovely. I am sure I have played the organ in every church in this area."

It is a remarkable achievement and, after six decades, Robert continues not only to play faithfully each week, but to direct Ballinderry's parish choir.

Robert's service to music in Ballinderry Parish was recognised when he was awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) by Her Majesty the Queen in her Birthday Honours last June, something the quietly-spoken 78-year-old said he was very honoured by.

Robert grew up not far from where he now lives. In the parish church, he led the youth fellowship and was in the choir from the age of 16. He played the piano and flute, and took organ lessons in anticipation of an opportunity to play in the church. "The rector's daughter Daphne Lowe [now Davidson] was the organist at the time, and when she left to be a doctor, I was asked to fill in until they got someone else," Robert says. "At the special service to mark my 60 years, I said I didn't know what had happened - did they not remember to look for someone else?!!"

Robert was 18 when he first played



Dr Daphne Davidson, Robert's predecessor - and deputy organist for the past 60 years - looks on as he cuts the cake at a celebration dinner organised by Ballinderry Parish Choir.

the organ in the church, and in all the intervening years, Daphne, now aged 85, has been his deputy organist. It was Daphne who presided at the organ at the special church service recognising his 60 years of service last June.

Robert and his late wife Margaret were members of the Christian Endeavour Choir from 1967 until its disbandment, when the couple joined the King's Chorale, of which he has been chairman for the last 10 years. Margaret was also a member of the parish choir. "We had no family, we shared everything," Robert says quietly. He and Margaret met in church, and had marked their 50th wedding anniversary just two weeks before Margaret's sudden death in August last year.

Robert is clearly very proud of his parish choir. "There are normally 28 members, and we have travelled to lots of different places doing concerts," he explains. "In the 60 years I have been organist and choirmaster, I have served six rectors. Things have changed a lot - we don't have any canticles or psalms in services any more, and the hymns are now much more modern.

"We have a music group for the jazzier numbers and the monthly Family Service is led entirely by the praise group."

Robert says he gets a lot of enjoyment from his work in the church. "I enjoy playing the hymns and great singing, and I have a very loyal choir. We have great fellowship, and choir practice is good fun."

He clearly inspires loyalty - Daphne, Elizabeth and Florence have been members of the Ballinderry Choir for 60 years, while others are not far off that milestone!

Music runs in the family. Robert's nephews Richard and Alan are both choristers and church organists, and Richard is a familiar voice as the presenter of the BBC's 'Sounds Sacred' radio show.

Outside of church, Robert worked as jewellery agent for the Belfast firm of John McClelland Wholesalers for 34 years, moving to Mourne Agencies, before going out on his own in the 10 years prior to retirement.

He was looking forward to receiving his BEM at Hillsborough Castle, but will miss his beloved Margaret. "It will be a bitter-sweet day," he says. "The choir took me out for dinner to celebrate my 60 years. That was also a bitter-sweet occasion, as was the special service in the church."

Past rectors, the Rev Canon Sam McComb and the Rev Canon Ernest Harris, joined the current rector, the Rev Trevor Cleland, for the service, held on June 30. Joan Crossey, Secretary of the Select Vestry in Ballinderry Parish, said: "As a congregation we are so thankful for Robert's ministry in music all these years."



The Rev Trevor Cleland, right, was joined by past rectors, the Rev Canon Ernest Harris and the Rev Canon Sam McComb, at a service celebrating Robert's 60 years.



The Rev Dr Andrew Campbell.

Dyslexia is a gift - it helps me see in 3D

The Rev Dr Andrew Campbell is to be published in a new series which showcases the work of world-leading scholars. This is impressive in itself, but is all the more so because Andrew is dyslexic.

Andrew will contribute to 'Analyzing Theology,' a new series in Analytical and Systematic Theology from Wlpf and Stock. His article is an ethical analysis of the current Nonviolent Atonement debate and builds upon his doctoral work and recent publications.

Rector of Skerry, Rathcavan and Newtowncrommelin since 2016, Andrew is married to Allison and is dad to Henry, aged three, and one-year-old Charlotte.

Andrew recalls that his mother Joy, a special needs teacher, queried his dyslexia quite early on, but it was only picked up formally in school when he was doing his 11+. "I got a D in the 11+ and felt like a failure," Andrew says. "My parents were incredibly supportive and I went to Downshire Secondary School.

"I was allowed 25 per cent more time in exams. It would take me a lot longer to read things. My work was riddled with spelling mistakes although grammar wasn't a problem, but there was a genuine feeling of 'was I stupid?' In P7, my parents had me statemented. That gave me a lot of confidence as I knew the reason for my low literacy levels. The report also stated that I had an exceptionally high IQ.

"Dyslexia is not something that you ever really overcome, it is more about finding coping mechanisms. I moved to grammar school at the beginning of third year, and

when I was 16, I was assessed again. The report showed my IQ was in the top two percentile, even though my literacy levels were in the bottom 25 percentile. It was something to hold on to when I did feel stupid - it meant a lot."

Andrew got a Grade C in his English GCSE, and did A Levels in RE, Classical Civilisation and History. He used a word processor for essays, but admits the spell corrector at times caused more problems than it resolved. "I would misspell important words and then chose the wrong correction, so, for example, an essay on 'The foundation of Constantinople' became 'The fountain of Constantinople,' and there were other more embarrassing ones than that," he says.

Andrew recalls an anxious week waiting to see if he had gained a place at Queen's University after A Levels. He read Ancient History and Byzantine Studies. There was only one other student on the course, and he also had dyslexia. Both were able to avail of specialist equipment.

"At that stage things started to get a lot easier. Initially I had software that would scan a book in and read it back to me. I was also able to dictate essays, but it wasn't designed for an Ulster accent, and I found typing to be better for the thought process," Andrew recalls.

He now finds he can read a document

quickly. "My brain will fill in the gaps, though not always correctly. But I can pick up the gist of an argument - it has become a real gift."

Andrew did two further years at Queen's, studying theology while working in the Chaplaincy at the University of Ulster.

He did his Masters' in Theology under the supervision of Stephen Williams, now Honorary Professor of Theology at Queen's. "Much of the teaching was one-to-one, which allowed Stephen to judge me more on my ability than my essay writing," Andrew recalls. "Reading was always going to be a hassle, but I found each step up easier. You quickly know what books to go for and get the bulk of an argument." He graduated with his PhD in 2016.

Andrew started training for ordination in 2010, a year after his marriage to Allison, and eight months into his PhD. He served his deacon year in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, and his three-year curacy in Bangor Abbey.

Andrew has been published widely, with book reviews in 'Themelios' and 'The Church of Ireland Gazette' and articles in 'Search,' 'The Churchman,' and 'The European Journal of Theology.'

He admits the challenges of dyslexia do remain. "While most people would have a book read in a month, it will take me three months to read and takes notes," he says. He is now working towards the Wlpf and Stock deadline of 2024.

"The key things that got me here are wonderfully supportive teachers and wonderfully supportive parents," Andrew stresses. "My mum would have been proofreading my essays at two in the morning. It has been hard work, but both Bishop Alan [Abernethy] and Bishop Harold [Miller] always told me to keep up my writing - they viewed it as an important part of my ministry."

Andrew's father Robin also has dyslexia, and he too gained a PhD. Dyslexia can be hereditary. "It is a big worry for me that Henry and Charlotte may have to struggle with it, and struggle is the right word. However, I know in my wife Allison, they have a mother who will also support them as she has supported me," Andrew reflects. "It seems like the whole education system is geared up to focus on what you can get down on paper.

"But dyslexia allows you to think in an alternative way, it is like seeing in 3D, and that is a gift."

Summer Fun



Young people from Craigs, Dunaghy and Killagan enjoyed a trip to Kilrea Water Park.

A planned summer scheme for children and young people in the Parishes of St Michael and St Stephen had to be re-invented when rising Covid-19 cases in the area forced its last-minute cancellation.

But the change showed just how resilient and resourceful the team behind the scheme could be, with a fun-filled week going ahead which ensured everyone stayed safe.

Around the diocese, youth and children's leaders went out of their way to organise safe and fun experiences for Connor's young people, despite the huge challenges still posed by the pandemic.

St Michael's and St Stephen's leaders, supported by an Exodus team from the north coast, planned the summer scheme for a week in July, with 35 young people signed up. But rising Covid cases meant the team had to come up with alternative ways to serve the community.

These included delivering activity packs for each child who had registered, serving takeaway lunches from the church car park and holding a prayer walk. On two evenings, the team joined Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie and Church Army Evangelist Stephen Whitten for activities in the Glencairn Community Garden.

Play it By Ear drama company joined in, performing drama sketches and telling Bible stories on doorsteps. A new Baking Buddies video was created and sent to families, along with the ingredients for Rice Krispie buns.

All Nations Ministries, which had been scheduled to run a drumming workshop, gave an outdoor performance at Hemsworth Court, a supported housing scheme for people living with dementia.

The week concluded with a family service in St Michael's, led by the Exodus Team and followed by a barbecue cooked by the rector, the Rev Canon James Carson.



Making a Baking Buddies video in St Michael's and St Stephen's.

"During the service, the young people spoke of all they had learned through the unexpected change in plans. They reflected on how they had learned that God's plans are always better than our plans and that he is in control," Children's Project Development Officer Victoria Jackson said, adding that feedback from parents had been very positive.

"Overall, it was amazing to witness the resilience and resourcefulness of everyone involved, they turned a negative setback into something so positive and made a lasting impact on their community."

Other parishes to organise activities for children and young people included Craigs, Dunaghy and Killagan, whose youth leaders ran an August trip to Kilrea Water Park, a venue also visited by young people from St Patrick's, Ballymena, who also enjoyed a summer scheme in the church grounds funded by the Education Authority. This included lots of fun and physical activity, snacks, drumming with Fun with Drums, games, yoga, arts and crafts, bouncy castles, face painting, drama with Chris from Play it by Ear, and more.

All Saints', Belfast, ran a 'Big Week In' for children in the mornings and youth in the evenings, and Holy Trinity Parish, Woodburn, hosted a Holiday Bible Club.

The children from the Faith Factory at Carnmoney Parish came together for 'Worship in the Woods,' and with the help of worship, teaching, games and a treasure hunt and refreshments, they thought all about trees and what they can teach us about God and our relationship with him.

The Transforming Lives for Good (TLG) Belfast Team organised P7 transition trips to Belfast Activity Centre and Exploris Aquarium, and an Exodus team was out and about in Derryvolgie for a parish summer scheme.

Lisburn Cathedral ran a summer scheme and mission trip to Downpatrick, and Ballyclare Parish hosted a pirate-themed Bible Club, complete with pirate ship and plank walking. The parish also ran its own Summer Madness event with a camp in the church grounds.

Quite a number of other parishes also brought groups to Summer Madness.

Victoria said it had been fantastic to see so many parishes finding ways to connect with children and young people this summer, despite the challenges of meeting in a way which adheres to Covid-19 guidance.

"I have been inspired and encouraged to see how creative and resourceful our parishes have been in engaging with families and sharing God's love. I am so aware that right now, children's ministry



Scary pirate in Ballyclare!

is challenging, and organising an event or programme can feel like a very daunting task, so I have been blown away by the lengths clergy, children and youth workers and volunteers have gone to in order to minister to children," she said.

"I know that on my travels and in conversations, I am only just scratching the surface of the amazing work which has gone on in so many parishes throughout Connor this summer. I have no doubt that many children's and families' lives have been touched, and faith has been grown through the work of so many leaders who have given up their time to make events and programmes happen throughout the diocese."



Just five to go - Canon Stuart Lloyd after completing 45 of his 50 ascents of Slemish last June.

Stuart conquers 'Everest' once again

The Rev Canon Stuart Lloyd conquered 'Everest' for the third time in June by climbing Slemish Mountain 50 times in succession.

In doing so, Stuart, retired rector of Ballymena and Ballyclug, raised £12,000 for mission work in Nepal, a country close to his heart.

Stuart began his challenge on June 19, and over the course of the following week completed seven ascents - and descents - each day, with an extra climb on the Wednesday, scaling a total of 30,000 feet which is a little over the height of the world's tallest mountain.

The 'Everest via Slemish' project aimed to raise awareness of and support for mission bodies in Nepal, where Stuart's niece Deirdre Zimmerman and her husband have served for more than 25 years. All funds raised will support Church Mission Society Ireland (CMSI) and their involvement in Nepal, and Nepali NGO Koshish.

The project was sponsored by St Patrick's Church, Ballymena, where Stuart was rector prior to his retirement in 2015; St Patrick's Church, Broughshane, where he currently worships; and St Patrick's Church, Coleraine, where Stuart assists.

Stuart received good support, with 25 people representing all three parishes joining in the climbs and four completing a total of seven ascents. For some, including the Rev Canon Mark McConnell (Ballymena and Ballyclug) and the Rev Dr Andrew Campbell (St Patrick's, Broughshane), it was their first time up Slemish.

"The challenge all went well in that no one fell, there were no mishaps, the weather most of the time was good for climbing, except the Thursday when we got soaked!" said Stuart. "We were blessed in being enabled to do the 50 ascents, staying safe and having company on about half the ascents."

On the Wednesday, Stuart did an extra climb in the evening, leading 20 Cubs and Scouts from Broughshane up the mountain. Jenny Smith and Roger Thompson from CMSI joined him on the last day for an ascent.

PRAYER

"Each time the summit was reached, we had prayer for some aspect of mission in Nepal and a short video was posted on Facebook each evening," Stuart said.

Climbing the height of Mount Everest via the more easily accessible Slemish is not new to Stuart. He has accomplished this feat twice before, and in June 2008, he climbed (and descended) the 30,000 feet over a three-day period, raising funds for a church in Kathmandu which he and his wife Jane have supported for many years.

"Donations have been many and some very generous," Stuart said. "Some were offered by strangers on the mountain. Altogether, I was very encouraged by the interest, participation and response."

CMSI supports three areas of mission in Nepal. One is outreach by the church in Kathmandu which offers a 'friend's service' to those who are referred to the city for health care from rural areas.

The Christian NGO, the Human Development Community Service, oversees an international school for mission children, runs a school for children with mental and physical disabilities, and provides wellbeing information.

The third area of mission is nutrition promotion, and this is the work in which Stuart's niece Deirdre, a CMS associate partner, is engaged. Many Nepalis have poor diets and this impacts especially on women of child-bearing age. Deirdre and her team provide training for locals which allows them to facilitate nutrition workshops.

Nepal is far behind Ireland in providing mental health care and Koshish is spearheading that work through advocacy with the Government and the training of local leaders.

Many suffering from mental health issues are locked away or thrown out of homes because of lack of understanding. Among other things, Koshish seeks to rescue these people and runs a refuge home for them.

Stuart said: "All of the various bodies that are being supported are immediately engaged as part of their work with the challenges of Covid. Like India, Nepal was hit by a second wave, and for a time hospitals were overwhelmed and real hardships were being faced by so many.

"The needs of those whom CMSI and Koshish has been catering for have thus increased greatly and any support from others will be greatly appreciated."



Sarah and Gracie Coates, pictured shortly before heading to Holland where Gracie is taking part in clinical trials.

Medical trial hope for Coates family

Two years after they lost their precious son Noah to a rare neurological disease, Sarah and Greg Coates walk the same well-worn path with their daughter Gracie, who also suffers from the life-limiting condition.

But this time, each step is filled with hope - Gracie is currently in Holland taking part in a medical trial which may slow the progress of the disease and perhaps pave the way for a cure.

Sarah is part-time Ministry Assistant in the Parish of St Peter and St James, Belfast, and friends from the parish and beyond have donated to an appeal which has enabled Sarah and Gracie to spend up to eight weeks in Holland.

Like Noah, Gracie suffers from Vanishing White Matter Disease. Worldwide, there are less than 300 known cases, with life expectancy only up to teenage years.

Noah passed away in July 2019. He was just 12-years-old.

A world-renowned paediatric neurologist based in Holland has been working tirelessly to find a cure for all children suffering from this disease. This year, the team began the first clinical trial of its kind, having discovered a drug which may help slow the progression of the disease. The appeal to help the Coates family spend time in Holland for the trial has raised £4,350. It means a lot to the family.

"People have been so generous and kind," said Sarah. "We are so thankful, it will ease a lot of the stress of being away from home, and allow us to be with Gracie."

Sarah worked with Women's Aid for 20

years, and currently works part-time for Safe Families and for Cithrah Foundation in Carrickfergus. Both are Christian organisations.

A member of the Elim Church, Sarah took up her role in St Peter's just before the first lockdown in 2020, and in the past 18 months has established a ladies' fellowship group; a ministry group; and also Solace, a group for women who live with abuse. This is open to all women in the community from all denominations.

As she prepared for the long stay in Amsterdam, Sarah shared Noah and Gracie's stories.

"Noah was diagnosed when he was three," she said. "His gait was off and we knew there was something wrong. When he was a year old, he took a wee tumble, nothing serious, but we found he couldn't weight bear. The hospital said he was fine. Then, two weeks before his third birthday, he had a vomiting bug. Again he couldn't walk. I was eight months pregnant with Gracie at the time."

Noah was given a CT scan. "Greg and I were sure that, whatever it showed, we could cope with it," Sarah recalled. "But we were called into a room full of consultants and nurses. If there is an instant your whole life changes, that was it for us. They told us Noah had a life-limiting disease called leukodystrophy which affects the white matter which covers the brain.



Loving smiles from Noah and Gracie.

"I just remember really wailing. This disease was life-limiting to teenage years, and Noah was just three-years-old. We went home to tell our family, it was just horrendous."

Noah's scans were sent to a specialist centre in Holland, where it was confirmed that he had Vanishing White Matter Disease. There was a one-in-four chance his little sister may also be affected. Noah received his diagnosis on October 18 2009. On October 19 2010, Sarah and Greg got the devastating diagnosis that Gracie had the same disease.

'Noah just radiated God's glory. His wee body was broken, but he just touched so many people'

"When I was pregnant with Noah, I was reading about Noah in the Bible," Sarah said. "Noah found favour in God's eyes - he was the light in a dark world. I wanted my son to be a wee light for God, and prayed that God would protect him. As Greg was driving to the hospital on the day Noah was born, he saw two rainbows in the sky, and was passed by a fleet of vans with rainbows painted on the sides, and so we named him Noah."

Sarah added poignantly: "There was a huge rainbow in the sky on the day Noah died as well."

When Noah was diagnosed, Sarah could not understand why this was happening. "I told God: 'He was going to do your work and be a light for you,'" she said.

The family attended endless hospital appointments and travelled regularly to Holland. Sarah and Greg were told a cure would not be found in Noah's lifetime, but they remained hopeful.

"He was a normal wee boy cognitively. He loved to laugh, he had a great big belly laugh. He really did light up a room," Sarah recalled. "He did become God's light,

but not in the way that I had thought. He was very independent. We prayed and bargained with God that we would do anything if God would heal him.

"One day, I just knew that he was not going to be healed this side of Heaven, and so we helped prepare him. We talked about Heaven all the time, not in a scary way, but of Heaven as our home, somewhere we all would go one day. Noah would tell us we were not going yet, we needed to be here to tell people that Jesus loves them.

"Noah was so accepting, he never complained."

Sarah said the 'cruel' disease had progressed very quickly. Noah was able to go to Woodburn Primary School for a year, then moved to Fleming Fulton Special School. He came back to Woodburn each year to get his photograph taken in the Woodburn uniform.

In 2015, Noah took a seizure, and he never walked again. "From 2015, he really deteriorated. We looked after him at home, though he did have spells in hospital," Sarah said. "One day, when we were waiting in the adult hospital, he started to pray for a man who was nervous. He prayed in a real, childlike way that God would have just delighted in.

"Gracie grew up around nursing and hospice appointments. She showed a few wee symptoms when she was three or four, but nothing more. She has one-to-one assistance at school, and has to wear a safety helmet as a bump on the head could make the disease progress more quickly. She can't do sport or play in the park like other children.

"Gracie loves TikToks and dancing. She loves being with her friends and taking the dogs for walks. She just loves people, she is a really caring child."

Because Gracie has the same strain of Vanishing White Matter Disease as Noah, the family believed her life would be limited. The new treatment in Holland has changed that.

"Now we have hope," said Sarah. "If she is selected for the trial, they are confident they can slow the progress of the disease. It is bitter-sweet, as this is a medication that has been around for years. But there is a great hope that Gracie will not have to go through what Noah went through."

Gracie is the fourth child to start the trial, which began in June. The results will not be known for four years. It was hoped that Gracie's treatment would begin on September 27, and the length of time the family will remain at the hospital will be



Happy memories: Sarah and Greg Coates with Noah and Gracie.



Noah Coates: 'He was our comfort,' says his mum Sarah.

dictated by how Gracie copes with any side effects.

During this time, Sarah and Gracie will stay in the Ronald McDonald House beside the hospital. Greg will travel from home at weekends to be with them.

When Gracie does return home, she will begin classes at her new school - she transferred from Woodburn Primary to Carrick Academy this year. She will be back in Holland three months later, but other tests and monitoring will be done at home for the next year.

Looking back on Noah's last days, Sarah said: "He went into the hospice for end-of-life care. He was in such good form. He loved Captain America and was so happy when Superman came to see him. He never complained, but one day he just said to me, 'I am tired of being sick now.'

"I prayed for him not to suffer. People would say to us, God didn't answer your

prayers for healing, how can you still have faith? But I prayed 'Lord, if you are not going to heal him, please take him home.' Physically, I felt this release and knew that I was able to hand him over."

Sarah said Noah loved to pray. "He loved praise and worship. His favourite song was 'O Happy Day.' He had a precious relationship with God. When people say God did not answer your prayers, I say that He did. I was able to be with Noah and to say goodbye.

"He did not suffer at the end. God did heal him, he just didn't heal him here. That child just radiated God's glory. His wee body was broken, but he just touched so many people.

"We thought that we were healing him, but since he has gone, we realise that he was our comfort, he was always wiping away our tears.

"I thank God every day that he gave me Noah, it was an absolute privilege to be his mother and he changed my focus Heavenward. A part of my heart is missing, but I know that one day I will be with him. Noah has reached his full potential and we just have to deal with our grief.

"He was amazing. He fulfilled God's plan in his short life, and some of us never get to do that in a full lifetime.

"We are never going to understand why, but I would much rather live my life with God than without him and the strength he has given us. We are still sad, but the opportunity to know that child was just amazing.

"Gracie has that same faith. Noah really loved her and she misses him so much."

You can follow Gracie's story on a special Facebook page @noahandgraciecoates.



Clergy at the Ordination of OLM Deacons in Lisburn Cathedral on September 8 are, from right: Stephen Green; the Ven Barry Forde, Archdeacon of Belfast; Glenn Thompson; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; the Very Rev Stephen Forde, Dean of Belfast; the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, Director of Ordinands; the Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor; the Rev Danielle McCullagh, Vicar, Lisburn Cathedral; the Very Rev Sam Wright, Dean of Connor; the Very Rev Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada; Peter McCausland; the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Archdeacon of Connor; and Peter Meenagh.

Four new deacons were ordained to serve in the Ordained Local Ministry (OLM) at a service in Lisburn Cathedral on September 8. Three days earlier, at a service held in St Michael's, Belfast, John Lowden was ordained deacon (stipendary) for the parishes of St Michael and St Stephen with St Luke.

The four OLM deacons are Stephen Green for St Bartholomew's, Stranmillis; Peter Meenagh for Lisburn Cathedral; Peter McCausland for Templepatrick and Donegore, and Glenn Thompson for Kilmakee Parish.

John Lowden's home parish is The Church of the Resurrection at the Church of Ireland and Methodist Chaplaincy at Queen's. He is married to Emily and prior to ordination worked in his family business, making guitars. He enjoys watching sport, hill walking, guitar, gaming and reading.

"Studying theology, I discerned a call to help others go deeper in their faith and put it into practice in their daily lives," John said. "Having grown up in independent evangelical churches, I was drawn to the Church of Ireland principally through a love of the liturgy and my own theological convictions. Through this process, I felt guided to explore ordination and I now look forward to helping the people of St Michael's, St Stephen's and St Luke's as they continue to reach out to their local communities with the love of Christ."

Stephen Green is married to Jane, and they have two children aged 18 and 14. Stephen works as an Account Manager for Williams Lea, a worldwide document solutions company. He was baptised and confirmed in St Colman's, Dunmurry, joining St Bartholomew's, Stranmillis, following his marriage in 1998. He relaxes by golfing, watching rugby, and assessing referees for USFR.

"Having served in a range of positions in St Bartholomew's, I began to wonder



Bishop George Davison with the Rev John Lowden, who was ordained deacon for the parishes of St Michael and St Stephen with St Luke, Belfast.

if God was looking for a little more," Stephen said. "A bit like Jonah, I came to the realisation you can run but you can't hide. God has caught up with me and I am looking forward to serving the people of St Bartholomew's and the Stranmillis community in any way I can."

Glenn Thompson is married to Angie and they have two children, aged 18 and 20. Glenn is a HGV driver with Haldane Fisher building supplies. A second Dan black belt in ju-jitsu, he is a qualified coach for the World Ju-Jitsu Federation in Ireland. He follows Liverpool FC.

"I have always been interested in Christianity, but up until 2015 I never actually took any serious steps until my dad was unwell," Glenn said. "It led me to give my life to Jesus, being baptised at the age of 39.

"I felt God drawing me to be with people and I want to help bring God to other people hurting. I really want to be involved in outreach to meet people who are so desperately searching."

Peter McCausland works in education, and is married to Thelma, with four children and four grandchildren. He enjoys walking, reading, cycling and rowing.

Peter has been a Diocesan Lay Reader in Connor for six years. "I felt I should apply for OLM and serve more fully in my own parish of St Patrick, Templepatrick, and St John, Donegore," he said. "The study has been challenging but inspirational.

"It was a privilege to be ordained as OLM in Lisburn Cathedral. The service was memorable and extremely encouraging and I was delighted that members of my parish were able to come and share in the worship. I look forward to serving Christ in my own parish in the years to come."

Peter Meenagh is married to Donna and they have two children, Sarah and Daniel. Peter is a self-employed web and graphic designer and a keen supporter of Liverpool FC.

He first felt a call to ordained ministry 14 years ago in his previous church, and it grew as he attended Lisburn Cathedral. "God's guidance had become stronger and he has taken me on a journey to this point where I am able to serve as an ordained local minister," Peter said.

"As an ordained local minister, I am leading a church plant in south Lisburn, part-time. It's an exciting opportunity and I believe that God's hand is really in it. God has provided a fantastic team of people who have a heart for him and the community we are serving.

"We are excited to set up a worshipping community in the area and serve those around us in many different ways. Ultimately I would love to see more people come to faith in Jesus, know his love for them and grow in their faith."

World Cup medals for dancer Jasmine

Jasmine Gray, a parishioner of St Simon's and St Philip's, Belfast, collected two medals at the Dance World Cup held in August.

Jasmine, 18, won both a silver medal and a bronze medal at the 2020/21 competition in Telford, England. A former pupil of Sullivan Upper Grammar School, she is now studying a BTEC in Performing Arts at the South Eastern Regional College.

She has been dancing since the age of three, and is skilled in every format - jazz, tap, modern, hip hop, street, ballet and more. Jasmine has also done acro-gymnastics, trampolining and cheerleading, and is hoping to continue her study of dance at Urdang, an independent performing arts academy in London.

This was Jasmine's first World Cup experience, and she was rewarded with a silver in the Commercial Duet category with her dance partner Megan, and a bronze in the Junior Street Dance category.

A student of Beats Studio, Bangor, Jasmine had to take time out of training during the lockdowns early in the pandemic, but this year dancers at Jasmine's level were designated elite athletes, and were permitted to return to on-site training.

It was a long road to the 2020/21 competition - the event was due to take place in Rome in June 2020, then rescheduled to Spain in May this year, before finally moving to England. To qualify, Northern Ireland Team members had to submit videos, which were judged by a panel made up of leading names in the



Jasmine Gray with her Dance World Cup medals. dance world.

Jasmine's mum Michelle, who until recently was secretary to the Select Vestry of St Simon's, said the competition in the arena was intense. "There were competitors from 50 countries around the world," Michelle said. "The standard was crazy high, but the Northern Ireland girls held their own. Jasmine had 13 dances, and was in the top 10 in 11 of them.

"The girls work really hard and it was great to see them do so well. They were so excited to get a medal, they knew they were up against the best in the world and Northern Ireland is a small country."

With Covid-19 restrictions easing and competitions starting up again, Jasmine, who helps out in the Sunday School at St Simon's Parish Church, is looking forward to taking part in more competitions as she works towards a future career in dance.



Merville Boyd was commissioned as a Lay Reader in at a service in Ballinderry Parish Church on June 16 by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison. Merville and his wife Thelma are pictured with Bishop George, the Rev Peter Jones, Warden of Readers, and the rector of Ballinderry, the Rev Trevor Cleland.

Mossley celebrates 50th anniversary

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, joined parishioners in Mossley on May 30 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the creation of the parish.

Mossley Parish was formally created on Sunday May 30 1971, following the establishment of a new worshipping community in Newtownabbey in 1967.

Bishop George was the preacher at two thanksgiving services held in the church.

The rector, the Rev Peter Jones, said: "In the year ahead, we hope to gather for an anniversary dinner in a local hotel, further develop our Christian mission and ministry in new and innovative ways and continue to reach out into our local community. We look forward to welcoming Streetreach back to Mossley in July 2022."



Norma Nixon was commissioned in St Cedma's Church as Parish Reader for the Parishes of Larne and Inver with Glynn and Raloo on June 2. The service was led by the rector, the Rev David Lockhart, and Norma was commissioned by the Rev Peter Jones, Warden of Readers.

Queen's Birthday Honour for Rosemary

Rosemary Steele, organist in Magheragall and Stoneyford parishes, received a BEM for services to community relations in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

She started playing the organ at St Peter's, Ballymacward (The Rock Chapel), when she was just 16. Outside of the pandemic, Sunday is a busy day for Rosemary, as she plays at St Peter's at 10am, St John's, Stoneyford, at 11.30am and, in more recent years, Magheragall at 6.30pm.



Organist Rosemary Steele BEM.



The Rev Andrew Sweeney, rector of Ballymoney, Finvoy and Rasharkin, the Mayor of Causeway Coast and Glens, Councillor Richard Holmes, and David Goodman, Warden of the Quiet Garden, at the official opening of the garden on September 11.

Place to reflect and appreciate God's gift

The community of Ballymoney came together on September 11 for the opening of the Quiet Garden in the grounds of St Patrick's Church, stepping into a special place for peaceful reflection.

The Mayor of Causeway Coast and Glens, Councillor Richard Holmes, officially opened the garden, set within the original rectory walled garden.

Many people from the local community attended the opening, including Father Damian McCaughan from Our Lady and St Patrick's, Ballymoney; professional counsellors and social workers; those who engage with local teenagers and the elderly; representatives from Christians Against Poverty; and others who are invested in the wellbeing of people in the community of Ballymoney.

Guests were welcomed by the rector, the Rev Andrew Sweeney, who spoke of the vision for the project. "Archbishop William Temple (1881-1944) said, 'the church is the only organisation that exists solely for the benefit of non-members.' If only it were true!" Andrew said. Jesus, he said, had walked away from the Church of his day because of the walls it had put up. "In fact, these walls within which you stand were put up so the rectors of previous generations could carve out a living," Andrew added.

He explained that the first task in the development of the Quiet Garden was



The Shields family gather by the bench which commemorates the late Harry Shields.

to cut a hole in the wall. "We saw it as a symbolic act, a way of saying to the community - you are welcome. This is our gift to you - we will develop it into a beautiful space and give it away.

"Has there ever been such a need for community engagement?" he asked. "We hope that the Quiet Garden will engender a sense of connection and belonging for the anxious, the isolated, the marginalised, the hopeless and the distressed.

"We hope it will become a space that facilitates recovery and offers renewed hope for a better future."

Andrew paid tribute to those whose expertise and hard work had turned the vision into reality, and thanked the Church of Ireland Priorities Fund for financially backing the project.

Cutting the ribbon to officially open the garden, Mayor Holmes said: "I hope this space will be used by the community as a space for reflection. It is amazing what can be achieved when people come together."

Parishioner David Goodman has been appointed Warden of the Quiet Garden. "It is a gift to the community, a place to reflect and appreciate God's gift to all of us. It provides the opportunity for people to meet others and be at one with God," David said.

A semi-retired engineer, David is fairly new to Ballymoney Parish. "I am looking forward to getting to know people and to taking forward Andrew's vision for the garden," he added.

Many of the benches in the garden are memorials to loved ones. Lesley Atkinson and Daphne Slater were chatting on a bench dedicated to Agnes and Billy Slater, Daphne's parents and Lesley's grandparents.

"They met in the Church choir here," Daphne said. "Dad has been dead 37 years and mum died seven years ago, and we felt this was a good way to remember them. I feel a bit emotional." She looked around the garden. "We grew up in these gardens, climbing over the wall to get conkers. Our first memories are of church and Sunday School, and trips on the bus to Portrush."

Lesley said her grandad had been a great gardener. "It is lovely to have this place to come and sit and remember him," she said.

A plaque on another bench reads 'Harry's seat... He loved his flowers.' The bench is in memory of Harry Shields, who died just over two years ago. "When I heard they were creating the garden, it just seemed the obvious thing to offer to put a bench in," said Harry's wife Audrey. "It is good that the whole town can use the garden," she added.

For some, the safe, open space, green grass and colourful flowers were a sheer delight - including our 'Connor Connections' cover girl, two-year-old Norah, whose great grandad is remembered by another of the benches in this beautiful garden.

Connor Takes the Castle is back in January 2022!

Connor Takes the Castle is back for 2022! Youth groups are invited to join the diocesan youth residential at Castlewella in January next year.

Connor Youth Council is preparing to provide the opportunity for young people to meet together from January 14-16. Applications are open and young people aged 11-18 can sign up to attend.

The cost for the full weekend is £60 and numbers are limited. There is the option to attend for a day trip on the Saturday for £20, including food and activities.

Christina Baillie, Diocesan Youth Officer said: "We cannot wait to meet together at Castlewella. Connor Takes the Castle has allowed us to make some great memories over the years and it is a joy to see young people learn, meet

new friends and have fun together.

"We recognise that our plans might need to change, but we are working hard to plan a safe and fun event for the young people in our parishes."

More information about the event and how to sign up is available through the Engage Connor Youth Facebook and Instagram page.

Summer Jam to celebrate 10 years



Members of 5th Antrim Scouts have fun on the water at their Summer Jam.

To celebrate 10 years since the formation of the Troop in All Saints' Parish, Antrim, 5th Antrim Scouts held a Summer Jam at Breckenhill Activity Centre in Doagh.

More than 30 young people attended, taking part in activities such as splatmaster, archery, bush craft cooking, raft building and the Drumdarragh Challenge.

The Troop was set up in 2011 by the Rev Adrian Halligan, who was curate-assistant in All Saints' at the time and a very experienced Scout, along with parishioner, Fiona Simpson. This was part of a diocesan initiative to encourage parishes to try something new.

On that first night in September 2011, nine boys and three leaders attended, and by the end of the season in June 2012, the troop had more than 25 Beavers, Cubs and Scouts and 10 leaders.

The vicar of Antrim, the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, said: "Since then we have grown and grown, and on most Tuesday evenings there are upwards of 50 boys and girls aged from 6-16 enjoying themselves in a variety of activities and gaining an armful of attractive badges for their hard work.

"Such is the popularity of our Troop that

we regularly have a waiting list to join our Beavers, Cubs and Scouts."

Those who took part in the Summer Jam at Breckenhill enjoyed the late summer sunshine, and the camp activities concluded with a celebratory cake.

Archdeacon McBride said: "We are indebted to the Education Authority who provided us with a grant in excess of £5,000 towards the camp and also granted us over £2,000 towards new camping equipment."

He added: "Although my previous experience of a youth organisation had been in the Boys' Brigade where I went through the ranks, I am aware of the importance belonging to an organisation such as the Scouts has in the formation of a young person's life, helping them to develop a whole range of life skills.

"As a parish, we are grateful to all the initial support that was given to us by the local district and look forward to our next 10 years."

Helping young people reconnect

As many regular diocesan events for young people could not take place this year due to Covid-19 restrictions, Connor Youth Council invited parishes to apply for funding to help them to connect with young people in their area.

Under the 'Every' initiative, 31 parishes availed of the funding which supported one-off events - some of which you can read about on page eight.

Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie, said: "It was great to see the funding also support wider programmes that parishes had organised. This included Belfast Cathedral's Summer School (page 20) with the 'Every' funding helping to purchase those great hoodies; Agherton Parish's 'Crest of a Wave' (page seven); and the 'Big Week In' at All Saints', Belfast."

Christina added: "It was a joy to visit many events supported by the funding and to see young people enjoy being part of the life of their local parishes by gathering in person again."

New resources

Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie has developed new resources for use with young people in parishes.

'Pursuit' has been developed in partnership with Love for Life and is supported by funding from the Church of Ireland Priorities Fund. This resource encourages young people to pursue character traits which will shape them to reflect God and have a positive impact upon all their relationships.

The 'Jesus Sessions' resource is an eight-session guide which gives a foundation to look at the life and ministry of Jesus. The resource looks at themes like fullness of life, Jesus' justice and generosity.

To find out more or get access to these resources, please contact Christina on christinabaillie@connordiocese.org.



Synod on Zoom. From left: Richard Cotter, Diocesan Finance and Administration Manager; the Rev Canon James Carson and Bishop George Davison.

Presidential Address

The Covid-19 pandemic and the changes to how the Church and specifically parishes in Connor Diocese connect with people were the focus of Bishop George Davison's Presidential Address at Connor Synod 2021.

Held online via Zoom on June 24, Bishop George paid tribute to the 'remarkable' way clergy and parishes responded to the challenges posed by the pandemic, and the creative way they had continued to offer worship and serve their communities.

Speaking of those who have lost loved ones to the virus, the bishop said his thoughts and prayers were with all who mourn. He made special reference to the Rev John Anderson, rector of Billy and Derrykeighan, whose death in April from Covid-19 had been such a great shock.

The Bishop paid tribute to those members of Connor Diocese who played a part

in responding to the crisis and whose professions brought them to the frontline.

And he said that parishes, forced to change routines and learn new skills, had discovered that doing things differently provided new opportunities to reach out with the good news of Christ to a wider range of people.

Covid-19 was not the only challenge, Bishop George told Synod. "Demographic changes and an increasingly secular outlook on the part of wider society bring their own difficulties and sometimes we have struggled to respond effectively. Increasingly the Church is seen as out

of touch and irrelevant in the world of today - 'nice if you like that sort of thing' at best and 'a threat to people's freedom' at worst!" the Bishop said.

But he stressed that when the gospel is proclaimed, lives are changed. "We simply need to discover ways of connecting effectively with the community around us so that people will want to know more of what it is that motivates us and take us seriously when we share our story of life and hope," the Bishop said.

"Perhaps however, the same openness to trying new things that has enabled us to respond to the challenges of Covid will also enable us to consider ways of addressing those challenges too. We have learned that sometimes it is when we have to step out of our comfort zones that we start to see new and exciting things happen!"

Concluding his address, Bishop George spoke of the work of the diocesan staff team, including changes in personnel. Team Connor, however, was not just staff, but every member of the clergy and every parishioner in the diocese, he told Synod.

"It's my desire as your bishop to nurture a sense of fellowship and belonging across the diocesan family so that we may better support one another as together we hold out 'the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all' (Acts 10: 36). Please pray for me in that work, as I will pray for you," Bishop George concluded.

Yei partnership will finish in two years

At its annual Synod, the Diocese of Connor agreed to extend its partnership with the Diocese of Yei in South Sudan for a further two years. The partnership, which has been in existence since 2007, will formally come to an end in June 2023.

The motion, from Connor Council for Mission, was proposed by the Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada and rector of Christ Church, Lisburn, and seconded by Lay Secretary Ken Gibson, Lisburn Cathedral.

"We are extremely grateful for all who have been involved in this partnership which has created deep bonds of affection under the leadership of Bishop Hilary and Bishop Alan," Archdeacon Dundas said.

He paid tribute to parishes across Connor for their generosity towards people and projects in Yei, making particular reference to Mongo Primary School, built by donations from Agherton and other parishes in the diocese.

The Archdeacon spoke of the many teams that have travelled to Yei over the years, running clergy training, youth activities, health schemes and other projects, and he reflected on the visits to Connor by Bishop Hilary and his wife Mama Joyce.

Acknowledging the support of Church Mission Society Ireland (CMSI) in the partnership, Archdeacon Dundas said: "Beyond the formal conclusion of this partnership, we will continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray for Bishop Levi who was consecrated last weekend [see page 21], and we hope that Bishop George [Davison, Bishop of Connor] and Bishop Levi can meet at the Lambeth Conference next year."

Seconding the motion, Ken Gibson said: "I have seen how this partnership has benefited folk around the diocese. Visits can be life-changing for younger and older people."

Mr Frank Dobbs, Agherton Parish,

concluded. "I have enjoyed visiting Yei three times. The partnership has had benefits in both directions," he said.

The Rev Amanda Adams, rector of Ballyrashane and Kildollagh, said the partnership had been rich and fulfilling. "Above all it is about relationships," she said. "It may be formally coming to an end, but relationships will continue with people who have become our friends. We are on this journey together and this is not to be interpreted as an end of relationship - that goes on."

Bishop George said that Connor Diocese wanted to extend the partnership by this two-year period to allow it to 'finish well.'

"The idea of a formal diocesan partnership is not that it should continue forever," Bishop George said. "We are encouraged to take on a partnership for a period of time and we have renewed this partnership on a number of occasions. This is not about ending the connections we have with Yei."



Synod with a difference.

History made as Synod held online

For the first time in the history of Connor Diocese, the annual Diocesan Synod took place online due to the ongoing restrictions related to Covid-19.

Around 150 members took part on Thursday June 24, joining the hosts via the Zoom platform. Earlier, a Service of Holy Communion was held in St Stephen's Parish Church, Millfield, led by Bishop George Davison, assisted by the Rev Canon James Carson, rector of St Stephen's, and the Dean of Connor, the Very Rev Sam Wright, who preached.

"The formal partnership has done its bit. It has enabled people from our parishes to have real and meaningful relationships, and those relationships will continue. We will be seeking to form a new partnership with a country in the developing world once the partnership with Yei comes to an end, and that will allow a whole new series of nurturing relationships to begin."

Synod member Mr Paul Dundas (no relation to Archdeacon Dundas) asked if now was a good time to be ending the partnership given the difficult situation the people of Yei are in.

Bishop George replied that existing relationships would continue and that he hoped to meet Bishop Levi next year. "But the situation such as you describe does make it difficult to form new relationships," the Bishop said. "A number of visits have not been able to take place. This motion ensures that existing relationships continue, but also recognises that this partnership has continued longer than partnerships in the Anglican Church normally do."

The motion was passed unanimously.

As attendance at the service was strictly limited, it was livestreamed on the Connor Facebook page.

The business of Synod got under way at 2pm. The hosts were members of the Connor Development Team and the meeting began with Scripture read by Dr Allison Campbell, Skerry, Rathcavan and Newtowncrommelin, and prayers led by the Rev Peter Blair, All Saints', Belfast.

As Judge Derek Rodgers has stood down as Chancellor, Bishop George nominated the Ven Barry Forde, Archdeacon of Belfast and Chaplain at Queen's University, to be assessor for this Synod.

Bishop George commented that Judge Rodgers had served as Chancellor for many years. "He was a source of wise advice to us all, and we appreciated his willingness to serve. We thank him for all his work in this role," the bishop said.

Following the acceptance of the minutes



Bishop George Davison delivers his Presidential Address at Connor 2021 Synod.

of the last Connor Synod, Bishop George delivered his Presidential Address (see page 16).

Connor's new Children's Ministry Officer, Victoria Jackson, introduced herself in a pre-recorded video. The Rev Canon William Taggart read communications from General Synod and results of the various elections were outlined.

The Report of the Diocesan Council and Associated Notices of Motion were proposed by Jim Neill, St Paul's, Lisburn, and seconded by the Rev Emma Carson, Ballymena and Ballyclug.

The Diocesan Council Report included updates on the diocese during the coronavirus pandemic, ordination anniversaries, diocesan administration, the development team, communications, youth ministry, children's ministry, the North Belfast Centre of Mission, and diocesan accounts.

Lay Secretary, Ken Gibson, thanked Diocesan Development Team members for all the work they had done during lockdown.

Notices of Motion were all passed unanimously. They related to the approval of changes to Diocesan Regulations, proposed by Archdeacon Forde and seconded by Canon Carson; Agreement that the Diocesan Fair Share should remain at 9.5 per cent, proposed by Cynthia Cherry, Antrim Parish, and seconded by the Rev Canon Kevin Graham; and a report from the Diocesan Board of Education, proposed by the Rev Dr Andrew Campbell, Skerry, Rathcavan and Newtowncrommelin, and seconded by Raymond Gilbert, Carrickfergus.

In discussion of the Council Report, Bishop George highlighted the report by Diocesan Warden of Readers, the Rev Peter Jones. "We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our readers, both diocesan and parish," the bishop said. "They are a vital part of the ongoing ministry of the diocese and a huge support to the clergy they serve."

The Diocesan Council Report was adopted by Synod.

Synod then agreed a motion from the Council for Mission that the diocesan partnership with the Diocese of Yei in South Sudan be extended for a further two years to June 2023 (see page 16).

Closing Synod, Bishop George thanked everyone in attendance for helping to get through the business. "Zoom is a challenging platform at times, it is not the same as meeting in person," he said.



The Rev Emma Carson, curate-assistant in St Patrick's, Ballymena, inside the church where work is taking place to deal with dry rot. Photo: Loraine Watt.

Ballymena Parish marks tercentenary

A very happy 300th anniversary to St Patrick's, Ballymena. Not only is the church marking its tercentenary, but it is also 200 years since the tower was built!

As the anniversaries are celebrated, the parish has launched an appeal to raise £75,000 to address 'significant dry rot' issues in the church building.

To help mark this important year, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council produced

a Tercentenary Commemorative Guide, which includes a short guide to St Patrick's Parish Church.

The Borough Council also produced a video as part of European Heritage Open Week in September, and a small exhibition

was held in the Braid Civic Centre.

The tercentenary is significant not just for the parish, but also for the town of Ballymena, as the history of the Church of Ireland is an integral part of the development of the town.

This year also marks the 140th anniversary of the re-opening of St Patrick's in Castle Street after a fire destroyed the newly-constructed building in 1879. The parish now faces a major challenge in terms of addressing dry rot issues within the building.

The majority of the financial challenge will fall to parishioners, but it is also hoped to encourage non-parishioners to make donations to help ensure the future of what is arguably, from an architectural perspective, Ballymena's most important civic building.

The parish has launched a public appeal to raise £75,000, and anyone wishing to make a donation can do so via JustGiving (search St Patrick's Church of Ireland, Ballymena).

In the Tercentenary Commemorative Guide, the rector, the Rev Canon Mark McConnell, set out an exciting challenge. "What will these stones, some 300 years from now, say about us - history will judge? I remain sure that the calling of the people of God in every age is to discover and share the revelation of God, chiefly in his son Jesus. The 'how to' might have to change but the 'who' and 'what' stay the same," Mark wrote.



Service of Ordination of Priests for Connor Diocese

St Nicholas', Carrickfergus, hosted a Service of Ordination of Priests for Connor Diocese on September 12. Three priests were ordained by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison. They were the Rev Nathan Ervine, who was ordained for the curacy of the Parish of Carrickfergus; the Rev Brendan O'Loan, who will serve in the Ordained Local Ministry in the Parish of Jordanstown; and the Rev Janet Spence, who will serve in the Ordained Local Ministry for the Parish of St Stephen and St Luke and St Michael, Belfast. At the service are, from left: The Rev Brendan O'Loan; the Rev Janet Spence; the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, Director of Ordinands; Bishop George Davison; Archdeacon Barry Forde; the Rev Nathan Ervine; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; the Rev Christopher St John, rector, St Nicholas'; the Rev Canon James Carson, preacher; Archdeacon Paul Dundas.

John takes up senior CLCGB role

John Williams, a Connor Diocesan Lay Reader, has been appointed the new Ulster Regimental Commander for the Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade (CLCGB) Northern Ireland.

A parishioner in Magheragall, John is a retired nurse and first joined the Church Lads' Brigade in St Colman's, Dunmurry, in 1959 at the age of six.

He moved up through the ranks, becoming Company Sergeant in his late teens and later undertook officers' training, also attending the week-long King George VI training course held in Cheltenham, England. John was appointed Company Captain in the mid-1970s.

A former pupil of Lisburn Technical College, John was working as an apprentice electronic technician with Grundig in Derriaghy when he got his first taste of the nursing profession, volunteering with the Hospital Service Reserves as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Award.

"The Hospital Service Reserves were brought in in the '60s and '70s as a result of the large number of casualties due to the Troubles," said John. "I enjoyed it and after I had been volunteering for four years, the Ward Sister suggested I take up nursing as a career. She must have seen something there!"

"I went for an interview at Belfast City Hospital. A lot of those who had applied had A Levels and some had degrees, while I left college after my Junior Certificate, but the Ward Sister must have given me a glowing reference because I was accepted."

John was in a class of 61 females and four males. He did three years' training as a staff nurse, a year on the medical ward, and then did a coronary care nursing course. After two years as a coronary care nurse, John moved to A&E in 1986. "I wanted to see how they dealt with coronary care patients in A&E, and planned to be in A&E for six months, but ended up staying until 2000," he said.

During this time, he was promoted to Charge Nurse. "I had a keen interest in how we dealt with trauma caused by civil disturbance, like gunshot wounds and blast injuries," John explained. "I went out in the ambulances and took photos of trauma caused by civil disturbances. I had articles published in international journals, and was invited to speak at international



John Williams.

conferences." The first of these, John recalled, was for the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin in 1987. "It was quite a daunting experience," he said. Further international speaking dates followed - in London, Singapore, Sydney, Nashville and Hawaii.

'I watched the parade with a lump in my throat, remembering how we just had a cap, a belt and a white haversack, not uniforms'

"Hawaii in 1995 was a very special conference and one I will never forget because that's where I met my wife Lynn, who lived in New Jersey," said John. The relationship blossomed and the couple married in September 1999. Lynn moved to Lisburn and was able to carry on her nursing career in coronary care in Lagan Valley Hospital.

With the closure of A&E in the City Hospital in 2000, John was also working in Lagan Valley. A medical condition in 2005 meant he had to stop work for a time. "I really missed the work and the people I worked with," he admitted.

And so John was back on the wards 18 months later. He retired in February 2021.

John became a member of St John Ambulance in 1986, later becoming Divisional Superintendent, and then District Commissioner for six years. In February 2016, Her Majesty the Queen sanctioned his appointment as a Commander in the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem.

With the exception of a few years when his nursing shifts did not allow time for CLCGB activities, John has been a faithful member of CLCGB. He helped out with Regimental Camps and Duke of Edinburgh expedition training and assessment. He was involved in CLB trips, travelling on a converted bus to places including Switzerland, Scotland and Austria.

"A few years ago, I was invited by Regimental Commander Melvyn Lockhart to come to the Brigade's 75th anniversary parade. I watched the parade with a lump in my throat, remembering how we just had a cap, a belt and a white haversack, not uniforms like they have now. Melvyn asked me to run leaders' training in first aid, and a year later, I became second-in-command to Melvyn."

It's not only the Brigade uniform that has changed since John first became a member of CLB - the organisation now has girls in its ranks - hence the change to CLCGB. "It is good that it now includes girls," said John. "It is all about equality."

The Ulster Regiment of CLCGB is the largest in the UK. "It offers a lot to young people. There are trips abroad where they get to experience the culture of another country, sport, friendships, a lot of badgework, the Duke of Edinburgh Award," said John.

John was commissioned a Diocesan Lay Reader in 2011, having already been a Parish Reader in his then home parish of Dunmurry. He is now a member of Magheragall Parish, where he is Parish Reader and Lynn sings in the choir.

John succeeds Melvyn Lockhart as Regimental Commander of CLCGB. "I was shocked to be asked and thought and prayed about it a lot before saying yes. All Battalion Commanders and Regimental Staff report to me, and I will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the Brigade. I am delighted that Johnny Conn from Carnmoney Parish has agreed to be my second-in-command," he said.

Joseph Summer School is 'amazing!'

Belfast Cathedral's 'Joseph' themed Music Summer School was a huge success, with nearly 60 children stepping into the amazing space of St Anne's Cathedral to sing, make music, and have fun.

The summer school ran from August 16-20, concluding with a fantastic in-person concert for family and friends. Precautions against Covid-19 ensured a safe week for everyone involved.

The scheme was organised by directors India Chapman Webb and Alison Darragh, and musical director Matthew Owens who is Director of Music at St Anne's. They were supported by Lorraine Stanley, course accompanist and music tutor; Ethan Darby, music tutor; and group leaders Eibhlín Eddy, Donna Johnston, Susie Hunter, Katie Lyons, Garbhan McEnoy, Tania Murphy, Valerie Prosser and Adam Reaney.

Seasoned singer/actor Caolan Keaveney played the role of Joseph, and the project had the backing of the City of Belfast School of Music; Belfast Philharmonic Choirs; the City of Belfast Youth Orchestra; NI Opera; and the Ulster Orchestra, whose members Richard Ashmore, Rozzie Curlett and Tanya Houghton gave instrumental demonstrations to the children during the week.

Director Alison Darragh said: "The children

were amazing and so happy to be doing something different. Some of them really hadn't sung for a good year and a half.

"They enjoyed daily sessions from members of the Ulster Orchestra, made Joseph's coat from felt squares, did canvas paintings and even had a mini Olympics."

Day four's activity was a trip to historic Clifton House, where the children had the opportunity to sing outside the windows, much to the enjoyment of the home's residents.

During the course of the week, the children worked on their performance of 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat' and also learned a number of other pieces including 'An Irish Blessing,' 'Chumbara' and 'Circle of Life.'

"On Friday evening, they sang the whole concert off copy which was really great as they were able to engage so much more with the conductor this way," Alison said.

"The concert was a great event. Parents, siblings and other family members joined the Dean, the Deputy Lieutenant of Belfast,



Belfast Cathedral Music Summer School organisers India Chapman Webb, Alison Darragh, and Matthew Owens, the Cathedral's Director of Music.

and sponsors for vocal warm-ups, which was great fun. The feedback we have had has been extraordinary. I think it lifted the spirits of everyone and the cathedral was festooned with balloons and art work and looked really lovely."

The children received video messages from Jason Donovan, who previously played the title role of Joseph in the West End, and actress Maria Friedman, and they all took home a certificate signed by the musical's renowned composer, Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, who wished them all the best for their performance.

The organisers expressed special thanks to others who supported the summer school including Dean Stephen Forde and the cathedral staff; Tesco, Newtownbreda, whose community champion Arnette was a huge help; Confetti, Belfast for the balloon display; Gwyneth Cockcroft and Jackson Greens for the treats; cathedral members David and Helen Alexander for sorting the refreshment breaks; and Connor Diocese's own Children's Ministry Development Officer, Victoria Jackson.



The summer school concert finale gets under way in Belfast Cathedral.

Stepping out for Chile

Derryvolgie parishioners walk more than 2,653 miles in aid of Communicating Clearly project

Parishioners from St Columba's, Derryvolgie, walked the length of Chile in June, raising more than £4,700 as part of the parish's Communicating Clearly audio visual project.

In January 2020, the Select Vestry took the decision to upgrade the parish audio visual system, but installation was delayed while funds were raised and by the Covid-19 lockdown.

"While the pause button was pressed on the physical installation of equipment, a new and exciting phase of ministry was launched," said the rector, the Rev James Boyd. "Our presence online was suddenly increased. Thanks mainly to a superb volunteer team, we were able to livestream services, produce inspirational videos, hold Facebook live sessions, and collaborate with parishioners as we created a space to hear stories of hope and comfort.

"As lockdown eased that September, we set about the physical installation of the new equipment. It was agreed that

as we raised funds for this project, it could be an opportunity to help others, looking out to our world as well as resourcing the mission of our parish."

Following a conversation with the Rev Stephen McElhinney of SAMS Ireland, the parish partnered with the Anglican Theological College Santiago in Chile, aiming to help purchase new technology that would enhance ministry training in South America.

James said: "This will enable the development of a new media department to provide an online system for theological education and formation. Being able to provide quality recorded and live media for training church leaders and church planters will make a significant impact in a country which is 2,653 miles long. The total cost of the project is around £14,000."

The harvest offering for the project raised £3,737, but more funds were needed and so the sponsored walk came about.

"We set out to walk 2,653 miles during June," said James. "We did it - in fact we walked more than that. A team of 49 people pledged several miles per day, with some as young as five taking part. It was wonderful to see the pictures coming in [including our background image] as we walked and prayed for our community and the nation of Chile.

"This project will have an impact for generations to come. Thanks to all involved in the walking we have raised over £4,700 before Gift Aid. A wonderful achievement for a worthy cause that is already impacting our community, as the equipment has enabled us to establish Life groups, children's and youth ministries online, live streaming funerals for family who can't attend and more. This is all before we get to the impact in the nation of Chile, the fruit of which will not be seen for a few years, but we know will be huge under God."

Funds raised for Chile were passed on on September 26.

Thanks to Connor as Yei Bishop installed

There were celebrations in Yei Diocese, South Sudan, on June 20 when Bishop Levi Marandulu was consecrated and installed as the third Bishop of Yei.

Yei and Connor have been in partnership since 2007 - a partnership which will conclude in 2023 (see page 16). Over the years, relationships have flourished, including that with former Bishop Hilary Luete Adebba, who spoke at the service.

Archbishop Justin Badi carried out a pastoral visit to the diocese for the consecration and installation, and welcomed and prayed for Bishop Levi as he takes on this new responsibility.

Speaking at the service, which lasted several hours, retiring Bishop Hilary thanked the various Governors of Yei State with whom he had worked, and emphasised the importance of good Church / State relations in building and maintaining peace and for community development.

Bishop Hilary thanked those who supported the Diocese of Yei during his time as bishop. "I want to thank our partners in the Church of Ireland, CMS Ireland in particular, the Diocese of Connor, and parishes in the Republic of Ireland, who have partnered with us in the Diocese of Yei throughout our ministry," he said.

"Without these partners, our ministry would not have been the same... I want to thank you all for having supported my ministry and helping make the diocese what it is today. Without these partners, it would have been very difficult for us."

Reflecting on some of the challenges he faced, Bishop Hilary thanked the Government of Uganda and the Church of Uganda for accommodating more than 103,000 refugees who fled from the Yei area to seek refuge in Madi West Nile Diocese. Many of these people are now slowly returning to Yei to try and rebuild their lives, hoping for a peace that will last.



At the consecration of the Bishop of Yei are Bishop Levi, Mama Agness and Archbishop Paul Yugusuk.

In a goodwill message to the new Bishop of Yei, CMSI Mission Director Jenny Smyth wrote: "Many of us would have liked to come and join you today... we assure you of our ongoing commitment to our partnership and look forward to the time when we can meet in person to congratulate you and pray for you."

Jenny added: "Let us pray for Bishop Levi in these weeks of transition and continue to pray for the people of Yei and our partnership with them."

Story of wartime bravery preserved

A Magheragall parishioner has donated treasured wartime memorabilia which belonged to her late uncle to the Ulster Aviation Society.

On the suggestion of her rector, the Rev Nicholas Dark, May Best has donated Flight Sergeant David Maffett's World War Two medals and his flying log book so David's story can be shared more widely.

Nicholas, May, and her husband Gerald, met aviation historian and author John Hewitt from the Ulster Aviation Society at Magheragall Parish Hall on May 26.

Mr Hewitt's first book was entitled 'Ireland's Aviator Heroes of World War II.' "Mr Hewitt's work is a witness to the great courage and sacrifice demonstrated by these Irishmen as they contributed to the Allied war effort against Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan," said Nicholas.

Mr Hewitt said David Maffett's story will be included in his fifth volume of 'Ireland's Aviator Heroes of World War II,' and his medals and documents will become an important part of the display at the Maze.

David Maffett grew up in Co Down and attended Down High School, finishing in 1939 when, aged 18, he joined the Royal Air Force (RAF). With the outbreak of war, David's training led to his first tour of duty from January to September 1940 with 9 Squadron, Nos 3 Group RAF Bomber Command. During this, David completed 30 operations over Germany as a gunner on Wellingtons.

In September 1940, David was posted to No 20 Operational Training Unit at RAF Lossiemouth. The unit was formed in May 1940 to train night bomber crews using the Wellington.

In April 1942, David was posted to RAF Marham for training on four-engine Stirling Bombers in preparation for a return to operational duty.

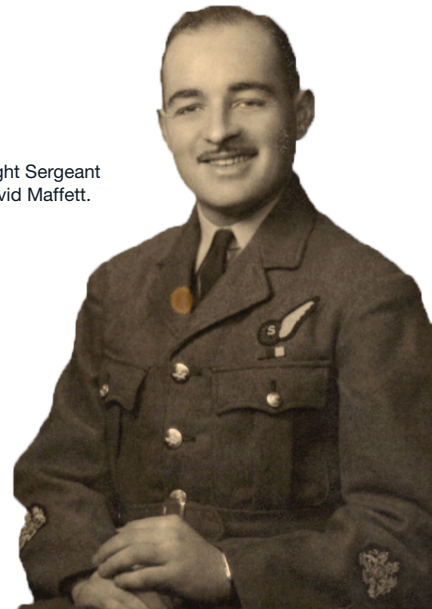
He went on the first 1,000 bomber raid on Cologne. Several sorties later, on August 7 1942, he was shot down. The following is a description of that night:

"On 7th August 1942, at 01.10 hrs, Stirling N6072 took off for Duisberg once more laden with six 1,000 lb general purpose bombs and seven 500 lb general purpose bombs. Around 02:57 hrs Stirling N6072 was intercepted and shot down, by Hptm Ludwig Bietmann of 5./NJG1 flying a Messerschmitt Bf 110, to crash into the west bank of the Maas near Kessel, two miles south of Venlo.

"Three of the crew had managed to bail - the pilot, Sgt William Laidlaw, Wireless Operator, Sgt David Maffett, and Sergeant John Green, the Observer, to become Prisoners of War.

"The rest of the crew - WO II AL Bachelder, RCAF, and Sgts HP Gardiner, GC

Flight Sergeant David Maffett.



Cavanagh, and LWA Barnard (Air Gunner), RAF - were killed in the crash. They were initially buried in a temporary military cemetery at Venlo. On 1st October 1947, they were re-interred in the Jonkerbos War Cemetery on the outskirts of Nijmegen in the Netherlands which contains 1,629 Commonwealth WW2 burials."

In 2005, on the 60th anniversary year of the ending of the war, David spoke about his experiences, describing the events of August 7 1942. Reflecting on the death of four crew members and his own experience as a PoW, he wrote: "I was lucky to be alive. I was wireless operator that night. Only three got out, the pilot, navigator and me. They got out first and I was alone in the aircraft, until I bailed out.

"I was a PoW for three years in Silesia, which is now in Poland and quite near Auschwitz. The camp held 13,000, some from Dunkirk, some 51st Highlanders and the RAF prisoners. On January 22 1945, 3,000 of us were marched out.

"We had to march 20km a day and had just two breaks. We went to Duderstadt and stayed 10 days, then across the Elbe at Magdeburg. By the time we reached Lukenwalde, just 50 miles from Berlin, there were just 145 of us still alive.

"We arrived in Berlin on the Wednesday and the Russians took over on the Saturday and held us for five weeks. Then they took us to the Yanks. We were flown to Brussels. I got back in June 1945 and was sent to RAF Cosford and then home. I was just 24 by then."

As David's nearest relative, May has treasured his wartime stories, along with his medals and his RAF log books.

Nicholas said: "May's decision to donate them to the Ulster Aviation Society at the Maze will ensure that her Uncle David's story of bravery will be remembered and treasured by future generations."



May Best, John Hewitt and Gerald Best at the presentation of May's Uncle David's war medals and RAF log books to the Ulster Aviation Society on May 26.

The Rev Jim Martin

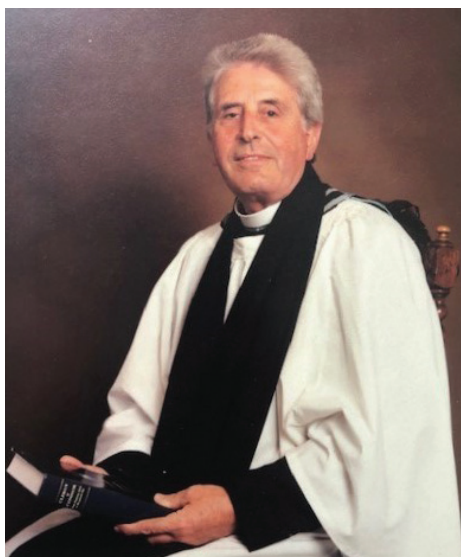
The Rev Jim Martin MBE, first rector of St Brigid's Parish Church, Mallusk, and founder of the Martin Residential Trust, died on July 27 at the age of 88.

Speaking at a Service of Thanksgiving for Mr Martin's life, the Archdeacon of Connor, the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, said he was a 'true and faithful servant,' who 'served his Lord with great distinction and honour.'

The service was held in Fleming and Cuthbert Funeral Home, Ballyclare, on August 2. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, only immediate family were present, but many others attended the committal in Antrim Cemetery.

Mr Martin established the Martin Residential Trust - a residential home for the profoundly mentally disabled - after experiencing at first hand the difficulties one family in the St Brigid's congregation was experiencing caring for their severely disabled son in their own home.

Originally from east Belfast, prior to ordination he served his time as a joiner,



starting work at the age of 14 in Harland and Wolff shipyard.

Addressing the Service of Thanksgiving, Archdeacon McBride shared some verses from Ephesians 4. "It is so appropriate to use them as the text as we meet together today to give thanks to God for the life of a true and faithful servant, Jim, who answered this calling and served his

Lord with great distinction and honour," Archdeacon McBride said. "Jim took his role, his job, his calling to be a shepherd of his flock very seriously. As his family, you above everyone else will know the sacrifices he made to tend the wandering to get them back into the fold, and the sacrifices you made, often foregoing his presence on important family occasions.

"On behalf of the Church he served so faithfully and so diligently, can I thank you for lending him to us for such a long and faithful ministry."

Archdeacon McBride continued: "Jim was a joiner by trade and was used to working with his hands and his tools. When I came into the hospital last Sunday, his favourite tool was on his bedside locker, the Bible that was presented to him on the occasion of his ordination to the priesthood.

"He knew his scriptures inside out and applied them to his whole life. Its contents were written on his heart and he did his level best, in an exemplary manner, to live out what he preached to his flock."

Mr Martin is survived by his children Caroline, Timothy and Lisa. He was predeceased by his wife Kathleen.

MU gifts for patients



Hospital Chaplain Sanna Mallon (second from right); Oriol Gamble and Edith Burns from St Paul's, Lisburn, MU; and the Rev Arthur Young with some of the gifts presented for the benefit of patients in the Royal Group of Hospitals and Musgrave Park Hospital.

Members of the Mothers' Union in St Paul's Parish Church, Lisburn, presented gifts to Sanna Mallon, Church of Ireland Chaplain in the Royal Group of Hospitals and Musgrave Park Hospital, for the benefit of hospital patients.

These included washbags for adults, and blankets, hats and cardigans for neo-natal babies, which Sanna has distributed as gifts throughout the Royal Victoria and Royal maternity neo-natal. "The patients in Meadowlands, at Musgrave Park, are especially grateful to receive such practical and generous gifts," Sanna said. "It makes such a difference to those unable to gather up their personal belongings on a sudden hospital admission."



The Rev Danielle McCullagh was instituted Vicar of Lisburn Cathedral by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, at a service in the Cathedral on June 2. Danielle has been curate-assistant in the Cathedral since August 2017. Pictured, front from left, are: The Rev Lucy Burden, curate-assistant, St Mark's, Armagh, who preached; the Rev Danielle McCullagh; Dean Sam Wright, Dean of Connor and rector of Lisburn Cathedral. Back, from left: The Rev Canon James Carson; Bishop George Davison; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar.



Clergy appointments

The Rev Heather Cooke, formerly curate-assistant in Carrickfergus Parish, has been appointed part-time curate-assistant in the Parish of Larne, Inver, Glynn and Raloo. Heather took up her new role on September 5, and is pictured being welcomed to the parish by the rector, the Rev David Lockhart.



The Rev Adrian Halligan with James Ross and Abigail Halligan from Craigs, Dunaghy and Killagan, and Laura Kilpatrick from Lisburn Cathedral.



James Diffin, The Hub Chaplaincy; Gary Huntley, Church of the Good Shepherd, Monkstown; and Johnny Diamond from Ballyrashane.



The Rev David Lockhart, Larne, Inver, Glynn and Raloo, catches up with leaders from St John and St Ninian's Parish.



Connor Youth Officer Christina Baillie; Bishop George Davison; Children's Ministry Development Officer Victoria Jackson; and the Rev Andrew Campbell, rector of St Patrick's, Broughshane, at the Rebuild event.

Rebuilding!

Youth and children's leaders came together to 'Rebuild' and look positively to the future at an event hosted by St Patrick's, Broughshane, and organised by Connor Youth Officer Christina Baillie and Children's Ministry Development Officer Victoria Jackson, on September 11.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, opened with words and prayer; The Good Book Company was on hand to share some useful resources, and there were workshops in both children's and youth ministry.

In the children's ministry workshop, Victoria shared practical ideas for children's ministry during Covid-19 and delivered training on the new All Aboard Two Resource.

At her youth ministry workshop, Christina launched two new resources - Pursuit and The Jesus Sessions - and recommended resources from The Big House, CIYD and Tearfund. She also

offered tips for working with young people in this season.

There were small group discussions, question time, and the event ended with lunch and fellowship.

Victoria said: "There was a real hunger and desire to get our children's and youth ministries up and running again which was so encouraging for us as we answered questions and endeavoured to provide ideas."

Christina added: "Both Victoria and I are keen to support parishes in whatever ways we can, for example through leading family services, helping plan your youth or children's ministry or recommending resources."



Young Henry test drives some of the resources!



Ladies from St Nicholas' Parish Church, Carrickfergus.



Youth and children's leaders from Greenisland Parish.