

# CONNOR

connections

Singer  
Joanne  
Hogg  
shares her story  
*pages 16-17*



# Lisburn Cathedral celebrates 400 years

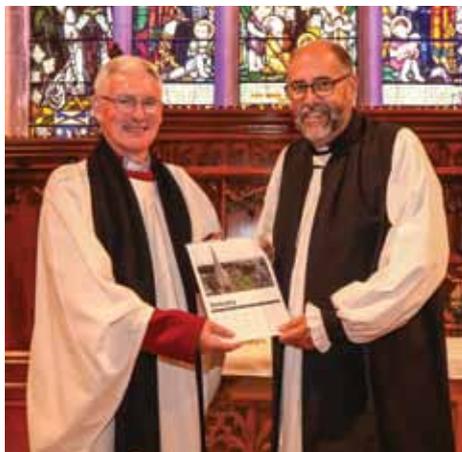
Lisburn Cathedral is set for a year of celebration in 2023, as it marks the 400th anniversary of worship on the cathedral site in the heart of the city.

The first church on the site was built by Sir Fulke Conway who, when he moved from England, constructed his castle in the park adjacent to what was then called St Thomas' Church, serving the castle family and staff and the small population of the immediate area.

Some 40 years later, Charles II established the church to be the Cathedral Church of Down and Connor, and later, Lisburn Cathedral was recognised as the Cathedral of the Diocese of Connor.

The original church was left in ruins after a rebel army attack on Lisburn in 1641. It was restored, but was destroyed by fire, as was most of the town, in 1707. Again the cathedral was rebuilt - the foundation stone was laid in 1708. The current Chancel was added in 1889.

The cathedral has connections with such historic events as the American War of Independence, the Siege of Delhi 1798, and the United Irishmen. Also, the Huguenot settlement in Ireland, the development of the linen industry and events following the killing of the Mayor of Cork and the subsequent murder in Lisburn of the senior police officer whose



The Rt Rev Sam Wright, Dean of Connor and rector of Christ Church Cathedral, Lisburn, presents a 400th anniversary calendar to the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison. Photo: Norman Briggs.

men were accused of that murder.

The first event in the year of celebration is '400 minutes of Prayer' on Saturday January 7, beginning at 9.30am. People can call in for both silent and led prayer.

A service to launch the 400th anniversary will be held on Sunday January 15, and will be attended by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, and other dignitaries.

On May 15, there will be a Gala Dinner, open to all, at a venue to be confirmed.

A celebration weekend will run from June 9-11, featuring a Friday night party, a 1623-themed afternoon tea on the Saturday, and a celebration service on the Sunday afternoon. Organisers are contacting former curates, vestry members, parishioners who have moved out of the area, and people who were married or confirmed in the cathedral over the last 30 years to invite them along.

Several themed open days are planned for July and August, along with a series of talks on the history of the cathedral.

A concert featuring New Irish Arts will take place on the last weekend in September, and a 400th anniversary closing service will be held before Christmas.

The cathedral is also considering ways of creating a permanent marker of this historic year, with ideas including a new Prayer Garden; a memorial in conjunction with Lisburn Museum, and cataloguing the contents of the cathedral's 'History Room' - currently in a disorganised state - to make the information freely available online.

As part of the celebrations, a 2023 calendar has been published. Images featured include an aerial view of the cathedral site, the old Huguenot graves in the churchyard, the refurbished interior (2012), Harvest, Remembrance, Easter outreach in the Hillhall Estate, the old cathedral gates (1925), hope in the face of Covid-19, and more.

Copies will be on sale at £4, with all funds raised being funnelled back into the cathedral.

Welcoming people to attend services and events as part of the year of celebration, the Dean of Connor and rector of Lisburn Cathedral, the Very Rev Sam Wright, said: "Over the past 400 years, through many times of trials and challenges, joy and celebrations, worship has been given to Almighty God on the site where Lisburn Cathedral sits today.

"Throughout this anniversary year, it is our desire to give thanks to God for his faithfulness and for the many generations of Christian people who have provided a faithful witness to the Gospel in Lisburn and beyond. At the same time, we look forward to and pray that worship, Christian teaching, prayer and outreach will continue and flourish into the future."

Anyone interested in attending these events or wanting to arrange a separate visit can make contact via the cathedral website ([lisburncathedral.org](http://lisburncathedral.org)) or Facebook.

## Ordination of four new OLM priests



Four new priests were ordained for the Ordained Local Ministry at a service in St Bartholomew's Parish Church, Stranmillis, on Sunday September 25. With the Bishop of Connor are, from left: The Rev Stephen Green, the Rev Peter McCausland, Bishop George Davison, the Rev Peter Meenagh and the Rev Glenn Thompson.

Autumn 2022

# Contents

Service for The Queen	4-5
Marvellous Molly!	6-7
A Connor honeymoon	8
Rosemary's Camino walk	9
Connor Diocesan Synod	10-11
Bishop Levi visits	12-13
News from Connect Base	14-15
Joanne Hogg interview	16-17
Stepping out together	18
Youth and children	19
Holy Land Pilgrimage	20

**Cover photo:** A

handshake between King Charles III and the Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor, following the Service of Reflection for the Life of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in Belfast Cathedral. Photo by Kelvin Boyes / Press Eye. See pages 4-5.



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

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## A faith-filled life of service



It came suddenly, didn't it? One day we were watching our Queen welcoming a new Prime Minister at Balmoral and then, just a couple of days later, we heard the news that she had died.

We were privileged in the Diocese of Connor to welcome King Charles and the Queen Consort to Belfast Cathedral for one of the National Services of Reflection in the days immediately following Her Majesty's death.

Many words have been written about Queen Elizabeth in the days since, many memories recalled and, indeed, many tears shed. Even those who didn't necessarily count themselves as royalists stopped to acknowledge the remarkable contribution that she made to the life of nation, Commonwealth and the wider world during a long and busy life. There is a palpable sense that with her death, we have lost someone special; but why is that? What was it about Queen Elizabeth that caused so many people to have such respect and admiration for her?

There are probably a whole host of answers to that question, but many people have spoken of her faithfulness, commitment and sense of duty to what she saw as her God-given calling as monarch. As we reflected on her life, we saw a commitment to fulfil the responsibilities that she had as Queen, to the very best of her ability, for the whole of her life.

There can be no doubt that she carried out her duties faithfully throughout her reign, in

the most difficult of circumstances, as well as the joyful times.

She spoke frequently of the faith that gave her the strength to carry out that task. Most publicly, she did so in her Christmas messages, but we saw it demonstrated too in her regular commitment to be at public worship in church. She told us all that her faith in Jesus Christ was something she depended on greatly to help her to live and serve us so well. And she kept up that faithful service literally to the end of her life!

I wonder what it would look like for each one of us to live a similarly faithful and faith-filled life of service? It will be different for each one of us according to our circumstances, but what a difference it would make to our world if each one of us set ourselves to follow Queen Elizabeth's example of dutiful service to God and others.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." 2 Timothy 4:7-8 (NIV).

Yours in Christ's service,

*+George*

## MU Annual Gathering services in St Anne's

More than 750 Mothers' Union members and friends from across the UK and Ireland attended the Annual Gathering held in Belfast on September 23 and 24.

Events began with two Services of Celebration in St Anne's Cathedral on the Friday at 4.30pm and 7pm, and the conference continued the following day in the Waterfront Hall, ending that evening with a concert featuring the Clare Chorale from Ballyclare.

The Services of Celebration were led by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, and the preacher was the Rt Rev Andrew Forster, Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, who stepped in as a late replacement for the Rt Rev Dr Emma



Carrying the banners are, left to right: Lynda Thompson (Down and Dromore); Alison Skillen (Connor); Jacqui Armstrong (All-Ireland banner) and Mavis Thompson (Down and Dromore).

Ineson, MU Central Chaplain. Music at the services was from the Kerygma Choir under Musical Director Lorna Palmer, with organist Neale Agnew.



Leaving St Anne's Cathedral after the Service of Reflection for the Life of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II are Sir Nigel Hamilton, Vice Lord Lieutenant for Belfast (far left); the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison; King Charles III; and Camilla, the Queen Consort. Photo by Kelvin Boyes / Press Eye.

# Reflecting on the life of our late Queen

Belfast Cathedral hosted a moving Service of Reflection for the Life of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on September 13, in the presence of King Charles III and the Queen Consort.

The 800 invited guests came from all backgrounds and faiths, from different political beliefs and from every strand of society, to stand together and reflect in quiet dignity on the life of the late Queen during the national period of mourning.

Yet, despite the solemnity of the occasion, there was also a sense of celebration as the new King paid his first visit to Belfast - and indeed Northern Ireland - as monarch.

In Writer's Square, opposite the cathedral, representatives of groups honoured with the patronage of the Queen had waited in the September sunshine for several hours to get a glimpse of the King and Queen Consort. They were rewarded with smiles and handshakes from the Royal couple.

Security was tight - the invited guests gathered near Hillsborough and were transported to the cathedral by bus. The normally busy Donegall Street and surrounding area was cordoned off and eerily silent. Elsewhere in the city, crowds lined the streets to catch a glimpse of the Royal convoy, arriving from Hillsborough

Castle where King Charles had earlier received an enthusiastic welcome.

On-the-ground preparations for this historic service had been ongoing since the announcement of the death of Queen Elizabeth on the previous Thursday evening. Brass had been polished, woodwork dusted, chairs positioned. The BBC had moved onsite, their equipment installed in such a way as to livestream the entire service unobtrusively.

As the Dean of Belfast is currently on medical leave, the honour of leading the service fell to the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, with the sermon delivered by the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev John McDowell.

## WELCOMED

The Royal couple were welcomed outside St Anne's by the Lord Lieutenant for the County Borough of Belfast, Dame Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle, who presented dignitaries, including the Lord Mayor of Belfast, the High Sheriff of Belfast, the

Chief Executive of Belfast City Council, and the Bishop of Connor.

Honoured guests already inside included British Prime Minister Liz Truss; Irish President Michael D Higgins; Taoiseach Micheál Martin; local politicians and leaders in public life.

As they entered the cathedral, Bishop George introduced the King and Queen Consort to faith and community leaders from across Northern Ireland. With each handshake, King Charles shared a warm smile and words of greeting. At 3pm, the Band of the Royal Irish Regiment struck up a trumpet fanfare heralding the commencement of the service. As His Majesty the King and the Queen Consort were escorted to the Royal seats, the Priory Singers, who formed the choir at this special service, sang the Introit 'Confortare' by Sir George Dyson.

Greeting guests, Bishop George said they had gathered to commemorate in word and prayer Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and to give thanks for all she had been as Queen and, as such, Head of State for the people of Northern Ireland.

The first reading, from Joshua 4, was by Eoin Millar, Northern Ireland Duke of Edinburgh Youth Ambassador, and the second from Philippians 4, by Alex Maskey, Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The choir sang the Psalm 'O Sing Unto the Lord a New Song' and later the anthem 'They Are All Gone Into The World of Light!'

as part of an Act of Commemoration which included the lighting of a candle, followed by a silence. The anthem was composed by the late Sir John Tavener, a personal friend of the King.

In his sermon, Archbishop John McDowell focused on the word ‘reconciliation,’ saying that of the many words used about the Queen and her long reign, it was the one most associated with Queen Elizabeth and Ireland, north and south.

### LOVE

Reconciliation, he said, requires the greatest of all religious virtues, love. “And who can doubt that the Holy Spirit of the God of Peace was present in the mind and in the heart of the late Queen, when she spoke her judicious and generous words, and walked the hard road of reconciliation, in this province and island,” the Archbishop said.

Concluding his sermon with words spoken by Mr Valiant for Truth in Bunyan’s ‘Pilgrim’s Progress,’ some of which the Queen herself used in her first Christmas televised broadcast in 1957, Archbishop McDowell said: “At her baptism Elizabeth Alexandra Mary was signed on her forehead with the sign of sacrifice; the Cross. And for 96 years, in a life which was a prodigy of steady endeavour, she offered herself, her soul and body, as a living sacrifice to the God who loves her with an everlasting love.”

Prayers were led by the Most Rev Eamon Martin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh; the Rt Rev Andrew Forster, Bishop of Derry and Raphoe and President of the Irish Council of Churches; the Rt Rev John Kirkpatrick, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church; and the Rev David Nixon, President of the Methodist Church.

The final hymn, ‘O Christ the same,’ was sung to the tune of the ‘Londonderry Air.’ The Church Leaders contributed to the ‘Celtic Blessing’ which closed the service, following the singing of the ‘National Anthem.’ For many of those present, it was the first time the repeated line in the anthem would be ‘God Save Our King.’

The organist was Jack Wilson; console assistant was Dr Paul Berry; and the choir was conducted and directed by Philip Bolton MBE.

Speaking after the service, Bishop George said it had all come together well. “There was a huge amount of effort on the part of the cathedral staff. The music was wonderful and everybody played their part superbly. It was something for us to look back on and be very thankful that we had the opportunity to be part of.”



The Bishop added that as he left the cathedral, King Charles had expressed his thanks for ‘a wonderful service,’ saying the first hymn, ‘Christ is Made the Sure Foundation,’ was one of his favourites, and describing the setting of the Psalm as ‘sublime.’

Lord Robin Eames, former Archbishop of Armagh, who was bestowed a rare Order of Merit by the Queen in 2007, was among the guests. He said: “It was so dignified and I felt spoke to us inside the cathedral and to so many people beyond these walls by its simplicity and its sincerity, and the address by the Primate was so appropriate and touched the right note on this occasion.”

### HONOUR

Anne Cromie, a parishioner of St Peter’s, Belfast, is a member of the Priory Singers. She recalled how the opportunity to sing at such an historic service came about. “It was a huge honour to be asked and everybody in the choir was very excited, but first, we had to master the music,” Anne said. “This was emailed to us on the Friday evening, with just four days to go!

“Singing for the King and Queen Consort and other assembled dignitaries was a privilege, of course, but for me it was more than that, it was a chance to express something of our sorrow at the death of a beloved monarch, and also to celebrate the elevation of her successor. And, given the importance of faith to both the late Queen and our new King, I hope we played our part well in a service of worship designed specifically to thank God for them and for the stability and continuity which the monarchy has given us in these

troubled times.”

Speaking in advance of the service, June Butler, All-Ireland President of Mothers’ Union, said it had been a great privilege to be invited. “I am really looking forward to being able to play in some way a tribute to her late Majesty who was Patron of Mothers’ Union,” she said.

Jacqueline Weir MBE, St Matthew’s, Shankill Road, and her friends from Girlguiding Ulster were among those groups invited to Writer’s Square. They had arrived three hours ahead of the service, and this paid dividends, as Jacqueline and her friends all got to shake hands with both the King and the Queen Consort. “We offered him our condolences and then wished him God’s richest blessings for the future,” Jacqueline said. “He commented that we were members of Girlguiding, and asked was it difficult to get volunteers these days. Before he moved on he said: ‘keep up the good work.’”

### HISTORIC

Sam Porter, head sexton at St Anne’s Cathedral, had spent many hours preparing for this historic service. He said every member of the cathedral team, as well as members of the Board, had played a part, as brass and glass were polished, floors cleaned, chairs positioned and television and security personnel accommodated. “There was a lot of pressure,” he admitted. “But now we can stand back and say we did it.”

Cathedral parishioners Verner McKinley, dean’s warden, and Terry Pateman, people’s warden, had an important role to play, leading King Charles and the Queen Consort up and down the aisle of St Anne’s. Both were very calm about their task. “It is a once in a lifetime event,” said Verner, just before the service got underway. “We will be walking very carefully!”

Karen Webb and Heather Gibson from Connor Diocese’s North Belfast Centre of Mission had been invited to the service. Heather commented: “It is a great privilege to be here and be part of history in the making.”

Brenda Pateman, a parishioner of St Anne’s, said: “I think this service has brought so many people together.”

Former Connor Lay Secretary, Robert Kay, and his wife Carol said they had enjoyed the service, which Robert described as ‘straightforward and meaningful.’ Carol added: “It was absolutely perfect in every way. The music was beautiful and the atmosphere was brilliant.”



Mallusk parishioner Molly Grattan who organised a fundraising garden party in July.

# Molly opens her garden for charity

Mallusk parishioner Molly Grattan threw her beautiful garden open to the public for a day in July - raising almost £6,000 for medical research.

Molly, a sprightly 85-year-old, has had surgery for both breast and bowel cancer in recent years, and her husband Dennis was a Diocesan Lay Reader for almost 60 years, until his death in December last year.

Molly has hosted open gardens before, but on a much smaller scale than the event on July 23, which raised funds for Dementia Research and Cancer Research.

Molly says advances in medical research have greatly helped her family - as has a strong faith. Following her cancer surgeries, her most recent scan was clear. "None of us knows what the future holds, only the Lord knows," she says.

"Dennis took dementia around two and a half years before he died. He became forgetful, but he was still doing crosswords and taking services in church. When things accelerated he was taken into hospital, and when he came home we had carers in. My daughter Dawn gave up her job to help, and our son Gary was here too."

Molly's other daughter Denise, is profoundly handicapped. She lived at home until she was 47, but now lives in the Martin Residential Trust.

"They expected Denise to live to 18 months, and she is now 58," says Molly. "She had a malignant brain tumour at six months, and after surgery needed a lot of care. She did not speak until she was six, and once she started, she never stopped!"



Molly Grattan, kneeling beside her daughter Denise, along with son Gary Grattan, daughter Dawn and granddaughter Yazmin.

Molly smiles. "Music is her world, and she loves church music.

"Without research, how many of us would be here? Without research, there would have been no cure. Denise had radiotherapy and left hospital aged seven and a half months. We were petrified, but they held a healing service for her with laying on of hands and anointing of oil in St Mary's, Crumlin Road.

"I came out of that service feeling so much calmer. I felt God was telling me he was going to deal with this. We did not know what the future held. One aspect of divine

healing is accepting what is going to happen and having faith in God to get us through. Over all the years, I have never had any reason to doubt that."

Dennis had been a lay reader from the age of 27, and after moving to Monkstown, the family joined St Brigid's in the mid-1970s and became involved in supporting the Martin Residential Trust which had been established by the rector of St Brigid's, the late Rev Jim Martin MBE.

"It is a fabulous place in the car park of St Brigid's," Molly explains. "Denise moved into the home in 2011. We were not ready before then, but as time went on Dennis's mother needed more care - she lived to 101 - and we worried if something happened to us, and so we felt the time was right."

These personal experiences are what prompted Molly to arrange the garden party, and the idea blossomed.

"I was telling Sheelagh Greer, who is a teacher as well as a musician and composer, that I was thinking of organising a garden party to raise money for medical research," Molly says. She laughs. "You would think I had a big domain!"

"Sheelagh said she would bring her keyboard and play for me. That planted the idea of having music throughout the day to keep people interested."

The garden party ran from 10am until 8pm. "My granddaughter Yazmin Bowers was a tremendous help with the publicity and setting up a JustGiving site," says Molly. "The whole family was great. Gary helped with the gardening and John White, who has just retired as treasurer in church, was my right hand man with the finances.

"We had sandwiches, scones and traybakes, all donated, on china cake stands. During the day, we served 900 finger sandwiches! The weather was overcast and we had one heavy downpour, but the gazebos kept people dry."

As well as Sheelagh, visitors were entertained by a variety of musicians who gave their time freely.

"The Martin Trust made a colossal effort to bring their residents over that day," recalls Molly. "People were so helpful. St Brigid's is always behind us, whatever we do. One local man who delivers prescriptions gave out our flyers to every household in Twinburn. Bingham's in Ballyclare, where I get my flowers, donated food and plug plants for me to give to people."

By the end of August, Molly and her team had raised £5,840 which was shared between Dementia Research and Cancer

Research - specifically for research into bowel cancer.

"I think about how they were able to operate to help me and many other people," Molly says. "Without research, they would not have had the knowhow to do this. The more research that can be done, the more cures will be found."

Molly's love of gardening began when, as a four-year-old, she was evacuated from Belfast to Clogher in Co Tyrone in the wake of the Blitz. "We lived in a little house behind Clogher Deanery," she recalls. "It was springtime, and the garden was overflowing with shrubs and daffodils. I really thought it was paradise. We lived there for two years before going back to our street in Belfast, which had no garden."



Molly in her beautiful garden.

"When I married in 1957, I told Dennis a garden was more important to me than the house!"

When she moved into her present home, Molly ordered 100 trees from the Department of Agriculture. "They grew so big we had to take them all out. I have made lots of mistakes along the way, it has been some learning curve, but I don't recall a time when I haven't wanted to learn more about gardening," she says with a smile.

Last year, to Molly's great surprise, she won the Antrim and Newtownabbey Council Best Kept Garden 2021 and the Best Kept Garden in the District Electoral Area.

Molly continues to be active in the garden, doing all the waist level work and watering, while Gary looks after the borders. She gestures across the smooth lawn to the borders bursting with colour and shape. "It is my passion," she says.



## Deacon interns look to year ahead

At the Service of Ordination of deacon interns are, front row from left: The Rev Lee Boal, the Rev Gareth Campbell, the Rev Andrew Neill and Bishop George Davison. Back row, from left: The Rev Danielle McCullagh, Archdeacon Barry Forde; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Dean Sam Wright, Archdeacon Stephen McBride, Archdeacon Paul Dundas and the Rev Canon Kevin Graham. Photo by Norman Briggs.

Three new deacon interns were ordained by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, at a service held in Lisburn Cathedral on September 11.

The Rev Gareth Campbell was ordained for Derryvolgie Parish, the Rev Lee Boal for Mossley Parish and the Rev Andrew Neill for Agherton Parish.

A full-time youth worker, Gareth is married to Sarah and they have two children aged four and two. "I grew up in Glenavy Parish where we were blessed with leadership that invested heavily in our development and faith for many years," Gareth said.

"This will be quite a busy year, as along with a young family and my final year of study, I'll still be working full-time as a youth worker in the Killicomaine estate in Portadown.

"I am passionate about ministry in all forms, but to date, youth ministry has been my main focus. I studied for a degree in youth work with practical theology and later served in Drumglass Parish, Dungannon, Lisburn Cathedral and Armagh Diocese over the past 10 years.

"This year I am excited to bring my skill set to Derryvolgie and offer all I can, and in return hopefully learn lots too."

Lee Boal has been married to Beth for three years. Prior to ministry, he worked on the family farm near Crumlin.

"I have a lot to learn, so this year I'm looking forward to being formed into the person God would have me be to serve his Church faithfully," Lee said. "I'm looking forward to getting alongside the people of Mossley Parish and serving them and

encouraging them in their faith and to connecting with the local community to share the hope of Jesus with them."

Andrew Neill is married to Claire and they have two daughters. A former pupil of Banbridge Academy, Andrew read Law and Politics at Queen's University from 2006-2009, staying at the Church of Ireland Student Centre, now The Hub, where he met the team at the Church of Ireland Youth Department (CIYD).

After university, Andrew interned with CIYD's JUMP programme for a year at St Jude's Parish Church, Ormeau Road, Belfast, before moving to Glenavy Parish as Children and Families' Worker until 2018, when he joined the team at Scripture Union Northern Ireland, where he continues in his role as a Schools' Worker.

Andrew said he is looking forward to learning during his deacon internship under the leadership of the rector of Agherton, the Rev Malcolm Ferry. "Rev Ferry has a strong record in leading parishes in various contexts, seeing growth and innovating new and effective forms of ministry," Andrew said.

"I am also looking forward to serving the Parish of Agherton, connecting with the congregation and using the gifts and skills I have to further enhance the ministry in the parish. Finally, I am looking forward to seeing how God calls me forward in this year as I am tested and stretched in new and exciting ways."



Summer interns Kyleigh and Preston Vaughn with Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie.

# Interns enjoy their Connor honeymoon

A young couple from the USA opted to spend their 'sort of honeymoon' doing an internship in Connor Diocese with Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie over the summer.

Twenty-year-old Kyleigh Vaughn and her husband Preston, 21, married last March after a whirlwind 10-month romance - although they were best friends for a year before that - having met at Bible College where they are both half way through a four-year course in Christian Foundation.

This is Preston's second visit to Northern Ireland - he was a member of the Christ in Youth team which joined young people from Connor for Summer Madness and Streetreach in 2019. He had hoped to return with the Christ in Youth team in 2020, but the pandemic prevented that, and so he was delighted when Christina said yes to his request to do his internship for college in Connor Diocese, along with Kyleigh.

## VOLUNTEER

The couple arrived on May 30 and stayed in Northern Ireland until the end of July. As visa restrictions meant they could only volunteer for 30 days of their trip, their itinerary included some 'honeymoon' time.

They spent their first week recovering from jet lag and getting to know Belfast while staying at Belfast Bible College, their second week was spent relaxing in Bushmills and exploring the beautiful north

coast, and they joined the Rev Andy Heber and parishioners of Carnmoney for their third week.



American interns Kyleigh and Preston at Connor Diocesan Synod held in Belfast Cathedral in June.



Preston and Kyleigh with Amy Gibson at the Connor Summer Madness sub-camp.



Kyleigh hard at work during Streetreach in Mossley in July.

In Carnmoney, they got to know parishioners at a coffee morning, led a Wednesday Bible Study, and preached on the Sunday morning. They also attended Connor Diocesan Synod on the Thursday. They were accommodated by Rev Andy and also by a local family.

## KIND

"Everyone has been very kind, we have been well fed and well kept," said Kyleigh.

The couple joined the Connor sub-camp for the annual Summer Madness Festival in Portglenone from July 1-5, before heading to Mossley Parish with the young people for Connor Streetreach which ran from July 5-8, with the couple leading the morning devotionals at Streetreach.

Preston said Summer Madness had had a big impact on him during his first visit. "It was the best part of my last time here. I loved all the speakers, it just felt like a genuine spiritual experience," he said.

After the excitement of all that, the couple enjoyed a break in Fermanagh, and spent some time on the fairways of Northern Ireland, where Preston introduced Kyleigh to golf, a passion he inherited from his father.

They also spent time at the North Belfast Centre of Mission in Whiterock, sorting out clothes and other items donated to the Baby Basics project.

Kyleigh said: "It has been interesting being here for two months rather than just a week or two. We have had the space and time to be embraced and submersed in the culture of Northern Ireland."

# The Camino Frances - more than a walk

Dr Rosemary Black, a parishioner of St John's, Malone, walked the Camino Frances in Spain during July, raising £2,357 for South Belfast Foodbank. She shares her story.

## El Camino es La Meta - The way is the goal

Having suffered from arthritis and undergone a hip replacement six years ago, my Camino walk was both a personal challenge and a celebration of the fact that, due to my surgery, I could manage this.

I have been aware of the Camino walks for many years and thought it would be more than a walk, rather a spiritual destination. In July, I fulfilled the long-standing ambition and walked the Camino Frances from Sarria to Santiago de la Compostela in Galithia - a distance of 117km.

I walked with my daughter Lucy, as she is very fit but would understand if I had to take it slower. Lucy provided great encouragement and very useful Spanish when required.

I enjoy walking and did hill walking in my 20s. I was encouraged to walk after my hip replacement, but had never undertaken something like this over a short period.

I felt that the walk would also provide an opportunity to raise funds for the South Belfast Foodbank (SBFB) with whom I have volunteered for the past five years since retiring as a hospital doctor. Whilst we would all like a society where foodbanks are not required, they provide a lifeline to many during these difficult times.



Dr Rosemary Black outside Santiago Cathedral at the end of her Camino walk.

SBFB is part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by The Trussell Trust, working to combat poverty and hunger across the UK, and also helping signpost clients to other organisations.

The stretch of the Camino we walked was very beautiful - rolling hills and valleys,

woodlands and areas of eucalyptus, dairy farms, maize fields and little hamlets.

The verges were filled with wildflowers of scabious, foxglove, campion and mallow.

Whilst this sounds idyllic, I did find the long stretches walking on rough terrain up hills in 25c challenging both mentally and physically - it required walking poles most of the time, and it was important to stay hydrated. However, the encouragement of my daughter, friends, family, my own church and the SBFB foodbank volunteers back home spurred me on.

I enjoyed stopping at small churches along the way, although many were not open. Those that were provided a stamp for my pilgrim passport. It was easy to follow the route as it is well signposted.

Although there were many other walkers, at times you can be walking alone through the woodland and that in itself is quite moving. To think you are walking on the path that pilgrims have taken for centuries. This was particularly brought home to me when we arrived at Mount Gozo - where the pilgrims got their first glimpse of Santiago Cathedral in the distance. There is now a larger than life statue of two pilgrims at the site.

I completed the walk in six days and arrived in Santiago with many other pilgrims. It was quite emotional to stand in the square in front of the cathedral and see the shell on the ground at the finish point.

We received our official Compostela Certificate after handing in our Camino passports. We then attended one of the pilgrim masses at the cathedral which is very beautiful and has the largest botefumera in the world.

The Gospel for that day was the parable of the Good Samaritan, and I thought it a very appropriate message after walking the Camino. The paths were very rough and dry, just as in the parable, and all shades of humanity were walking as in life, and we need to look out for our neighbour.

We continue every day in the way and I guess that was the spiritual message I received. I felt it even more on my return home, especially as I read all the messages of support on the fundraising page I had set up for the foodbank.

I am very grateful to all those who sponsored me for the walk and thank them for their generosity. So far £2,357.50 has been raised which I hope will help South Belfast Foodbank continue its work and provide food for many individuals and families over the months to come.

## A story of 'Miracles, grace and generosity'

'Never Lose Hope - the story of St Apollo School, Kasizi,' written by the rector of Christ Church, Lisburn, the Ven Paul Dundas, was launched on July 5 by local MLA Robbie Butler.

The book tells of the partnership between Christ Church and St Apollo School, Uganda. In a preface, Paul writes that it is a story across many miles with lives changed and transformed - 'an amazing journey long before the first brick was laid on the new school buildings in 2012.'

The story is based partly on Paul's own reflections, as well as thoughts of members of the teams who travelled to Kasizi and published documents.

Launching the book, Mr Butler said he



Archdeacon Paul Dundas (centre) with MLA Robbie Butler and Helen Darcy from Fields of Life.

had found it full of miracles, grace and generosity. "It is really astonishing what God can and does do when we are faithful to his calling and obedient to act," he said.

Copies are priced £4, with all proceeds going to St Apollo School.



Synod members met in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.



Smiles from Bishop George at Synod as he is presented



Rosemary Patterson, Jacqueline Weir and Valerie Miller.



Bishop George delivers his Presidential Address.

# 'Genuine sense of joy' at in-person synod

Due to the pandemic, the first in-person CoC Synod was held in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast on June 16, with around 200 members.

The business of Synod was preceded by a Service of Holy Communion. The meeting formally opened with reading and prayers, before the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, invited the assessor, Judge Alistair Devlin, to take on the role of Chancellor of the Diocese. He succeeds Judge Derek Rodgers, who Bishop George said had filled the role 'very faithfully.'

Following confirmation of the minutes of Synod 2021, Bishop George delivered his Presidential Address.

He said he had called the meeting with 'a genuine sense of joy.' "Whilst we have managed to conduct our business in the intervening years using the technology available to us, there is nothing quite like meeting together," he said.

He added that parishes had responded 'amazingly' in the face of lockdown and the pandemic. "People adapted, learned new skills, found imaginative ways of keeping connected and altered the way that they worked to meet a new situation," he said.

Bishop George spoke of challenges, including changing patterns of life; finance and resources; of increasing burdens of red-tape; and the difficulty of finding the volunteers needed to do everything that needs done.

"As a diocese, I want us to nurture a sense of the support that we can be to one another... I think that it is vital that we understand the diocese as part of who we are, part of that wider



The Rev Dennis Christie and the Rev Patrick Barton.



Karen Webb and Judith Cairns.



Holy Communion before the business of Synod.



Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie



...ed with a cake to celebrate the 30th anniversary of his ordination.

# ‘Sense of joy’ in Synod

Connor Synod since June 2019 was held in 150 clergy and lay members in attendance.

“A network of relationships that connects and supports us as Christians,” he said.

The Bishop said that sometimes the structures which have served a parish well in the past need to be looked at and new ideas discussed and tried.

“Across the diocese, but particularly in the Archdeaconry of Belfast, we have seen changes that have caused us to recognise that we need to try new things in order to grow and revitalise the Church,” the Bishop told Synod.

He revealed a new five-year partnership project between the diocese, the RCB and the parishes of St Aidan, St Mary Magdalene and St Simon with St Philip, Belfast. This sees Archdeacon Barry Forde leave the Chaplaincy at Queen’s University to work in a new role supporting the developing of Pioneer Ministries and facilitating reshaping for mission across the Archdeaconry.

“I have no doubt that the experiences and learning which are done in the context of Belfast will quickly have application across the wider diocese and indeed the Church of Ireland,” the Bishop said.

Bishop George spoke of the importance of safeguarding relationships, welcomed new clergy to the diocese and expressed thanks to various people. He concluded his address by saying it had been ‘a privilege to share in the life of this diocese as your bishop.’

The Rev Canon William Taggart outlined

Communications from General Synod, and various elections were held, before the Rev Peter Jones, rector of Mossley Parish, proposed the report of Diocesan Council, seconded by Norman Nixon.

Trevor Douglas, Diocesan Development Officer, drew Synod’s attention to a booklet highlighting funding opportunities which has been produced by the diocese and was circulated to all attendees.

Christina Baillie, Diocesan Youth Officer, gave an update on various diocesan events and introduced a new Youth Council initiative, Clusters, which facilitates an opportunity simply for encouragement to clergy and leaders.

Standing orders were suspended for a presentation by Linda Abwa and the Rev Roger Thompson of Church Mission Society Ireland (CMSI), who brought greetings from Yei Diocese, South Sudan, from retired Bishop Hilary and his successor Bishop Levi.

As Connor’s 15-year partnership with Yei comes to a close next year, Linda said: “You have built real partnership. You have shared with our partners as they have gone through conflict and trauma and you have prayed for people and for peace.”

Connor Diocese, she said, had supported Mongo Primary School, Immanuel Model Secondary School and the Martha Clinic, and had helped fund school places for vulnerable children and more. “In all of this, God has faithfully used his Global Church to transform lives in Yei, but lives here have also been changed by the fellowship you enjoy with folks cross-culturally,” Linda said.

Roger spoke about the CMSI and SAMS Voices Together events which were held in August, when global leaders from Africa and South America visited Ireland.

As Bishop George paused proceedings for a coffee break, he was surprised to be presented with a cake specially

baked to celebrate his 30-year ordination anniversary.

The first speaker after the break was Diocesan Children’s Ministry Development Officer Victoria Jackson, who said she had been encouraged and inspired by those working in children’s ministry in the diocese.

Motions were passed relating to the Diocesan Financial Scheme, Diocesan Fair Share and Diocesan Regulations.

The Rev Peter Jones, Warden of Readers, drew attention to the Readers’ Report in the Council Report, saying that it was good news that 11 new Readers had been commissioned during the previous year, and expressed thanks to all those Diocesan and Parish Readers in the diocese. He also drew attention to a new brochure on Vocations, Discerning Ministry, produced by the Director of Ordinands, the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, and encouraged parishes to hold a Vocations Sunday at some stage in the year.

The Archdeacon of Belfast, the Ven Barry Forde, expressed the best wishes of Synod to Ulster University, which this year moved into the centre of Belfast. The increasing student population would have ‘a major impact on the life of the city with new opportunities and challenges,’ he said. He spoke of the excellent work of the student chaplaincies and parishes supporting students in Belfast.

Sally Cotter, President of Connor Mothers’ Union, outlined the activities and projects the MU had been involved in over the past year.

The Report of Diocesan Council was accepted.

Before closing Synod, Bishop George thanked all those who had participated, his staff team, the cathedral Mothers’ Union for refreshments and Dean Stephen Forde and the staff of Belfast Cathedral for hosting the event.



The top table as Synod gets under way in Belfast Cathedral.

# 'In South Sudan and Yei, the Church is their only hope'

Bishop Levi Marandulu, new bishop of Connor's partner Diocese of Yei, South Sudan, and his wife Mama Agnes spent some time in Connor in August.

The Bishop was consecrated and installed as the third Bishop of Yei on June 20 last year, in succession to Bishop Hilary Luete Abeda, and was in Ireland along with more than 30 world leaders from Africa, Asia and South America for the CMS Ireland/SAMS Ireland Kingdom Voices programme.

After their arrival from Canterbury, where they had been part of the Lambeth Conference, the guests spent time at the Tobar Mhuire Retreat and Conference Centre in Co Down, attended CMSI and SAM's Kingdom Voices events.

During the week, the Bishop met with Bishop George Davison, and was hosted in Agherton Parish, which has a well-established link with Yei, having helped raise substantial funds for the building of a new school in Mongo village, South Sudan.

In Agherton, Bishop Levi experienced his first visit to the sea with the rector of Agherton, the Rev Malcolm Ferry, and parishioner Dr Frank Dobbs, who has visited Yei on many occasions. As the sun was shining, Bishop Levi was unable to resist Malcolm's invite to have a go at body boarding which he thoroughly enjoyed!

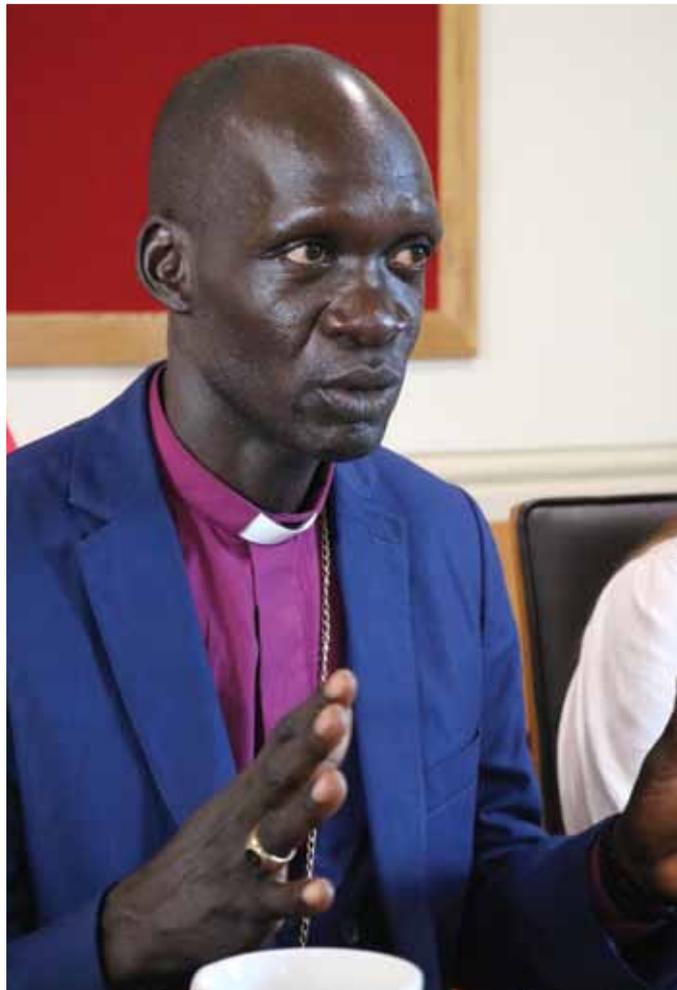
Malcolm said the link between Yei and Agherton remained strong, with plans for bringing someone from Yei to Agherton to workshadow for three months, before sending them back to Yei with new skills and three years' worth of salary.

The Bishop also spent time at Lisburn Cathedral, where he met members of cathedral teams who have travelled to both Yei and Uganda in the past.

At a special breakfast with parishioners in the cathedral, Bishop Levi spoke about his path to becoming bishop, and about life in Yei, which he said is 'getting back

to normal' following another period of civil war.

"There are still cases of insecurity as a group of rebels did not sign the peace agreement," he said. "Some people remained behind, like us, and some have come back, but many are still in the camps."



Bishop Levi and Mama Agnes have four daughters and two sons, aged from four to 24. He recalled how he was confirmed aged 16, and called to go for theological training in 2000. That year, he met Archdeacon Paul Dundas, rector of Christ Church, Lisburn, when Paul was delivering training at the Bishop Alison Theological

College in Arua, Uganda.

"In 2005 I was ordained as a deacon and in 2006 as a priest. When I completed my studies in Bishop Alison Theological College, the principal asked me to stay on as assistant tutor. In 2009, Bishop Hilary of Yei asked me to come back to South Sudan, and I was posted to Goli, a parish 20 miles west of Yei town, where I remained until last year," the Bishop said.

He received a call in November 2020, telling him he had been chosen as one of six candidates potentially to succeed Bishop Hilary when he retired.

"I was consecrated as Bishop in Yei Cathedral on June 20 last year. It was a joyful service. The cathedral was not big enough and many people had to stay outside. There were 6,000 worshippers! It was great," he said.

Looking to the future of Yei Diocese, Bishop Levi said ministry and evangelism were a priority. "In South Sudan, we have a population of more than 11 million and four million of these are members of the Anglican Church, but an element of teaching is missing and we need to train people.

"Our biggest problem is education. The majority of our people never had the chance to go to school between 1955 and our independence in 2011. Only 26 per cent can read and write. We need to improve this. My predecessors laid good foundations, many schools were established, but we have 110 teachers and out of these, only 13 are trained. If we can get more teachers trained, they can offer a quality education in our schools and these teachers will change the future."

The Bishop said his third focus was projects. "As a Church, in South Sudan we are dependent, and much of the support for projects comes from the western world, organisations like CMS. What we are missing is support for clergy. Clergy are not paid, they volunteer in faith. We have 96 priests, and they find it difficult to pay school fees for their children, even to feed themselves.

"Our prayer is to establish a coffee growing project which in 5-10 years will produce enough coffee for us to sell and make money for our clergy. We are encouraging clergy to grow coffee and we will sell it and give the money to them."

## Cloughfern marks 70th anniversary



Bishop Levi and Mama Agnes with some of those members of Lisburn Cathedral who attended a breakfast on August 13. Opposite page, the Bishop speaking at the breakfast.



Cutting the anniversary cake are children of founder members of the Church of the Ascension, Cloughfern Parish: Tom Fulton, Maebeth (Waite) Wilson, Christine Hunter, and Eleanor (Fulton) Robinson.

Cloughfern Parish celebrated its 70th anniversary over the weekend of June 4-5.

Members of the newly-formed parish began meeting in 1951 in a converted barn in Fernagh Estate, and the new Church of the Ascension, Cloughfern, was built around 18 months later. It was formally dedicated by Bishop Charles Irwin, on Ascension Day, May 24 1952.

In 1953, work began on a parochial hall, built mainly by volunteer labour. After a complete redecoration, and the installation of a stained-glass east window, the church was formally consecrated on May 21 1955.

Since then, Cloughfern Parish has had five incumbents and eight curates.

The celebrations began on June 4, with a Platinum Jubilee lunch. There was a special display of biscuits decorated for the church's jubilee by the Sunday School. A slideshow of photos ran throughout the afternoon, and the event ended with a quiz.

On June 5 there was a special service in celebration of the Jubilee, when parishioners gave thanks for the service and dedication of the Queen and those in the parish who have given of their time and energies over the last 70 years.



The Bishop of Yei enjoying his first experience of swimming in the sea at Portstewart!

Bishop Levi also wants to improve the church-run Martha Clinic which had good support from a UK partner, but that is likely to end in the wake of Covid-19. "This is a concern as we may not raise enough to pay the staff to maintain the clinic. We also want to raise the standard of the clinic and build a medical ward," he said.

Returning to education, Bishop Levi said that the number of girls attending school dropped in their secondary school years, due to pregnancy and early marriage. "In some communities, the culture does not allow girls to go to school," he explained. "The Church and Government are encouraging girl child education, but if a parent has two children, a boy and a girl, and they cannot pay for both to go to school, they will send the boy. These are the challenges we are facing."

He said people were returning to their homes in Yei, as the world economic crisis meant life in the refugee camps had

become more difficult. "But when they come back, they find life in Yei is also difficult," he said. "They find their tukul has been burned down and they have to begin from zero, or those who had built a house find there is someone else living in it. How to feed themselves is a big question."

The Bishop has recently been visiting churches in refugee camps in Uganda and Congo. "The reception they gave me left me in tears. You sit and talk to them and hear their troubles. In South Sudan and Yei, the Church is their only hope," he said. "In all their suffering, you can see joy in their faces when they dance and worship God."

Bishop Levi described the Mothers' Union as a strong ministry. "In the Church, we find that the number of women is greater than the number of men. The MU offers fellowship, counselling, they visit hospitals and families. They advise the Young Christian Families Association on how they should take care of their home, children and visitors," he explained.

Yei Vocational Training Centre (VTC) is doing well. "This year we have 158 students, many of the drivers and builders in the area have been to the VTC. For young ones leaving school for one reason or another, Yei VTC becomes an answer," the Bishop said. "Also for parents unable to pay for their children to go to university. They all get the skills to help themselves."

And the Bishop said he had been encouraged by his time at the Lambeth Conference. "Lambeth was my first time outside Africa. I met people from all over the world, and I felt like I was not alone. I also felt a great spirit of unity among Anglican churches. That makes me so happy and I feel that I am in the right place."



The Rev Jacob Mercer was introduced as Priest-in-Charge of St Brigid's, Mallusk, at a special service on May 31. The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, is pictured with Jacob, third from left, and clergy at the service. Photo: Victor McCabe.



Baby Basics' volunteer Susan Hamilton, Church Army Evangelist Sister Karen Webb, and Baby Basics' administrator Heather Gibson sorting donations in Connect Base's new home at St Columba's, Whiterock.

# Connect Base moves uphill to Whiterock

Connor's North Belfast Centre of Mission, Connect Base, is now located in St Columba's Parish Church, Whiterock, having outgrown its space in the Spectrum Centre on the Shankill Road.

Lead Evangelist, Sister Karen Webb of Church Army, said the vision behind moving was to give the Centre of Mission more scope to do outreach work in the community. The new venue has the added bonus of additional space for the Baby Basics project.



A message from Baby Basics.

Karen, Evangelist Stephen Whitten, Baby Basics' administrator Heather Gibson, and volunteers are currently settling into their new home, and planning for the future.

"We are looking forward to getting out and talking to people in the community," Karen said. "Springhill Primary School is just opposite and we have three people wanting to train to offer the Transforming Lives for Good (TLG) programme in the school. This is a mentoring programme for children in upper primary who are in danger of being excluded from school. Once we build relationships with families, we can start things such as parent and toddlers groups or after-school clubs."

She explained that when the Centre of Mission was first established in 2016, the team did not want to associate with just

one church. "Over time, we have built relationships with all the churches in the Rural Deanery, and we moved to St Columba's in January because it offers great, purpose-built space," Karen said. "This is not just a base to meet with people, but a space to do more, a space to hold special services. This is our aspiration, that this will become a real hub."

"We will be talking to people in the local houses and in the school, asking them what they want from the local church, and what they need in the area. We have seen how TLG and after-school clubs have worked in St Stephen's and St Michael's. We would like to replicate that in this community, through building links with schools and families."

The move to Whiterock, she added, is all about developing the mission of the Centre of Mission. "We had outgrown the Shankill Road unit and didn't have to space to have the flexibility to do what we hope to. And even though we have moved, the locals still find the time to call in for a chat."

Baby Basics Belfast was founded in 2017,

and is a volunteer-led project aiming to support families who are struggling to meet the financial and practical burden of looking after a new baby.

The project is currently supplying around 40 packs a month. "Since we began, we have given away 1,306 packs," Karen said. "Donations come from all over, when we put out an appeal for particular items on social media, we have had a phenomenal response. When we specifically asked for clothes for boys aged 0-6 months, I did one pick-up in a nationalist part of Ardoyne and another the same day in the Shankill estate. They say this is a divided community, but when the chips are down, all people are willing to help."

Susan Hamilton from Shankill has been volunteering for two years, since suffering a bereavement. "It has really helped me and gives me a focus," Susan said.

Her work is very much appreciated. "Susan is an absolute Godsend, she knows where everything is and knows all the local people," said Karen

Heather Gibson is Baby Basics' administrator, and also volunteers her time to sort the donations and put together the beautiful packages for the new mums, dads and babies.

"The reward is seeing the packs ready to go out and the reaction of the health visitor or community worker when they come to pick them up," said Heather. "It is also nice to see the donations coming in and to discover what we have got. Some of the handknits are beautiful."

In addition to the space in the hall and the first floor of St Columba's, the Centre of Mission now has extensive storage on the second floor, a kitchen, office space and even a washing machine and tumble dryer to process any second hand donations. The open plan room on the ground floor, in which services take place each Sunday, can be reshaped for many different uses.



Bishop George Davison watches Aubrey Sweeney and Linda Tissington cutting the Dunluce Parish Church bicentenary cake (above) and left, John McCollum (stonemason) and designer Jamie Clark beside the new window.

# Glencairn blossoms!

Glencairn Community Garden, a wonderful natural haven, continues to blossom despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, thanks to the work of Church Army Evangelist Stephen Whitten and his team.

The garden, on an acre of what was previously derelict land beside St Andrew's Parish Church, Forthriver Road, was established in February 2020, but development work was impacted by Covid-19.

Since restrictions eased, Stephen and a core team of enthusiastic volunteers have been busy planting, painting, building, harvesting and more.

Over the summer, the garden was bursting with vegetables - with many varieties harvested and distributed to pensioners in the local area - as well as flowers, trees and an abundance of wild grasses and wild flowers.

We paid a visit on July 28, to find Stephen and regular volunteer Isaac Castle busy painting a container which will be used for storage and shelter at the site, while another volunteer was lending a hand.

Cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, spinach, potatoes, broccoli, fennel and kale were all growing heartily, along with basil, beetroot, strawberries and runner beans.

A wishing well and a huge tyre - decorated by last year's Exodus team members - were literally bursting with colour.

Step away from the flowers and vegetables, through the pampas grasses and trees, and you will find a path covered



Volunteer Isaac surveys some of the vegetables ready for harvest.

in tree bark, winding its way through nature's own garden.

Keeping on top of all the work is no mean feat. Isaac, aged 73, is a regular volunteer. The project also benefits by a weekly visit from men doing community service, organised by the Probation Board.

Members of Glencairn Youth Group have been involved, their painting and planting over a number of sessions helping them work towards their John Muir Award.

The garden is not just providing food and a pleasant natural environment, it also hosts events like the Tuesday night Men's Club, when local men from the Rural Deanery gather around the campfire, supported by Stephen and the Revs Adrian Bell and Canon James Carson.

Taking a few minutes out from painting the container, one volunteer explains why he is in the garden. "I have an interest in gardening, food production and sustainable farming in particular," he says. "So helping out here falls in line with my interests and allows me to serve my community as well."

Stephen has plans for future activities in the garden. "I would love to do sessions for primary school children under the willow, helping them learn about nature or using it for story time," he explains. "I hope others will want to use the space too."

Looking ahead, there is a long list of jobs to be done to keep the garden at its best - including the erection of two new polytunnels.

Volunteers are welcome to join Stephen on Tuesday and/or Thursday each week at the Community Garden anytime between 9.30am and 3pm. If you would like to find out more about getting involved, please call Stephen on 07704 481489 or email him at s.whitten@churcharmy.org.uk.



Church Army Evangelist Stephen Whitten by the colourful wishing well in Glencairn Community Garden.

## Dunluce Parish celebrates bicentenary

The bicentenary of St John the Baptist Parish and Church, Dunluce, was celebrated on June 19 at a Service of Thanksgiving.

This included the dedication of the 'Water of Life' stained glass window to mark the anniversary.

Due to Covid-19, this event could not take place in 2021, the year of the bicentenary.

The window, designed by Jamie

Clark, captures many aspects of the parish, particularly the old church at Dunluce. The Scripture passage used by the artist is 'The water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' John 4:14.

The window was dedicated by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, who also preached.

The organist was Sonya Colville, and the choir anthem was a medley of hymns from two centuries ago.

# 'I call music my expensive hobby!'

IRISH SINGER SONGWRITER JOANNE HOGG WAS VOCALIST WITH CHRISTIAN BAND IONA

She planned on becoming a doctor, but when circumstances intervened, Joanne Hogg instead forged an international career as vocalist with the Christian band Iona.

Today, Joanne focuses on her own music, with her latest album 'Apologia Vol 1 - Pilgrim,' inspired by the last two years of her spiritual journey.

On June 12, parishioners in Joanne's home church of St Colmanell's, Ahoghill, heard her sing and talk about her passion for praising God through worship.

A native of Magherafelt, where her father was a Presbyterian Minister, Joanne and her husband Steve now live in Rasharkin. They have two sons, Isaac, 21 and Ethan, 19.

They married when Joanne was 22, with two years of her medical degree still to go. After graduation, she started her Junior Houseman year at Belfast City Hospital, but halfway through the year, she contracted a virus which affected her heart.

She had to take time off to recover, and was still on medication even as she completed her registration. "I did some locum cover, but by that stage I was already beginning to realise I could not see myself as a career doctor," she says. "My illness helped me come to that conclusion, although I was already feeling confused about whether I wanted to pursue something else, like music.

"I used to skip anatomy and go to the Church of Ireland Centre on Elmwood Avenue and play the piano. I had always loved music, but having access to that piano was when I really began song writing. I was beginning to see the world differently. These weren't hymns, but songs about how I was experiencing life as a Christian looking at the world around me."

She decided to take a year out and headed to a Christian artists' conference in the Netherlands where she sang for a talent evaluation panel. "I got lots of positive feedback," she says. "Youth for Christ were looking for guest teachers in Denmark. They wanted someone with



Joanne Hogg performing with Iona at Boerderij, Zoetermeer in 2009. Photo by Monica Duffels

a strong Christian faith who was able to perform. I was thinking, God, is this what you have been planning for me all along?"

Joanne started in Denmark that September. It was to prove a challenging year. "It was a very full programme, speaking at assemblies and giving lunchtime and evening concerts," Joanne recalls. "I had never trained my voice and didn't really know how to look after it. Six weeks into the new year, I lost my voice completely. I was sent home and they found nodules on my vocal chords. I was told to rest my voice completely - not even talk - for three weeks, then no singing for the rest of the year.

**'It's just amazing to return to the real, true understanding of the gospel'**

"I did go back to Denmark for the last six weeks of my contract, but it wasn't looking like music would be a good long-term path for me, so I returned to medicine.

"Fortunately, my last two years were clinical years, and I enjoyed them. I saw more of human experience as a junior doctor and think it moulded me. It was a privilege to have that time, I was involved in lots of human situations and family situations. It inspired me creatively.

"I was dealing with some of the big

questions in life, and looking at the whole area of human suffering. After a shift in the hospital, I would go to the piano in the Church of Ireland Centre and write something poignant. There were times I could not make sense of things and was asking God why."

Although she was back in medicine, music continued to tug. "I had met an artist named Adrian Snell at the Christian artists' conference, and he had asked me to send him some of my songs. I met him again at a Youth for Christ concert in Denmark, and we had a long chat. He was planning a concept album, and needed a female voice," she says.

"I recorded 'Child of Darkness,' and performed it at the album premier in the Hammersmith Odeon. I also sang a couple of my own songs with his band jamming along. Three years before I ended up leaving medicine, Adrian asked me to come on tour to Switzerland for four concerts.

"Fast forward three years, and I was contacted by one of the musicians from that tour who said they had been to Iona and had an idea for a band. They needed a vocalist and thought of me."

Joanne wasn't sure that band membership was for her. "I had envisaged being a singer songwriter doing my own thing," she says. "Steve and I took a long trip. We returned to find a postcard from Iona. I later dreamed I was on Iona and wrote a song about the dream and called it 'Iona.' The next day I wrote 'The Island.' I hadn't written for a long time, then I wrote two about Iona. Perhaps God was saying songs about my life were not what he wanted."

And so Iona was born. The band performed at the Greenbelt Festival two months later. "We played in a small tent and at our first gig there was an audience of around 15-20. But they included two agents from Word Music UK who loved our sound and wanted us to record with them," Joanne recalls.

Iona signed a record deal for three albums, with the first coming out in 1990. Word Music later became Alliance, and the band stayed with them until their self-released albums.

A video featuring the song 'Treasure' brought Iona attention from the USA, which led to invites to music festivals. "I loved doing the music, but I really didn't like being away from home," Joanne admits. "Our longest tour was three weeks, but on average we did 10 days in the UK or Europe, and maybe only four tours a year."



Singer songwriter Joanne Hogg.

In 1996, Iona's album 'Journey into the Morn' was listed as one of 'Q' magazine's top 50 albums of the year, and the band's success continued until it disbanded six years ago.

"After the boys were born, touring became more of an issue," Joanne says. "Tours tended to be just for a few days, which was difficult logistically. It is pretty hardcore. We didn't have lots of roadies. We had to pack up ourselves at the end of a concert before heading to our budget hotel, then be up early for a long drive to the next venue. And we were not a cheap band to put on stage."

But touring was lucrative. "We sold most of our albums when we played live, that is how we got our income," Joanne says. "I have never thought of music as my career - I would call music my expensive hobby!"

Joanne sang with Moya Brennan and Margaret Becker on Getty's 'Hymns for New Irish.' Her first solo album, 'Into the Light,' was released by Alliance Music in 1999, then two further solo albums with Kingsway Music in 2008 - 'Personal,' and 'Raphael's Journey' - before 'Uncountable Stars' in 2015.

"My last two CDs were 'The MAP Project 1 and 2' - that's Miracles and Parables," she explains. "This is the gospel. This is what I



Joanne Hogg performs with Iona at the Spirit of 66 Club, Belgium, in 2010. Photo by Lutz Diehl.

want to communicate now. The album in the process of being mixed, 'Apologia Vol 1 - Pilgrim,' is inspired by the last two years of my spiritual journey from a more extreme charismatic environment back to Biblical-rooted Christian faith."

She will release this on digital platforms. "I am really excited about it. I think it is going to cause some people to ask questions and ponder," she says. "It's just amazing to return to the real, true understanding of the gospel. This is the most doctrinally theological-focused work I have ever done."

Follow Joanne on YouTube - 'Joanne Hogg Songs for Sinners' and at <https://johoggmusic.bandcamp.com>.

## New curate in St Paul and St Barnabas



The Rev Brian Lacey, left, who was licensed as priest-in-charge of the Parish of St Paul and St Barnabas; Bishop George Davison; and the Rev Andrew Irwin who was introduced as curate of the Parish.

The Rev Andrew Irwin was introduced as curate of the Parish of St Paul and St Barnabas, Belfast, on June 8 by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison. At the same service, Bishop George also licensed the Rev Brian Lacey as priest-in-charge of the parish.

Andrew, 32, grew up in the Parish of Knocknamuckley. He studied Computer Science at Queen's University Belfast, graduating in 2012. He worked in software development and digital communications before training for the ministry.

Andrew was deacon intern in Waringstown and Donaloney, Diocese of Down and Dromore, then moved to Banbridge as curate in Seapatrick Parish.

## Ordination of priest in Ballymena

The Rev Andrew Moore was ordained a priest on September 21 at a service in St Patrick's, Ballymena, where he will serve as curate.



Andrew is married to Laura and they have three young children. Prior to ordination, he worked as a paramedic. Andrew was ordained deacon for an internship in St John's, Orangefield, Diocese of Down and Dromore.

## Christmas Festival

Mossley Parish is hosting a Christmas Festival, 'O Come All Ye Faithful,' opening on Thursday December 8 with a service at 7.30pm and continuing on December 9 (11am-8pm), December 10 (10am-8pm) and December 11 (2pm-6pm).

There will be Christmas trees, Christmas craft work and Christmas themed floral art. For further details, or group bookings, please email [rectormossley@hotmail.com](mailto:rectormossley@hotmail.com).

## David publishes two children's books

The Rev David Luckman, church planter at Hilden Community Church, Lambeg Parish, has published two biographical books for children this year as part of the Trailblazer series from Christian Focus Publications.

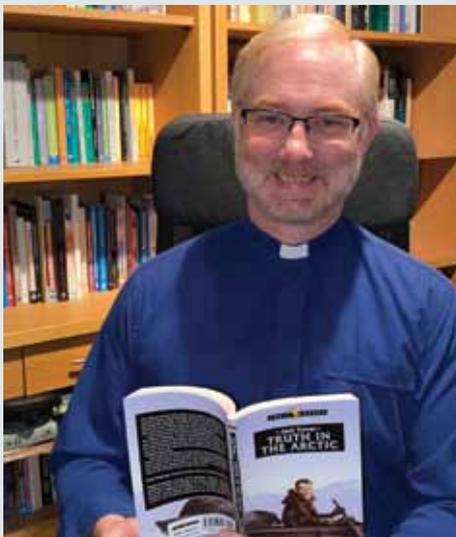
The first book, 'Jack Turner - Truth in the Arctic,' tells the story of Jack Turner, a BCMS missionary to the Arctic in 1929, who sought to spread the gospel to the Inuit people, no matter the personal risks he faced.

"He also translated parts of the Book of Common Prayer into Inuktitut so the people could be biblical, ordered, and clear-minded in their corporate worship of Almighty God," David said. "He spent many years travelling to local Inuit settlements across the land by foot or dog sledge, travelling nearly 25,000 miles in his time there. But sadly Jack's service was cut short by an unfortunate shooting incident."

David's second book, 'Thomas Cranmer - The King's Ambassador,' is an introduction to the life and ministry of the man who spearheaded the 16th century English Reformation.

Cranmer rose to prominence and power in the court of King Henry VIII. He sought to use his influence for the glory of God and the advance of God's kingdom in England. "Ultimately Thomas Cranmer was the ambassador of King Jesus in the realm of England, and this ministry would cost him everything," said David.

Copies of both books can be purchased directly from Christian Focus Publications, Amazon, or any Christian bookshop.



The Rev David Luckman and his first children's book, 'Jack Turner - Truth In The Arctic.'



Striding out in Clough.

It was best feet forward as members of the Parishes of Craigs, Dunaghy and Killagan stepped out on three walks around the areas close to the parishes during June.

The Rev Adrian Halligan said: "Our parishes are based in the villages of Cullybackey, Clough and Cloughmills and the natural beauty around them is wonderful.

"There were several reasons for the walks, including fun and fellowship across our three parishes, to enjoy God's amazing creation which is all around us and because of a promise made in May 2019."

Adrian continued: "A good friend of our parishes, Aurelia Kelly, organised walks in Randalstown, Portglenone and Ahoghill in conjunction with Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion parishes' ME at 8 project. Aurelia was assisted by Amanda McCallion and Sarah Simpson from the Parishes of St Colmanell's, Ahoghill, and Portglenone, and the programme of walks was called Fit For ME, Fit For LIFE.

"In May 2019, members of our grouped parishes participated in the walks organised for the Fit For ME, Fit For LIFE programme, and at the end of the last walk Aurelia enquired if we would like to help organise a fourth walk in May 2020. Sadly, this was never to happen due to Covid and then the untimely and tragic passing of Aurelia in November 2021."

Each parish walk was between two and three miles. The first was held in Clough village on a beautiful evening. The walkers enjoyed a good chat with fellow parishioners and viewed the Queen's Platinum Jubilee display in St James' Parish Church.

The following week, the route followed the river walk in Cloughmills and back to the church for refreshments. Walkers saw parts of Cloughmills they didn't know existed, and also learned about the work of the



Fellowship and a rest after the walk in Cloughmills.



Staying safe on the route around Craigs Parish Church area.

Cloughmills Community Action Team and their community food share scheme.

The last walk was in Cullybackey around the Craigs Parish Church area. Although the weather was not as kind, this did not dampen spirits, and at the end of the walk, everyone enjoyed refreshments in the grounds of the rectory.

"The walks were selected to encourage everyone to get involved, no matter their age or fitness level, and we were also delighted to welcome along our four-legged friends each week," said Adrian. "All our walkers have said how wonderful it was to be out and about in the fresh air and to get the opportunity to get to know others from across the three parishes. Plans are now afoot (pun intended) for 2023!"

It has been a busy few months for Connor's young people, with the return of Summer Madness, Streetreach, and the Connor Takes the Castle weekend.

The residential at Castlewelan ran from September 23-25, with 120 young people and leaders from 12 parishes enjoying fellowship, worship and lots of fun.

There were guided sessions, music, outdoor activities including rounders and paddleboarding on Castlewelan Lake, and the ever-popular Connor's got talent. Hayley Cullen from GB Youth For Christ was the weekend speaker and the Rev Lee Boal and the Rev Peter Blake led worship.

Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie said: "Connor Takes The Castle was a fantastic opportunity for young people from different parishes to grow in their knowledge of God and have loads of fun together. We're so grateful to all the leaders and young people for making it so special."

Connor Streetreach ran from July 5-8, with 41 young people and leaders from 13 parishes, along with adult helpers from Mossley Parish, taking part.

Each day, the young people had breakfast in the parish hall, followed by devotions led by visiting American interns Kyleigh and Preston Vaughn, discussions and prayers.



Young people and leaders from Connor Diocese had a great time at Castlewellan Castle.

## Storming the Castle!

After lunch, the teams headed out to fulfil their activity with one group doing outreach in the community, including running children's activities and picking up litter in New Mossley; praying for people on doorsteps and in the street; and running a very busy kids' club at the parish hall.

The young people come back together each evening for dinner, an evening activity and debrief. On the final afternoon, they ran a community event and barbecue before heading for home.

Many of those who attended Streetreach had come straight from Summer Madness - the annual Christian youth festival held this year in a new venue in Portglenone.

Despite somewhat inclement weather at times, outdoor activities proved popular, and the different seminars in the various marquees drew interested young people. Then, of course, there was worship in the marquee...

For young people from Connor, including those visiting Summer Madness just for the day, the Connor Sub-Camp was a great place to meet, chill and eat, with Connor Youth Council providing a barbecue each evening.

The big Connor barbecue took place on the Sunday, with burgers and sausages turned by Connor clergy, with clergy and family also helping out.

## Resourcing youth and children's ministry

Youth and children's ministry leaders from across Connor Diocese came together at St Patrick's, Broughshane, on September 3 to be encouraged and resourced for the year ahead.

The event was organised by Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie and Children's Ministry Development Officer Victoria Jackson. Leaders from 11 different parishes and parish groups attended the event, which included separate workshop sessions in children's ministry and youth ministry.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, welcomed everyone and thanked them for all they did. "I hope it is a morning you will find helpful and something that will equip you for the work you do in the parishes you serve," he said.

"That work is some of the most important that is done in the life of the Church. When children are little, they take in so much, but you are doing so



Emma Thompson from Prayer Spaces in Schools leading a session on children's ministry at Launch.

much more than just teaching them the facts. When you meet with the children and young people in your parish, you are engaging in the enormous privilege of introducing them to Jesus.

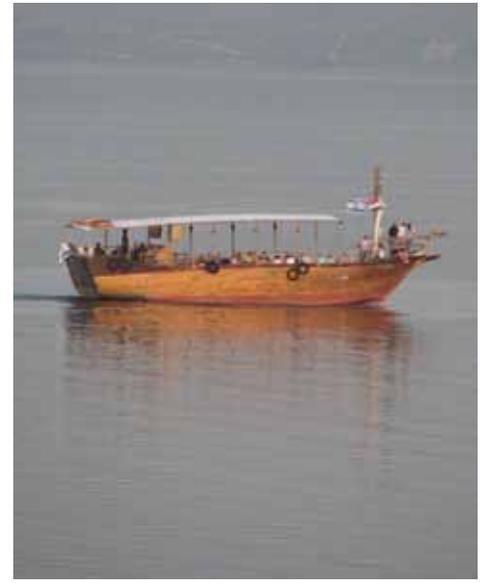
"To do what you do is not just down to the skills you have and the resources you pick up, it is being able to share something that means something to you. Nurture your own relationship with Jesus, that is the greatest gift you will give to the young person you are

working with."

Christina told the gathering that great things were happening across the diocese in parishes. "This morning you will have the opportunity to share your experiences and to discuss the reality and the challenges," she said.

Representatives of two parishes spoke about their work with children and young people - Johnny and Kirsty from Ballyrashane and Killdollahagh outlined the activities they provided through the parish Sunday Club and youth group, and Amanda and Dennis from Ahoghill and Portglenone spoke about the work of the Kids Zone group - which had continued through the Covid-19 pandemic, engaging children via Zoom - and the youth fellowship.

The youth ministry workshop was led by Christina, while the session on children's ministry was led by Victoria and Emma Thompson from Prayer Spaces in Schools.



# A pilgrimage to the Holy Land

led by the Rev Canon David Humphries and the  
Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor

May 16-26 2023

11 days based in Jerusalem & Galilee

A pilgrimage to the Holy Land will take place in May 2023, led by the Rev Canon David Humphries and the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison.

Over the course of 11 days, pilgrims will have the opportunity to visit biblical sites including the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane, Temple Mount, the Tomb of King David, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Emmaus, Mount Tabor, Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee.

For the first six nights, pilgrims will stay in the Golden Walls Hotel in Jerusalem, moving on to Tiberias and the Ron Beach Hotel on the shores of the Sea of Galilee for four nights.

The tour departs from Belfast on Tuesday May 16, returning on Friday May 26. The cost per person will be £2,985, with a reduced rate of £2,805 for anyone booking before October 31.

Canon Humphries, who has been rector of Kilbride since 2016, has been leading pilgrimages to the Holy

Land for almost 25 years.

The last 'bishop-led' pilgrimage to the Holy Land took place in March 2011, when Bishop Alan Abernethy was joined by a group of 80 people from parishes across Connor Diocese for a very memorable trip.

This will be Bishop George's first visit to the Holy Land. Inviting people to join him on this pilgrimage, he said: "I've always hoped to have an opportunity to visit the Holy Land for myself and am excited to be joining David Humphries in leading this 2023 pilgrimage.

"It will be wonderful to pray and worship and to read Scripture together - where the events we are reading about took place! I look forward to sharing that experience with those who are able to join us."

For further details and to book places, please contact Canon Humphries on 028 9332 2979 or by email at [wdhumphries@hotmail.com](mailto:wahumphries@hotmail.com).