

CONNOR

connections

Muddy
Church
fun

for families

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Passion for theatre honoured with MBE

She fell in love with theatre at the age of 10 when she won a ticket to the Grand Opera House pantomime, and her experience of that production of 'Cinderella' led to a lifelong passion.

In January, Maureen Dunn's services to drama and the performing arts over many decades were recognised when she received an MBE in Her Majesty the Queen's New Year Honours.

Maureen, 79, is a parishioner of the Church of the Ascension, Cloughfern. She is honorary secretary of the Newtownabbey-based Theatre 3, and is also vice chairperson and honorary secretary of the Association of Ulster Drama Festivals. She has been secretary of Newtownabbey Drama Festival for more than 30 years.

Her love of theatre grew from that first visit with her younger brother to the Grand Opera House, Maureen having won two tickets in an art competition in 'The Schoolfriend' to see 'Cinderella,' starring Des O'Connor as Buttons.

"As soon as the curtain went up, I was just amazed by the whole spectacle and the beauty of it all," Maureen recalled. "I thought, I would love to be on that stage, and in 1986 that dream came true when I played Theresa in 'Remembrance' by Graham Reid at the Opera House with Theatre 3 in the finals of the Association of Ulster Drama Festivals."



Maureen Dunn MBE.

This was two years after she joined Theatre 3 - in the early days, Maureen was an actor and later artistic director. Her leading roles included playing Mrs Venables in 'Suddenly Last Summer' by Tennessee Williams, Evie in 'The Gingerbread Woman' by Neil Simon, Mrs Birling in 'An Inspector Calls' by JB Priestly, and Mother Miriam Ruth in 'Agnes of God' by John Pielmeier.

The group represented Northern Ireland in UK and All-Ireland finals with plays such as 'The Rats' by Agatha Christie, 'Plaza Suite' by Neil Simon, 'The Dumb Waiter' by Harold Pinter, 'Something Unspoken' by Tennessee Williams, and, most recently,



Maureen Dunn performing in Hugh Lennox's play 'Roman Fever.'

'Bench at the Edge' by Luigi Januzzi, which represented Northern Ireland in Harrogate in 2019.

As a mature student, Maureen gained a 2:1 BA Hons Degree in Theatre Studies and Anglo-Irish Literature from the University of Ulster in 1997. In 2006, she established a Youth Drama Workshop for 8 to 18-year-olds in Ballyearl Arts Centre.

Outside of the pandemic, each year Theatre 3 does one full-length play which is entered into competitions, a touring summer theatre show, and a one-act play for the autumn festivals.

Maureen has travelled all over with the theatre group. "There is competition, but I meet so many nice people," she said.

While drama and theatre are her passion, Maureen is a qualified dental nurse, and prior to retirement had careers as both a dental nurse and as a secretary.

Maureen has been a member of Cloughfern Parish since the age of 14, and she and her husband Norman were married in the Church of the Ascension. They have four children.

She founded the parish drama association, The Ascension Players, 20 years ago, offering parishioners the opportunity to take to the stage and raise funds for the church while doing so.

News that she was to be awarded an MBE had come as a big surprise, Maureen said. "I am totally delighted and feel very honoured as I represent a brilliant organisation, and everybody who goes out and acts or directs deserves an award because they are all amazing," she said.

Maureen is looking forward to a visit to Buckingham Palace to collect her MBE in the coming months.

Black Santa Appeal raises £150,000

The 2021 Black Santa appeal at Belfast Cathedral raised £150,000 to support charities across Northern Ireland.

These included charities working with those with mental health issues, the homeless, medical research, and those caring for children, youth and the elderly. There was a special focus on charities working directly with refugee communities in Northern Ireland and on groups supporting people with a disability. A proportion of the money raised is also given to Christian Aid.

The 45th Black Santa Sit-out began on December 13 and continued until Christmas Eve. On different days, Dean Forde was kept company by clergy and canons of the Cathedral and the Bishops of Connor and Down and



Belfast's Lord Mayor Kate Nicholl takes a Black Santa selfie!

Dromore. The appeal also had practical support from the firm PwC.

Dean Forde said: "The £150,000 total exceeded my expectations in a year of restricted footfall, and when many of the Cathedral's major events had been cancelled because of the Covid restrictions."

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Cover photo:

Families across the diocese donned their wellies to get outdoors and learn about Creation at a number of Muddy Church events. See page 8.


Picture: June Admiraal on 'Unsplash.'




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

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Your presence will bless your parish



There is nothing like being together, is there? That's something we have learned the hard way over the last couple of years!

We've been glad of the technology, be it phone, Zoom calls or church services shared over the Internet, to give us some opportunity of keeping in touch, but there's no substitute for being physically present with one another. When we are together, our level of meeting, of connecting, is so much deeper and more meaningful.

When God wanted to share his most powerful message of love and salvation with his people, he did so by coming amongst us physically in the person of his Son, Jesus. In Christ, God was made flesh and demonstrated his commitment and the depth of his love for us.

As the church of Jesus Christ, we can never really be all that we are meant to be if we are not together in worship, fellowship and service. As the restrictions we have endured over the last couple of years are being lifted, may I encourage you and your families to re-engage with the life of your parish as fully as you can? We'll all still be considerate and careful of one another as we learn to live with Covid-19, but the body of Christ needs every member playing our part! Your parish will be enriched and blessed by your presence and participation.

Once again, in the pages of this magazine you will find examples of the way in which people and parishes in Connor Diocese are living and serving together. I hope that as you read its pages, you will be informed and inspired as we get to know more about each other. Do use the articles that you read to spur you on to pray for the people and parishes you are reading about.

On a personal note, I have been enjoying the opportunities I've had to meet with many of you in your parish churches over the last few months and I'm looking forward to many more of those occasions.

I'm hoping some of you will be able to share in my Installation Services which are planned in Lisburn Cathedral and St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, over the next few weeks. The service in Lisburn on February 20 will have a particular youth focus and then, on March 13, St Anne's will host a larger gathering of clergy and lay people from across the diocese. Do pray that these will be meaningful occasions that help to build our witness together in Connor.

Yours ever,

+George

Commissioning of Diocesan Readers



Peter Kirch and Michael Ogilby were commissioned as Connor Diocesan Readers by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, at a service in St John's, Ballyclare, on January 23. Pictured are, from left: The Rev Peter Jones, Warden of Readers; Peter Kirch; Bishop George; Michael Ogilby; and the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, rector of Ballynure and Ballyeaston.



At the Muckamore Parish Development Association Hub in Ballycraigy are, from left: Paula Kelly, administration; James Moore, treasurer; Nichola Jenkins, interim youth worker; Kim Dunne, family support co-ordinator; and Daniel Carlisle, youth sports development officer.

An 'oasis of hope' in Ballycraigy Estate

The history of Ballycraigy estate, the largest housing estate in Muckamore Parish, is inextricably linked to the fate of British Enkalon, a synthetic fibre company that came to Antrim in 1962.

The estate provided housing for Enkalon workers. Many were young Church of Ireland families who brought new life to Muckamore Parish. For the next 20 years the area prospered, before the factory closed down overnight in 1982 with devastating consequences.

Some former employees left the area in search of work, while families fleeing the Troubles in Belfast were rehoused in estates like Ballycraigy. Many ended up on benefits, and despite ongoing support for communities and businesses from the Enkalon Foundation, the legacy of that factory closure remains. Statistics show that Ballycraigy is in the top 10 per cent of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland, with educational under-achievement, higher than normal crime and disorder incidents, lower incomes and higher levels of health and disability issues.

Muckamore Parish has had a long-term lease on a site in the heart of the Ballycraigy estate since 1977. In the early years, it housed a hall and small church, but these eventually became so vandalised they were removed for safety reasons. The site remained derelict until four years ago, when the Muckamore Parish Development Association (MPDA) embarked on a renewal programme.

This not-for-profit association was set up in



Enjoying pizza at the Community Hub.

2008 to lead outreach in the area, source funding, and work with statutory bodies and other charities to bring help to families in need. Initially, MPDA used Ballycraigy Primary School and local council community centre to run a mums and tots group, an afterschool club, senior citizens' club and a children's summer scheme.

Now MPDA has moved into purpose-built premises on its original site in Ballycraigy, with this new Community Hub providing a place for families to meet and avail of training, advice and other support.

Andrew Stewart has been Chairman of MPDA since 2016. "The Trustees

embraced my dream of turning the Ballycraigy site into an 'oasis of hope,' where everyone coming to our Hub would leave refreshed," he explained.

"We prepared a business plan which indicated that we would need a budget of £170,000 to clean up the site and put a new building in place."

The building was to contain a café-style meeting area, a training room, and a one-to-one consultancy room. It was also to be as vandal-proof as possible.

The group then lobbied to promote its vision for the site and the impact it could have in the area. A survey outlining its plans circulated in Ballycraigy received an 'overwhelmingly positive response.'

Sourcing the funding had been a challenge, Andrew admitted. "Initially, we were turned down by most funders, but we listened to the feedback received and adjusted our applications accordingly."

Eventually, the £170,000 was secured, with the key funders being the Church of Ireland Priorities Fund; the Church's Orphans and Children Society, the White Mountain Fund; the Enkalon Foundation; and Antrim and Newtownabbey Council.

Because of Covid-19 restrictions, it was not possible to hold a formal opening of the new Community Hub. Instead, it opened its doors quietly in September 2021 to small groups of families.

Andrew said that one of the key elements in the success of the project over the past three years was the appointment of someone who really knew the Ballycraigy estate - family support worker Kim Dunne, who has links to the estate and knows the difficulties facing local families.

"Kim has made the breakthrough that we were looking for and has so far improved the wellbeing of up to 70 families and around 100 children," Andrew said.

Kim's area of interest is childhood adversity and in particular how community support can improve the health and life outcomes of children who have had adverse childhood experiences. "These can include parental mental health issues, drug and alcohol misuse and poverty," said Kim. "If a child experiences four or more of these adversities, they are at significant risk of severe mental health issues, poor educational attainment and early death."

She said that Northern Ireland has the highest rate of childhood mental illness in the UK, and the transgenerational effect of the Troubles is an underlying factor.

"It can be difficult to get some of the

families to engage with community support,” she said. “Patience and care must be taken in order to build relationships. However, research has shown that families that are open to community support show improvements in their life and health outcomes.”

This is where groups like MPDA can make a difference. “Adversity in the Ballycraigy area is high and always has been. Poverty is evident, educational attainment is lower than average and there are high levels of mental health difficulties,” Kim said.

“Within vulnerable families on the estate, transgenerational adversity is clear. These families cannot escape the cycle and it is these people that need carefully targeted support to help them improve their life and health outcomes.”

Kim has built on the association’s earlier work, organising larger seasonal events to bring the community together, as well as smaller family support groups, like the Family Drop-In. MPDA runs events to encourage children and parents to play together, strengthening relationships and building resilience, and the association has developed working relationships with local support organisations including Parenting NI, Sure Start, Home Start, and the Antrim Foodbank.

“The greatest achievement of our organisation is that we have gained the trust of local families and built strong relationships with them,” said Kim. “We are different to other local support organisations because we offer a wraparound support service to the whole community. We don’t stop supporting families because the children reach a certain age or they’re out of catchment, and the security of this knowledge has helped us build community support.”

Kim added that knowing the association was there for families had been particularly important during the pandemic lockdowns, when MPDA delivered food packs to those in need, applied for grants to purchase fresh food vouchers in the local shop, and provided activity packs for children. Social media and online Zoom sessions ensured that family support services continued.

“However, the most important thing for the families was our visits,” said Kim. “We didn’t just knock the door, leave the packs or vouchers and walk away, we stayed and



After-school fun at Muckamore Parish Development Association Community Hub in Ballycraigy.

talked to them at a social distance. The families needed someone to talk to and this was our priority.”

Further funding from Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, BBC Children in Need and the Government Dormant Fund means the project will be sustainable in the long term.

“The lives of the families we support will never be easy, but they now know they are not isolated, and they have support to help them to cope with the adversities they face,” Kim said. “If we can touch the lives of even a few families who are experiencing difficulties, and offer support

that enables them to build strong relationships, improve their life choices and ultimately break the transgenerational cycle so that they can offer

their children opportunities for academic achievement, improved mental health and a resilient nature, then MPDA’s support will have been invaluable.”

At the end of 2021, MPDA employed three part-time staff, with a fourth in training. Working alongside Kim are administrator Paula Kelly; sports youth worker Daniel Carlisle, and interim youth worker Nichola Jenkins.

Kim said many volunteers from within the community are keen to help out. “This is a team,” she emphasised. “Local people have taken ownership of the Hub. They see it as theirs.”

Looking to the future, the association is planning to have the Community Hub recognised by the Open College Network

(OCN) so it can deliver accredited courses. It also plans to organise a programme for older people and establish an environmentally-friendly gardening group to attract wildlife and enhance the appearance of the neighbourhood.

We called into the Community Hub in Ballycraigy on a Thursday afternoon to find it bustling with children enjoying the fun and games offered at the after-school clubs. These have proved so popular, the group is also using the nearby community centre hall to accommodate all the children wanting to join in the multi-sports led by sports youth worker Daniel. There was also dinner for the kids.

“Physical health leads to better mental health,” said Daniel. “They are active, having fun and learning team skills. This gets them away from screens and opens up pathways into local sports clubs.”

Keeping a watchful eye on the wee ones, Kim commented: “There is a real community feel here. On a weekly basis we work with around 100 children through our different programmes.”

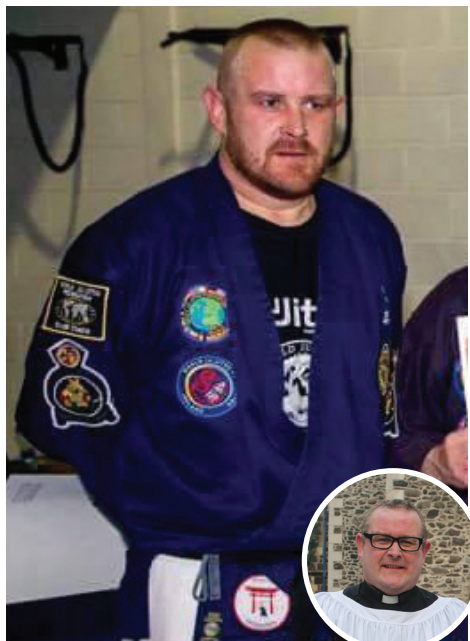
Association treasurer James Moore had also stopped by. “This building is an indication to others that we are serious about what we do,” he said.

Andrew is delighted with the impact the MPDA team is having in the area. “Their smiling, radiant faces epitomise my vision for the centre as an oasis of hope, where people come with their worries and problems and leave refreshed,” he said.

In recognition of what MPDA is achieving, Antrim and Newtownabbey Council has entered the association in the annual All-Ireland ‘Pride of Place’ competition in the 2,000 to 5,000 community size category. The results will be known in mid-February.

‘If we can touch the lives of even a few families who are experiencing difficulties... then MPDA’s support will have been invaluable’

Ju Jitsu coach Glenn is a 2nd Dan Black Belt



Glenn in Ju Jitsu mode and, inset, during his ordination as an OLM deacon last year.

Glenn Thompson is a 2nd Dan Black Belt in Ju Jitsu and a qualified coach for the World Ju Jitsu Federation in Ireland. He is also an OLM deacon in Kilmakee Parish.

He took up the sport in 2008, after watching his young son and daughter train and compete in their gradings. "Seeing the discipline and ability of all the young people was great and I wondered, can an old dog be taught new tricks? So I took the plunge," Glenn says.

He trained at various local clubs. "I was fortunate to take part in grappling and groundwork competitions for Ireland and Europe with the Federation. I also trained and competed with students from Italy, Russia, the USA and Israel."

Training four times a week, Glenn got his 2nd Dan Black Belt in 2015. "For the Black Belt grading, it was essential to remember all previous belts' techniques and Katas, as well as facing off against other students in full contact," he explains. "During the belts I trained with weapons including a Jo staff, a Bo staff, Tonfa, Sai, and for Black Belt we had to learn the Katana Kata with a Samurai sword."

Basic Japanese is also needed for each grading, and Glenn was quizzed on terminology along with basic anatomy. After gaining the Black Belt, he was awarded the title of Sensei (Teacher).

Having acquired his coach's badges through the World Ju Jitsu Federation,

Glenn could coach in any country which had federation clubs. "I had a two-year course to complete containing both academic and practical modules," he says. "I was first awarded the role of an assistant coach under the supervision of a full coach and then finally my full coach's badge."

He gets a lot out of Ju Jitsu. "I have always enjoyed the fellowship - I have had the same training partners for nearly 10 years and have made some very good friends," he says. "The self-discipline and keeping the mind focused has helped me along my own spiritual journey, and obviously the fitness needed to compete has helped me stay fit and healthy."

"Coming away after a two-hour class of being kicked, punched, and thrown about the mats, I always tended to forget any stress rather quickly! The fact that I was constantly learning new things really kept me motivated. My Senseis have always been fantastic in motivating and getting the best from people."

Glenn has sustained dislocated shoulders 'on a few occasions,' and has broken 'a finger or two' along the way, as well as sprains and strains, but says that's all part and parcel of a contact sport. "Like they say, no pain no gain," he laughs.

He was involved in Ju Jitsu before he became a Christian. "Through my own journey, I have to say that for a Christian, any martial art should be taken from a sports/self-defence only perspective," he says. "A lot of martial arts have other religious elements to them, and as I was on my own Christian walk, I made sure to keep my eyes focused on Jesus."

"As a clergyman, it has helped me stay self-disciplined, self-reflective, sociable, fit, and kept my mental health in a good condition. If I transfer these to my spiritual walk, then I can apply these to Bible study, pastoral work and my own reflections and meditations. I would say Ju Jitsu can certainly help clergy - or anyone."

He adds that it is a great sport for young people. "My own children have got to a high level," he says. "Ju Jitsu brings self-discipline and a routine hard to find in day-to-day life. It also brings any young person self-worth when they are shown exactly what they are capable of. Fitness and mental health levels for any young person are extremely important and Ju Jitsu is excellent for keeping both healthy."

Christopher St John is rector of St Nicholas', Carrickfergus. He has a PhD and a number of Master's degrees. He also has Black Belts in no less than eight different martial arts!

Chris took up Judo aged 13 after he and a friend were 'picked on' by a group of boys. "I enrolled not really knowing what I was letting myself in for," Chris recalls. "I quickly got the bug and began to train several times a week. When I was 17, I won the Northern Ireland Junior Championships."

In his early 20s, Chris coached the Police Judo Club. "I also began studying Aikido, made famous by Stephen Segal. It focuses mainly wrist and armlocks," he explains. "The mixture of Judo and Aikido was the basis of the martial art of Taiho Ju Jitsu. This is used by the Japanese Police and in the 1980s and 1990s was used by many British Police services."

"I set up the first club in Northern Ireland to teach this martial art, which also involved the study of weapons techniques. One of my training partners was a Ju Jitsu coach and I began to develop my striking skills."

"I have a preference towards grappling over striking, and was interested in Russian techniques that found their way into the Judo repertoire, so began to compete in Russian Sambo (Sombo) Wrestling - their national sport. I competed in various wrestling styles from around the world, as well as freestyle and Greco Roman."

Chris set up the NI Sambo Federation, and before Covid-19, Northern Ireland hosted the President's Cup Sambo tournament two years running in Ballymena. "We attracted top fighters from around the world. Northern Ireland came third, a wonderful achievement," Chris says.

His own achievements in martial arts are also impressive. In Ju Jitsu, he was awarded a 6th Dan in 2016 by the International Budo Federation. He holds 5th Dan grades in Taihojutsu and Kobudo (Japanese weapons), a 4th Dan in Judo with the British Judo Association and he hopes to grade to 5th Dan this summer.

Chris also has a 3rd Dan Black Belt in Aikido, a second degree Black Belt in Combat Sambo, a Black Belt in Sambo wrestling, and a black belt in Kurash wrestling (the National sport of Uzbekistan).

Motivation is a key to reaching these levels, Chris says. "You need to turn up to training whether you feel like it or not. Grappling is all about managing shifting weight and using your body effectively. Techniques need to be drilled relentlessly to acquire

Two clergy who shine at martial arts

Chris has Black Belts in eight disciplines!

muscle memory. Timing is important, as is establishing a rhythm. It's a bit like dancing.

Although he no longer competes on the national stage, in the past Chris won Gold at the IBF Dutch Sambo in Dalfsen. He was second in the British Sambo and winner of the British Sambo Masters. He has also competed at the World Masters Judo Championships in the US. "I had a fair bit of success at national level, winning the Police Wrestling championships for both freestyle and Greco on several occasions. I was the first ever PSNI Sportsperson of the Year," he adds.

Of all the martial arts, Sambo Wrestling, which he describes as a mix of Judo and wrestling, is Chris's preferred discipline. "It is due to be in the next Olympics, so it is an exciting time for the sport," he says. "Many of my favourite techniques are now prohibited in Judo but they can still be practised in Sambo.

"Over the years I have broken both wrists, separated leg bones and broken several toes. My worst injury was when I detached my pectoral, deltoid and bicep muscles. I had to go to England for the repair operation and the few days after were agony. I only have 50 per cent strength in my left arm, but I am grateful to be able to have full use of that arm once more."

Is there any incongruity in a Christian clergyman practising martial arts? "The term martial arts can be misleading," Chris comments. "Martial techniques are those which have been taught to the military, there is nothing particularly artistic about these techniques."

"I am fascinated with the different wrestling styles around the world, and it is a tremendous way of exploring different cultures. There is a beauty about the interplay of circular and linear movements involved in grappling systems. The execution of techniques definitely involves artistry, of which mastery is sought.

"I am aware that some people are attracted to the spiritual or esoteric aspects of some fighting systems, and are drawn to martial arts for that purpose. Nowadays, many activities can have quasi-spiritual aspects, such as the practice of Zen Golf or Zen swimming. The Olympics were originally

held in honour of Zeus and so athletic activities could be criticised for their origin.

"Grappling itself is concerned with using strength, skills and ability to overcome and gain victory over an opponent. Where two competitors have trained hard and have similar skill levels, it really does become a matter of strategy, rather like chess.

"Trying to unbalance an opponent or achieve a submission in a competition has no clandestine aspect to it. Children love to grapple in a safe way, and adults can gain enjoyment from participating in martial arts without ever entering competition."

Chris continues: "I believe that wrestling was endorsed biblically in Genesis 32: 22-32. Jacob's tenacity in his wrestling match served as a pivotal point for him progressing on to the next stage of his leadership ministry. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:12: 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.'

"Understanding the dynamics of physical encounter through wrestling, grappling and struggling shows we should not expect spiritual warfare to be short-lived. Retaining our equilibrium with God is vital no matter what the opposition throws at us."

Covid-19 meant that for Chris, group training was not possible. "During lockdown, I practised karate Katas and weapon techniques on my own, but I much prefer responding to the reactions of others," Chris said. "Fortunately my son Karl, who has Black Belts in several martial arts, is happy to get some practice with me so it was handy having him in my bubble.

"Starting back, I am aware of just how rusty I now am. It is good to look at techniques with fresh eyes and there is a general sense of enthusiasm concerning training together again."

Chris is hoping to start a children's Judo club in St Nicholas' Church Hall. "In some churches, Judo has been a great way of making missional inroads in the local community and providing positive role models for young people. Hopefully this will be possible in the future," he says.



The Rev Chris St John and his son Karl demonstrate some martial art moves.



Children on the Creation trail at the diocesan Muddy Church event in Ballintoy.

Families 'muck in' to celebrate Creation

It was a case of the muckier the better at Muddy Church events held in a number of Connor parishes, including the aptly named Muckamore Parish, as well as Ballintoy and Ahoghill and Portglenone!

Organised by All Aboard - Connor Children's Ministry and the grouped Parishes of Ballintoy and Dunseverick, a diocesan Muddy Church event took place at Ballintoy Rectory on September 26.

Throughout the rectory grounds and walled garden, various stations were set up where families could reflect on questions about Creation and enjoy activities which helped them to explore these questions further.

Families had the opportunity to take part in different craft activities, pond fishing,

and touching and smelling vegetables and plants. There was also a petting farm and a puppet show.

More than 60 people attended, some from the local area and others who had travelled from as far away as Belfast. On arrival, everyone received a goody bag which included an all-important ticket for a free ice-cream on the completion of the trail!

Diocesan Children's Ministry Development Officer Victoria Jackson said: "The atmosphere was fantastic, with families

delighted to connect once again and, for some, to be at a church event for the first time since March 2020.

"The weather forecast for the afternoon was very ominous and the marquees we tried to erect were doing their very best to make their way into the sea with the strong winds, but we were so thankful that the afternoon stayed dry just long enough for everyone to enjoy each of the activities!"

On October 17, St Jude's, Muckamore, organised a special family service and Muddy Church event to celebrate the return of the parish Sunday School, and lots of families leapt in.

The family service focused on Creation, and there was no shortage of fun, with the children acting out the story of Creation, action songs and a Creation-themed team quiz. After the service, everyone enjoyed the ice cream van before heading into the wooded playground area beside St Jude's for Muddy Church.

Families followed a trail, taking time to ask questions and wonder about God's Creation. The children hunted for pieces of a memory verse and then took part in canvas crafts and making 'leaf hedgehogs.'

The folk in the Parish of Ahoghill and Portglenone also donned their wellies on October 17, hosting a Harvest Picnic, with Muddy Church for the kids. Held at Portglenone Forest Park, more than 100 people enjoyed food and fellowship together.



Exploring Creation in Ballintoy.



Fun outdoors in Muckamore.



More than 100 people joined in the family picnic and Muddy Church in Ahoghill and Portglenone.



Dr Jeni McAughey (centre) and other Christian Aid Ireland activists who took part in the People's March at COP26 in Glasgow. Back row, from left: The Rev Cheryl Meban from Lisburn, Stephen Trew from Lurgan, Helen Newell from Belfast and Darren Vermaak from Dublin. Photo: Kelvin Boyes/Press Eye.

Still a long way to go in wake of COP26

By Jeni McAughey

After the fires, floods and other extreme weather events we have experienced over the past few years, we can no longer bury our heads in the sand about climate change.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change left us in no doubt about climate change and the fact that we as humans have caused it. In their report last August, they stated: "It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred."

The report continued: "The scale of recent changes across the climate system as a whole - and the present state of many aspects of the climate system - are unprecedented over many centuries to many thousands of years."

We are feeling some of these effects of climate change, but those in developing countries are suffering much more. Weather patterns are unpredictable, with both droughts and floods being more common. Sea levels are rising, threatening those who live on islands and close to the sea. Those who have contributed least to climate change are suffering the most.

To try to avoid the worst and irreversible effects of climate change, the COP26 conference held in Glasgow last November set an aim of keeping the rise in temperature to 1.5 degrees above pre-



The Christian Aid campaigners on the march in Glasgow.

industrial levels. Current pledges will result in a rise of 2.4 degrees. We need to reduce carbon emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 if we are to reach the target of 1.5 degrees. A rise of 2.4 degrees will result in more extreme weather events, rising sea levels and an increase in climate refugees.

Christian Aid Ireland organised a small group to go to the People's March on November 6, and I was delighted to be asked to join this.

We went to add our voices to the demands that businesses and governments act now to make the necessary changes to reach the 1.5 degree target. We wanted to speak on behalf of the many in developing



Women and children wading through flood water in Fangak County, Jonglei State, South Sudan, where floods are contributing to a major hunger crisis. Photo: African Development Aid (ADA)/Christian Aid.

countries who could not travel to Glasgow and whose voices are not heard.

An estimated 100,000 people marched from Kelvingrove to Glasgow Green that day, as well as many on similar marches in cities and towns across the UK and the rest of the world.

Policy makers can be in no doubt that people want them to act - and act now - with real change and not just words. The organisers estimated that there were 10,000 in the faith block in Glasgow, from Jesuits to Quakers. It was inspiring to see so many united in demanding that action happens now.

So COP26 ended with an agreement that is flawed, but shows there has been some compromise and some important commitments. However, there is still a long way to go to ensure that the words and promises are translated into action.

Our Government has talked about the need for reducing carbon, but continues to approve new oil and coal exploration. Climate finance for developing countries is already falling far short of what has been promised; Christian Aid has estimated that the financial effect of climate change could amount to a fifth of GDP for some poorer countries. So, we need to keep asking our Government to act and act decisively and urgently.

We can all play our part too and this is part of our Christian commitment. We can reduce our impact by driving and flying less and walking or cycling more, by reducing our meat and dairy consumption and eating a more plant-based diet and by reducing our dependence on 'stuff.' Then we have the moral right to ask our Government to act too.

Dr Jeni McAughey is a retired GP and parishioner of Whitehead and Islandmagee

A warm welcome for all nations



Hudson Kaunda and Carson Bell in the foyer of Belvoir Parish Church where All Nations Ministries repair bicycles to provide migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, with a means of transport.

An upside-down bicycle and a couple of toolboxes, their contents scattered across a dust sheet, are not what you would usually expect to see in the foyer of a church.

But the presence of a bicycle repair workshop at Belvoir Parish is evidence of the commitment of this parish - and others across Connor and Down and Dromore dioceses - to support the vital work of All Nations Ministries (ANM).

The rain is falling hard outside and volunteer Carson Bell downs his tools to join Hudson Kaunda, a Methodist preacher and Trustee of ANM, to talk about the charity's work with refugees and asylum seekers across Belfast.

Hudson is originally from Malawi, but came

to Belfast to study and didn't leave. He shares something of the background to ANM. "It started out as the African Christian Fellowship, and provided fellowship and friendship to African students at Queen's University, the University of Ulster and Belfast Bible College," Hudson explains. "But we found there were also students joining us from other nations and other faiths, so we changed the name to All Nations Ministries.

"We have a Christian ethos, but do not discriminate against any religion - we have many Muslim refugees and asylum

seekers because of the wars in Iraq and Sudan. ANM also includes local people - our name says we are accommodative of everybody."

He continues: "We seek to help the integration of migrants in local communities. Sometimes, when migrants and asylum seekers come here, they stay in their own small corner. They may live in Belfast but have never even visited Carrickfergus."

ANM encourages integration by organising support, activities and information seminars, with much of this hosted by local churches. Belvoir Parish Church is a hub for events. Welcome Days are normally held at St Katharine's Parish Church, Fortwilliam, in Connor Diocese, and at these, the focus is on cultural awareness.

A key activity is the collection and distribution of donated furniture and other household items including plates, saucepans, clothing, Bibles and bikes to new arrivals. These items are stored in St Katharine's before they find a new home. "When refugees and asylum seekers come to live here, they don't know where to go for essential items," says Hudson.

All Nations Ministries works closely with the PSNI North Belfast, and together the two organisations host Open Days at which ANM teams up with PSNI staff to talk about crime and, in particular, hate crime, prevention and reporting. Cultural differences are also referenced, with a talk - and sometimes a walk - around the different areas of the city.

"Sometimes there are problems between migrants and local people, and often there is a cultural aspect to this and the PSNI engage us to help," Hudson explains. "A number of our team members speak Arabic, and will visit the family. Cultural and language differences can make resolving issues very difficult, but we can help with minor issues, and the PSNI depends on us for that. Our team really understands the migrants. Sometimes, we engage with local people as well."

The ANM team is made up entirely of volunteers, who Hudson explains are motivated by the words of Jesus: 'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' (Matthew 25: 35, 36).



All Nations Ministries in action - clockwise from top left: A young refugee team takes part in a football tournament; new refugees visit the furniture store at St Katharine's Parish Church, Belfast; dinner with PSNI and church leaders on October 11; celebrating partnership with the PSNI.

The charity always needs volunteers to move things around. They now own two vehicles, which are a great help! "We raised funds to buy a minibus from the Mission to Seafarers by washing cars and bag packing in supermarkets," Hudson says. "We also bought an old school bus with the seats removed and we use that as a van - previously we just had a trailer to shift all the furniture."

Although they belong to different churches, members of ANM meet once a month at the Mission to Seafarers at Belfast Harbour for refreshments, fellowship and chat. They have organised outdoor picnics in places like Botanic Gardens and Hazelbank Park, and also run weekend breaks for young people.

"The children of refugees and asylum seekers don't get away on holidays. They hear their friends at school talking about their holidays, so we received funding from Belfast City Council and were able to take the young people away for weekends to places like the north coast and Newcastle YMCA," says Hudson.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, ANM delivered food to up to 250 homes. "Sometimes when the migrants arrive they get tinned and non-perishable food from the foodbank, but the foodbanks cannot provide fresh vegetables," Hudson explains. "We give them vouchers for supermarkets so they can go and buy fresh fruit and vegetables, and we also buy from FareShare which provides fresh food close to expiry dates."

He adds: "Refugees are permitted to work, but asylum seekers are not allowed to take on jobs. People find out about us mostly through word of mouth. Those we help tell their friends. We also signpost them to the appropriate government agencies."

The bicycle workshop currently operating in Belvoir Church was first established in premises in Newforge Lane, but when the lease there ended, it moved to Belvoir where there was more space, particularly as the main parish hall was not in use during lockdown.

Refugees and asylum seekers who have left their natural homelands are often keen to integrate with the local community - if they have the means. "We believe that having access to a bicycle will give them an ability to travel further distances to meet and interact with local people and community groups, services and amenities," Carson explains.

"The church team in Belvoir has recognised the benefit of having the bike repair shop here, as we have found it has helped us



Volunteers Hudson and Cameron deliver a refurbished bicycle to a delighted migrant family.

interact with the community on a number of occasions."

As part of this project, ANM has partnered with Sustrans to run workshops in bike maintenance and bicycle safety for the refugees and asylum seekers.

Carson is an engineer who took early retirement shortly before the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020. He had set up the bicycle workshop a few months before, and since retiring, has volunteered in the community, delivering food to people in need - working with the SOS bus, 4,000 meals cooked in the Belvoir Parish kitchen were delivered during the pandemic. "That was God's plan for my retirement!" he laughs.

"You don't always get to see the happiness you bring, but it is wonderful to witness the joy on a child's face when you deliver a bicycle to them, or to a young person who is having to walk to school or to work."

ANM also organises social events - PSNI North Belfast donated 19 guitars, and guitar lessons are run from the ANM office in York Street. English language classes and classes to help refugees and asylum seekers with the theory part of the driving test are also offered. "We do a lot of things, all in response to the needs of the people. We help to build their skills," Hudson says.

A special event was held at Belvoir Parish

Church on October 11 to celebrate the partnership with PSNI North Belfast. This included a dinner, stalls featuring arts and crafts by refugees and asylum seekers, music and dances from around the world, acrobatics and more.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, PSNI Chief Constable Simon Byrne and other faith leaders were among the guests. People from 23 different nationalities were represented on the night.

The charity would love to hear from other churches in the Belfast area who would like to support its work by making a donation, volunteering to help move furniture, helping with funding applications, or delivering food or bicycles. ANM is also on the lookout for a permanent home.

"Our biggest need is a place of our own," says Hudson. "We keep praying, so far our needs have been met. When we bought the van and minibus, we didn't have the resources, but we prayed and we were able to get them."

If you are interested in getting involved with the work of All Nations Ministries, or are a refugee or asylum seeker and would like to avail of the support the charity offers, please email anm@gmail.com or visit the Facebook page www.facebook.com/allnationsministries.



Rebekah Devlin pictured in Salisbury Cathedral.

'An outstanding performance'

Sixteen-year-old Rebekah Devlin, a parishioner of All Saints', Belfast, was a finalist in the prestigious BBC Songs of Praise and Radio 2 'Young Chorister of the Year' competition 2021.

She sang 'He will hold me fast,' by Matt Merker and arranged by Jonathan Rea from New Irish Arts, in the semi-final, and in the final, her rendition of 'Midwinter' (Bob Chilcott) earned her high praise from the adjudicators.

A sixth form student at Strathearn School, Rebekah is a singing pupil of Jenny Bourke.

The competition, presented by Aled Jones, was recorded in Salisbury Cathedral, with adjudicators being composer Howard Goodall; vocal coach David Grant; and renowned soprano Lesley Garrett.

Commenting on Rebekah's performance in the final of the competition, Lesley Garrett told her she was 'a spellbinding story teller.' David Grant said it had been 'really beautiful.' "There is an obvious power to your voice and obvious clarity, and yet when you came to that last note, it was almost tremulous." He added that it had been 'an outstanding performance.'

Rebekah sings regularly with All Saints' Church, and is a member of the Belfast Philharmonic Youth Chamber Choir, the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland and the Belfast School of Performing Arts. She also sings with her school's Chamber Choir. Her mum Tricia has been Musical Director at All Saints' for 30 years.

"I was quite nervous about the competition," Rebekah said. "I had Covid not long before, so I didn't even know if I would be able to go until a few days before because I still had a bit of a cough."

Tricia said the opportunity to sing on national television in this competition was a 'privilege and honour' for Rebekah. "It is a great opportunity to show her talent and her gifts," she said.

Advent Panto Trail across the diocese

Their faces said it all! The children - and adults - who came along to a series of Advent Panto Trails in Connor Diocese in the weeks leading up to Christmas had an awesome time!

The colourful seasonal events were put together by Connor Children's Council and Church Army with the help of Play It By Ear drama company, and a total of six Advent Trails were rolled out across the diocese.

The creative talents of Victoria Jackson, Diocesan Children's Ministry Development Officer, and Church Army Evangelist Karen Webb brought the story of the first Christmas to life, with really engaging dramas from Chris and Ross from Play It By Ear.

The Christmas Panto Trail began with a performance of the Nativity Story from Play It By Ear, and in true panto fashion, featured a panto dame and young Buttons, along with a host of other panto and nativity characters.

The children, parents and grandparents, in small groups in accordance with Covid-19 guidelines, followed the performance through different stations in each church or parish hall before sitting down for arts, crafts and refreshments - including hot chocolate!

Families then enjoyed a Christingle Service, led by puppets, and had the opportunity to make their own Christingle to take home.

Victoria extended a big thank you to the



volunteers in the six parishes who had made the Nativity Panto Trail possible and to all of the families who came along and joined in the fun!

The Advent Panto Trails were held in St Patrick's, Ballymena; St Patrick's, Whitehead; Drummaul Parish Church, Randalstown; All Saints', Antrim; Derryvolgie Parish and Lisburn Cathedral.



All set for panto action. From left: Ross Jonas from Play It By Ear; Karen Webb, Church Army; Victoria Jackson, Connor Children's Ministry Development Officer; and Chris Neilands, Play It By Ear.

Youth ministry resources

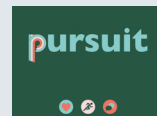
Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie has highlighted two new resources to support leaders in their ministry with young people.

The Jesus Sessions, developed by Christina along with Ava Jordan-Curasi (Youth and Children's



Ministry Coordinator, Banbridge Parish) and Tim Burns (Diocesan Youth Officer in Down and Dromore), is an eight-session guide which gives a foundation to look at the life and ministry of Jesus. Themes include fullness of life, Jesus' justice and generosity.

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.



For further information, contact Christina at christinabaillie@connordiocese.org.

Be Yourself?

The Church of Ireland Evangelical Fellowship is hosting a Zoom conference, with guest speaker Graham Tomlin, Bishop of Kensington, on March 23.

The topic is 'Be Yourself?' Bishop Graham has written widely on this subject. The event begins at 7.30pm on March 23. Register at [Hello@cief.church](mailto>Hello@cief.church).

Glencairn celebrates

On St Andrew's Day, November 30, St Andrew's, Glencairn, celebrated 50 years of ministry within the community. The preacher was the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, and in attendance were the Rev Philip Agnew from the Methodist Church, along with those who have ministered in the church both past and present.

Connect Base moves to Whiterock

Connect Base, Connor's North Belfast Centre of Mission, relocated to St Columba's, Whiterock, at the end of January as it had outgrown the space at the Spectrum Centre, Shankill Road.

Baby Basics and all other programmes will operate from Whiterock as normal. Contact number is 07545 207480.



June Butler, All-Ireland President of Mothers' Union, far right, with the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison; the Archdeacon of Connor, the Ven Dr Stephen McBride; and local MU members who turned out to support June's third Connor '21 in 21' fundraising walk in Muckamore.

MU fundraising walk

June Butler, All-Ireland President of Mothers' Union (MU), completed her third and last fundraising challenge in Connor Diocese when she walked from St Jude's, Muckamore, to All Saints', Antrim, on October 13.

Irene Gates, Connor MU Diocesan Secretary, had planned the route which started on the shady Shakey Bridge River walk and followed the Mill Race Trail, before crossing to the Lough Shore, with the homeward stretch beside the Six Mile Water into Antrim Castle Gardens. The walkers finished at All Saints' Church, where a short service was held.

June was accompanied on the 7.8km walk by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, the Archdeacon of Connor, the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, and members of local MU branches.

Other members, including former All-Ireland President Paddy Wallace, a parishioner of All Saints', and Connor Diocesan President Sally Cotter, were at St Jude's to send the walkers on their way.

Because MU fundraising at branch level was suspended due to the pandemic, June set herself the challenge to walk 21 kilometres, made up of three legs of 7km, in each of the 12 Church of Ireland dioceses in Ireland, and sought sponsorship from MU members and members of the public.

Before setting out, June said that after this Connor walk she would have only three walks remaining. "I have enjoyed every moment except when I was soaked to the skin in Phoenix Park, Dublin, and one of the walks in the Diocese of Tuam, when I ended up on a slurry path," June said.

"It has been a joy and delight to have met with members before each walk, and to have people walking with me."

Before the walkers set off from St Jude's, Diocesan President Sally shared a brief

reflection and prayers.

June's first walk in Connor was in Belfast on April 13, from Stranmillis to St Anne's Cathedral, and her second walk, from Holy Trinity Parish Church, Portrush, to Agherton Parish Church, Portstewart, took place on April 26.

All monies raised by the '21 in 21' walks will go to the 'Mums in May' fund to provide support for MU projects in Ireland and overseas.

Antrim Enrolment Service

On January 16, All Saints', Antrim, held its Mothers' Union enrolment service at which new office bearers and committee were enrolled.

The vicar, Archdeacon Stephen McBride, also made presentations to the six ladies who have been branch leaders in his time as vicar.

The ladies are Jennifer Campbell, Sheila Thompson, Sylvia Smyth, Sylvia Barton, Paddy Wallace and Helen McBride.



Archdeacon Stephen McBride with, from left: Jennifer Campbell, Sheila Thompson, Sylvia Smyth, Sylvia Barton, Paddy Wallace and Helen McBride.



The Rev Dr Pat Mollan.

A heart for healing

We meet the Rev Dr Pat Mollan from The Church's Ministry of Healing - The Mount

The view from number 162 Knockbreda Road is pretty amazing. The city of Belfast rolls away from its front door, the famous cranes of Harland and Wolff glinting in the sun, other landmarks clearly visible.

The Rev Dr Pat Mollan, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Ministry with The Church's Ministry of Healing - the Mount, points to church spires rising from the landscape, identifying each by name.

The Ministry, which is open to people of all faiths and none, was established in the 1960s and is based in Belfast and Dublin. It became a limited company in 2009 and moved to Knockbreda Road in 2012.

Pat grew up next door to St Patrick's, Jordanstown, and was very involved in the life of the parish. "I had a real love for the church, it was a big part of my life," she says.

Pat's father died when she was 16, and she moved to Knock when she was 20. She met her future husband, Rab, when studying at Belfast Royal Academy. Pat went on to Queen's University to do a degree in Chemistry, followed by a PhD. "I was the only woman to graduate in 1970 with a PhD in Chemistry," she recalls.

"I taught in Annadale Grammar School. That was a shock! I can still remember the difficult boys - there was not a lot of harm in them. It was a challenge but I enjoyed it. Every time I am in a school or a chemistry

lab I sense an aroma that makes me feel like I am home again - and I am not talking about the stinky chemicals!"

Pat taught for two years, stopping when her first child was born. She planned to go back to work, but having four babies in the space of 'four years, six months and one day' put paid to that. Rab worked as a Professor of Orthopaedics. "I enjoyed being mummy," Pat adds. "I never returned to a school again, but I teach in all I do, I believe it is one of my gifts."

ORDINATION

Pat's journey to ordination began with an advert in 'The Church of Ireland Gazette.' 'Would you like help finding a greater understanding of God's work and world and finding where your spiritual gifts lie?' the advert stated. Placed by Belfast Bible College, it invited women who were available on Monday mornings 'for the next three years' to study with other 'like-minded women.'

Pat applied successfully for a place on the Women's Study Fellowship. "I said I would speak at meetings, even though I had no interest in doing so. I was scared," she admits. "When I was asked to propose

a vote of thanks at a flower club, I fled! Years spent at home with the children had caused me to lose confidence, so I couldn't do speaking events!"

But, encouraged by her family, Pat was soon confidently speaking at meetings, sharing testimony, giving book reviews. She eventually found herself contemplating ordination.

ENCOURAGED

"Driving home one evening, I was asked had I thought about ministry in the Church of Ireland. I was in my mid-40s at the time and thought that was stupid. But when I got home I was visibly upset, and Rab asked what was so bad. I told him I had been thinking about ministry. He didn't think it was daft and encouraged me to step forward."

Six months later, Rab revealed he was going to follow Pat down the ordination path and they started training together.

"I had always a desire to learn New Testament Greek," reveals Pat. "I enrolled for a Batchelor of Divinity at Queen's, to be taught at Belfast Bible College, at the same time as attending college in Dublin on a monthly basis.

"The course also entailed learning Hebrew. I was quite involved in the MU and noticed how people would smile wryly at the idea of someone from the MU doing a course like that. But I got a First Class Honours. It was a journey of exploration, a certificate of discipline, and oh did I have to study!"

Two of her four children were still living at home. "There were meals to be cooked, shopping and housework to be done. I lived a crazy life," she laughs.

The degree required Pat to do a field term. In the first year she served in Knockagoney and in her second year she spent eight weeks at a Bible College in Uganda. "It was a real time of learning. I was living in villages with rats and spiders and things I don't like," she recalls.

"I was truly on my own. I was put on a bus on a Thursday and returned to the college on a Tuesday when I had a couple of days to relax and do my washing.

"But I really learnt from God. Everywhere I went, I was required to speak. I didn't realise how dangerous it was at the time. Three weeks after I left, a tribe came over the border from Zaire and slaughtered people in some of the places I had been."

Pat had other daunting experiences in mission. In Sudan she contracted viral encephalitis. "I nearly died," she states.

Pat and Rab were ordained deacons together in 1996. She served in the Parishes of Aghalee, Glencraig and the Lecale Group, and was later a curate at Down Cathedral.

"I felt underused. I could have done more," she says. "I read a book, 'Would you like to be extravagantly blessed by God' - the prayer of Jabez says we as Christians should be praying that God would extend our boundaries. When the Ministry of Healing job came up, people started telling me that I should go for it.

"Like Gideon, I laid down the fleece, and after 10 days wrote my application. At interview, I was asked why I wanted the job. I said I didn't want it at all, but that people kept telling me I should apply, so I had been praying about it and it just wouldn't go away!"

Pat was offered the position and took up her new role on April 1 2004.

"I absolutely love it," she says, enthusiasm shining in her eyes even after 17 years! "You can see God's hand working it. I love that when you step forward in fear and trepidation, God meets you at that point of need and you see how he works in such amazing ways."

MOVE

When Pat started, the Church's Ministry of Healing was located at The Mount, Albertbridge Road. But the house was beginning to 'fall apart' and with the changes in disability legislation, a move was necessary. The building's valuation, however, was not going to be sufficient to finance new, more suitable premises.

Then something 'amazing' happened. "A woman came in and shared her faith journey with me and I listened," Pat recalls. "When she asked what she owed, I told her she didn't owe anything. Then she wrote a cheque for £1,000, which she gift aided. I was in a state of shock. I realised that God will bring people - he can do that."

The Healing Ministry moved to its new premises in Knockbreda in 2012.

In the early days, Pat was sent on a tutors' listening course in England, and during this course had a moving encounter with a former soldier who had served in Northern Ireland. At the end of the week, she observed: "He had been 'healed by his own prayer of forgiveness of those who had destroyed him."

"I believe we live in a society with so much unforgiveness. Forgiveness is the key to opening God's healing for us," Pat adds.

She recalls other experiences of seeing

healing in action. On a trip to Saul, she was approached after the service by a woman with a bad scar on her arm. "I wondered why she hadn't asked for prayer before the service, but I touched her bandage and asked that God heal her and astound the doctors. That was in September. When I saw her again in December, she pushed up her sleeve and her arm was healed."

Pat speaks of another lady who came asking for prayers for healing for arthritis, but said she did not have time to stay for the service. "I felt a lack of generosity in my prayer, but asked God to touch her and heal her. Three months later, there was no sign of her arthritis," Pat says. "I think it was God telling me 'you can do it!' You have to ask. There is no formula, no proper way to do it, just ask."

The Ministry of Healing holds weekly healing services in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, at 1pm each Friday, and monthly services in Down Cathedral. There are

services at 10am on the first and third Tuesdays of the month in the Chapel at 162 Knockbreda Road.

The Ministry also offers counselling, spiritual accompaniment, teaching courses, and quiet days and retreats. It gives talks to organisations and churches. The beautiful garden, created and maintained by Rab, offers an outdoor retreat, a space for reflection on the outskirts of the city.

The house has a chapel, quiet rooms, space to pray and to read and reflect. Its services are financed by regular giving and a few grants, but the Ministry is not supported by Central Church.

Pat is now 77, and she and Rab remain undaunted by the regular journeys from their home in Downpatrick to their office in Belfast. "I love my work, it gives me such a thrill," she says.

You can learn more about all the services offered at www.cmh-themount.org.

Board presentations to Organ Scholars



Pictured following the Organ Scholarship Service are, from left: Gerald Hill (Board member), Michael McCracken (tutor), Lady Brenda Sheil (Board member), Victoria Irwin, Canon John Auchmuty (Chairman of the Board), Callum Whiteside, the Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor (preacher), Rebekah Wilson, Canon David Humphries (Honorary Secretary of the Board), Caroline McCartney, Dean Stephen Forde and Dr Joe McKee (tutor).

The Down, Dromore & Connor Organ Scholarship Choral Evensong was held in Belfast Cathedral on September 19.

The service was conducted by Dean Stephen Forde, recently appointed to the Board of Management. Lessons were read by the Rev Canon David Humphries, Honorary Secretary, and Dr Judith Harper, Board member. Bishop George Davison was the preacher.

Dean Forde and Chancellor John Auchmuty, Chairman of the Board, presented certificates to scholars who had completed the three-year course, Chancellor Auchmuty congratulating them for demonstrating great commitment and resilience during the pandemic.

He thanked the tutors Dr Joe McKee, St Columba's, Knock; Michael McCracken, Down Cathedral; and the Rev Dr Ian Mills, now in England, for their teaching and ongoing support to each of the scholars.

Organ Scholars who received certificates are: Caroline McCartney, St Columba's, Knock (now in Durham Cathedral); Callum Whiteside, St Mark's, Ballysillan; Rebekah Wilson, BMus, Knockbreda Parish; Victoria Irwin, St John's, Whitehouse; Jack McCabe, Killinchy and Kilmoody (awarded Junior Organ Scholarship, Queen's College Cambridge); Glenn English, Magherally Parish, Banbridge.

Due to the pandemic, no year-one scholars were selected, but the work for those already on the scheme will continue. They are David Dunlop, All Saints', Belfast; Clare Kelly, ALCM, St Patrick's, Jordanstown; Sean Turner, St Patrick's, Ballymoney; Tanya Zachara, St Mark's, Dundela; Larissa Fleck, St Patrick's, Armoyle; Dr Mark McKinty, St Cedma's, Larne; Hannah Shaw, St Cedma's, Larne; and Grace Steed, St Mark's, Dundela.

(Angela Kerr)

Rathcoole looks to the past and

There's plenty going on in the Parish of Rathcoole, near the shores of Belfast Lough.

The parish is unique in that it was the first in the Church of Ireland to be planned entirely within the confines of a modern housing estate. The church was consecrated on December 1 1956 and is dedicated to St Comgall, who was born in nearby Magheramorne. Due to its unusual architectural design - the parish hall is on the ground floor and the church on the first floor - the church is a grade two listed building. Originally linked with Carnmoney, Rathcoole became a separate parish in 1962.

The current priest-in-charge is the Rev Arlene Moore. The pandemic proved a challenging time for Rathcoole, as it did for all churches, but when the go-ahead to reopen activities was sounded, St Comgall's was ready to hit the road running!

On Ash Wednesday in February last year, with the UK still in the throes of lockdown, Rathcoole Parish began Lent with an online service of Penitence and Lament. This was as a local response to the national mother and baby homes inquiry, which involved the Church of Ireland through Bethany Home in Zion Parish in Rathgar, Dublin.

Arlene explained: "The rector in Zion Parish, the Rev Steven Farrell, had concluded an online service of worship was a necessary and helpful addition to formal written statements issued by our denominational leaders. We in Rathcoole adopted (and adapted) their liturgy as a way of showing our solidarity with that parish/home and committing ourselves to penitence, prayer and action."

BAPTISM

Arlene said that as part of that service in Zion, parish baptism registers were placed on the Holy Table as they contained the names of many of the children from Bethany Home.

"While to my knowledge no one, clergy or lay, from Rathcoole Parish or community has anyone belonging to them who were in any way connected to the mother and baby homes, we also placed our baptismal registers on the Holy Table as a symbol of our commitment to pray for and to reach out to all mothers and children, and especially single parent families and those in any kind of need or distress within our



Stationery boxes packed and ready for use by the young people and leaders in the various organisations in St Comgall's, Rathcoole.

community," she said. "We also committed ourselves to practical action in this regard when the lockdowns ended."

This promise was enacted at Rathcoole's Harvest Service in October, when parishioners responded to an appeal for items to make up the bundles given out to families in need by Baby Basics Belfast.

"As well as the usual harvest fruit and flowers, the sanctuary was filled with Moses baskets, rocking cradles, knitted/crocheted pram blankets, nappies, wipes and all sorts of baby toiletries and supplies," Arlene said. "Victoria Jackson, Connor Children's Ministry Development Officer, was our guest speaker and agreed to deliver them to Baby Basics.

"We were later delighted to hear our donations helped towards Baby Basics issuing their 1,000th bundle. Victoria also led the congregation in an action song and engaging all-age talk based on the parable of the Sower. We trust many good seeds of further commitment and action in relation to supporting families in crisis were planted at that service and will bear a harvest in due course," Arlene said.

YOUTH AND CHILDREN

In preparation for the return of youth and children's activities, and in keeping with its Covid-safe policy, the parish issued each child and leader in the various youth and children's organisations with their own personal tub of stationery resources for use in activities.

Arlene expressed thanks to Engage Connor Youth for a grant towards the cost of this, and the members of St Comgall's Select Vestry who picked up the bulk of the tub.

Each individually-labelled tub contains coloured pencils, felt tips, crayons, glue, pencil case with a ruler, pencil, pen, rubber, sharpener, child-friendly scissors, sticking tape and a packet of sweets! Each child and leader also has an individualised popper wallet to store any worksheets or colouring-in pages.

The tubs and their contents are kept on site to be available for use each week and sanitised after use.

Arlene added: "A child-friendly walkthrough video was also prepared to welcome back all our youth and children's organisations and to introduce them to the procedures we have in place in line with our Covid policy and risk assessments.

"Clergy, parish readers and organisation leaders alike had fun putting this video together, with the help of several puppet friends dressed and ready to go in their different organisation uniforms."

CLIMATE SUNDAY

The parish marked Climate Sunday with a special service, followed by tree and seed planting on October 17. Guest preacher at the service was the Rev Dr Ron Elsdon, who gave an address using his extensive knowledge to highlight the issues affecting the world.

the future

During the service, the congregation was led in a commitment to care for the environment and to take personal responsibility for effecting positive change; and prayers were said for the COP26 conference held in Glasgow.

Afterwards, members of the congregation gathered outside to put their worship and commitment into immediate action. The parish had permission to remove a dead sapling tree from the grounds and, in accordance with Church of Ireland policy, two trees were to be planted in its place.

Arlene thanked Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council for its help in sourcing the trees. A pear tree was dedicated in memory of all those who had died in the parish and community during the coronavirus pandemic, and those who could only have restricted funerals. The tree was planted by Dr Elsdon.

An apple tree, obtained from the Woodland Trust, was also planted as part of Her Majesty the Queen's Green Canopy Initiative to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee in 2022. This was planted by Alan Jones, rector's glebewarden.

Arlene said: "We were delighted to discover that the apple tree was already bearing some beautiful fruit on arrival and of course we pray that not only the trees but the parish and community will bloom and bear much fruit to God's glory in the future too."

As part of the Climate Sunday activities, two children representing Kidz Church also scattered some Remembrance-themed seeds, including poppy, cornflower, ox eye daisy, pansy and forget me nots, as well as bee and butterfly-friendly wildflower seeds in a special flowerbed, as the congregation prayed for its responsibility to steward God's gifts and pass this responsibility on to children and future generations.

REMEMBRANCE

St Comgall's as a parish did not exist during the World Wars, and so there is no inscribed memorial plaque in the church. On Remembrance Sunday 2021, the parish sought to personalise remembrance and to honour the memory of relations of all who call St Comgall's their spiritual home.

Arlene said the response had been excellent. "For the Fallen of The Great War, we printed out Commonwealth War Grave Commission Certificates which



Stones of Remembrance painted by Robert Keown

were framed, and displayed all around the church. Likewise, the lists of all names were framed and set up beside the font," she explained.

"Members of the congregation were encouraged to pause for a moment of quiet individual remembrance and to lay down their own poppies as they left the church. During the service, we read out the names of all those who fought and died as well as those who served and survived."

That evening, the parish held its usual annual service of music, prayers, Scripture readings and reflection for all those who have lost loved ones naturally rather than through war/conflict.

"People seem to appreciate having a tangible way of expressing their grief and recording their remembering and so each year I include a creative interactive element to this service," Arlene said. "During the pandemic, many people took to painting stones or inscribing them with their heartfelt thoughts, a personal note or a

verse of Scripture before laying them up as memorials. This seemed to me to be a natural activity to offer this year."

INSPIRATIONAL

During lockdown in July 2020, Arlene conducted the funeral of Adelle Keown, who died aged 18 of leukaemia. "Adelle was an inspirational young lady and had participated as one of the riders in the 2019 BBC 'Children in Need' Rickshaw Challenge, raising millions for charity and featuring on both national and local TV," Arlene said.

Adelle's family has continued to support many charitable causes in various ways to keep Adelle's memory alive, including their own charity 'Adelle's Legacy of Love.' Her father, Robert, is a gifted artist who, after her death, painted stones as thank you gifts and as a way of remembering Adelle.

"Inspired by this and the many painted stones which have been laid around various sites in Northern Ireland to remember the experience of the coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns, I thought it would be a nice idea to create a border surround for the tree we planted in memory of all loved ones, and especially of those who had died during the pandemic and of Covid-19," Arlene said.

Robert willingly painted some stones. As part of the lost loved ones service, congregation members were invited to select a stone and add the name of their loved one or a personal thought.

The stones were later varnished and prepared for securing on a specially-made surround. "Names of all those in the funeral register will be inscribed on other stones and added, as well as those from any future funerals.

"We will remember them all indeed," said Arlene.



The Rev Arlene Moore and the Rev Dr Ron Elsdon look on as Alan Jones, rector's glebewarden, plants the apple tree on Climate Sunday in Rathcoole.

'Transforming Lives for Good' in Lisburn

A 'Transforming Lives for Good' project is now up and running in Lisburn, with Lisburn Cathedral and Christ Church Parish teaming up to become a centre for the area.



Coordinator Donna Meenagh and deputy coordinator, the Rev Derek Harrington, said: "It has been a passion of a few to have this valuable resource available to the schools in Lisburn with the help of passionate volunteers.

"We are currently in two schools in the area with seven coaches who are dedicated to spending one hour a week, one-on-one with a young person identified by the school as a child who would benefit from early intervention, whether it be for social, emotional or mental health needs."

The project started officially in November, with five weeks of coaching before the Christmas break. "Our focus has been having fun and building rapport," the coordinators said.

"Having resumed in the second week of January, our plan is to have a focused project/interest alongside some 'me time' where each coach helps set goals to equip their child with tools in order to be of benefit to them in areas of identified need.

"Please do pray for our TLG centres across Northern Ireland, that God would continue to raise up coaches with a heart for children and young people who are struggling to get alongside them to help bring positive change into their lives."

'Lord, For the Years' Flower Festival

If you are planning a spring outing, Christ Church, Castlerock, Diocese of Derry and Raphoe, is hosting a Flower Festival from May 27-29.

Entitled 'Lord, for the Years,' the festival's artistic director is Alan Beatty, assisted by James Burnside. Festival times are Friday May 27 10am-7pm (opening service at 11am); Saturday May 28 10am-7pm; and Sunday May 29 2pm-6pm (closing service at 7pm). Refreshments will be available. For group bookings, contact Debbie Moore on 07751 542013 or email debbiemore573@aol.com.



NI Fire and Rescue firefighters from Glengormley Fire Station with the Rev Andy Heber and members of the team which organises the Carnmoney Community Fellowship Club, pictured at the November meeting.

Carmmoney Community Fellowship Club Tackling loneliness

A group set up just a couple of months before the pandemic hit has resumed its monthly activities, offering an escape from loneliness and isolation to people of all ages in the Carnmoney area.

Carmmoney Community Fellowship Club restarted last October. It is open to anyone in the community, with parishioners making up around half the members.

The vicar of Carnmoney, the Rev Andy Heber, explains: "We set up the club to help with isolation. A lot of people in the area are very lonely. There is still a nervousness among older, more vulnerable, members of the parish to return to Sunday services in person, but many are keen to get out."

The club provides transport to and from the parish hall for anyone who needs it.

The initiative has the backing of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Community Relations Forum. Kathy Wolff, community relations officer with the forum, said: "We are trying to build up relationships between churches and community groups. This fellowship club is a genuinely pleasant place. It offers friendship and addresses loneliness. It is a lot of fun and there is always something different for members to enjoy."

In October, the special guest was parishioner Helen Eccles, who read some of her monologues, and the members tried glass painting. At the November get-together, there was a quiz, a team challenge, and a talk by representatives of Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue.

The December meeting took the form of a Christmas dinner attended by more than 50 people, with music from Louis Small.

Paying a visit to the November meeting, we found a parish hall ringing with good humoured laughter. Members were seated in socially distanced manner around tables pouring over a quiz.



The team challenge at Carnmoney Fellowship Club's November meeting was a serious business!

It was Louise Sherlock's first visit to the fellowship club. A parishioner of St Brigid's, Mallusk, Louise says: "I get out to a day centre on a Monday, but the rest of the time I am on my own. I have carers come in because I had a stroke a couple of years ago. I cannot walk without a rollator, so the club gave me a lift down. I am always looking for company."

Margaret McConnell belongs to Carnmoney Parish. "I have had treatment for cancer and when the lockdown came I had no immune system, so I had to stay at home," she says. "I have good neighbours, but it does get lonely in the house."

Elsie Ashby says she enjoys the company and having something to look forward to. She encouraged Patricia McKenna to come along too. "This is the first time I have been back since lockdown and I come for the social interaction," Patricia says. "The last two years were okay, but you have to make the effort to get out, especially when you live alone."

Carmmoney Community Fellowship Club meets in the parish hall on the second Wednesday of each month, and new members are welcome.

The Ven Jack Patterson

The Ven Jack Patterson kept 'the simple truth that Christ died for you' at the heart and centre of his life, the Rev Malcolm Ferry told mourners at Jack's Funeral Service on November 20.

The former Archdeacon of Dalriada died on November 15, aged 82.

Referring to two readings Jack had specially chosen for the occasion, Malcolm, rector of Agherton Parish where the service was held, said: "They are not some carefully sought out obscure passage from a hidden prophet or some verse filled with theological wordplay. Rather they give us the simple yet profound words commonly used at funeral services to point us to hope and to the Redeemer of the World.

"Jack in his ministry remained determined that he should keep the main thing simple. And what do I mean by the main thing? - that at the heart and centre of your life is the simple truth that Christ died for you."

He said that Jack had witnessed over many years, as a faithful pastor to his people, that when religion becomes complicated, it is a sign that it is drifting away from the realities and centralities of faith.

"Jack had discovered that, even as he looked around at the world of nature, the beauty of the north coast and the little patch that was his parish, he could see the simplicity of God's design everywhere," Malcolm said. "In the Parish of Ballintoy and Dunseverick, where he gave his life's work - he saw how God built the year around four seasons. That simple pattern of four wasn't complicated and if it was good enough for the seasons it was good enough for Jack. To over-complicate things was a sign that it is departing from Christ."

Malcolm continued: "Jack looked for the relationship in ministry and as a pastor for his parish he excelled at that... Jack built and developed relationships with the people of God and through his easy style of ministry brought the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ as he led them forward and pointed them to God."

Malcolm told mourners that Jack was well read and up for debate.

"As a pastor of his people, Jack's easy style meant that those who found themselves under the pressures of daily living, busy and worried and anxious - Jack



Archdeacon Jack Patterson.

was there to listen and pray that those in need would be reminded that Christ was with them, and Christ is adequate. The beautiful simplicity that is a living relationship with Jesus."

He said Jack's family knew the sacrifices he made personally and that they had made as a family so that Jack could be the pastor he was.

Malcolm spoke of Jack's elevation to be a Chapter Canon in St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast and then to Archdeacon of Dalriada, positions which he said he held with distinction, although they were far from his first love of being a pastor.

"Thankfully, Jack laughed at himself at the lack of his 'managerial' skills but deep down the Church had a man of God where the simplicity of the Gospel was to the front," Malcolm said. He added that after retirement, Jack was charged with bringing ministry to the retired clergy families and again to keep and build relationships with the people of God."

Extending his sympathy to Jack's wife Frances and their family, Malcolm said: "Here again the pastor speaks and Jack does so in the words he chose from the Old Testament. Ecclesiastes Chapter Three we hear - 'To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and time to die; A time to weep, and time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.'

"Surely we hear, in those words, the simple and profound truth of life and death and then we hear echoing in our ears the words of Jesus himself: 'I am the way, the

truth, and the life: No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'

"The simple yet profound truth that we affirm today for ourselves in our lives. The same yardstick which John Norton Patterson lived in life and ministered in word and sacrament over his long and significant years ordained as priest and pastor. A truth that will bring comfort to each one of you in the loss of Jack."

Prior to the service, the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, paid this tribute to Archdeacon Patterson:-

"Jack Patterson's 40-year ministry in the Diocese of Connor, the greater part of which was spent in the parish of Ballintoy with Rathlin and Dunseverick, was a model of diligent pastoral ministry to a generation of people in Co Antrim.

"His faithful service in north Antrim was recognised with his appointment as Archdeacon of Dalriada during the final years of his active ministry.

"Jack continued to be a familiar figure to many as he lived out his retirement in Dunseverick. He will be greatly missed by many in the diocese."

Sympathy is extended to Jack's wife Frances; children Mark, Fiona, Michael and Moira; his grandchildren; brother Jim and sister-in-law Rosemary; and the wider family circle.



'Butterflies of Hope'

The railings of St Michael's and St Stephen's churches, Belfast, were bursting with colour in the form of a 'Butterflies of Hope' display in the lead-up to Christmas.

These were created by Malvern Primary School, Small Wonders Nursery, St Stephen's Sunday School, St Michael's Afterschool Clubs, residents of Hemsworth Court and clients in Shankill Day Centre.

Heather Carson, parish development officer, said: "The butterflies are a bright and beautiful reminder in difficult times that there is always hope in Jesus."

Connor Takes the Castle 2022



It was cold and mucky, but young people from across Connor Diocese had a fantastic experience when they visited Escarmouche Action Park at Shane's Castle, Antrim, on January 15.

The event was organised by Christina Baillie, Diocesan Youth Officer, and Connor Youth Council in place of the annual residential in Castlewellan Castle which had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Christina was determined that the Connor Takes the Castle event should still be based in a castle, and the Escarmouche Action Park proved the perfect venue. Groups of young people came from All Saints', Antrim; St Michael's, Belfast; Drummaul; the United Parish of Ballynure and Ballyeaston; St Columba's, Derryvolgie; St Nicholas', Carrickfergus, and Lisburn Cathedral.

Activities included laser tag, an assault course, tug of war and Connect 4 basketball. There were chips and hot drinks for lunch.

Christina said: "It was fantastic to see so many parishes come together for this event. In particular, I loved seeing connections being made between young people and leaders, and everyone having fun!"

"The young people were fantastic at the various activities and really challenged themselves. We were disappointed to cancel the residential weekend, but delighted that we could still get together in a safe way."

