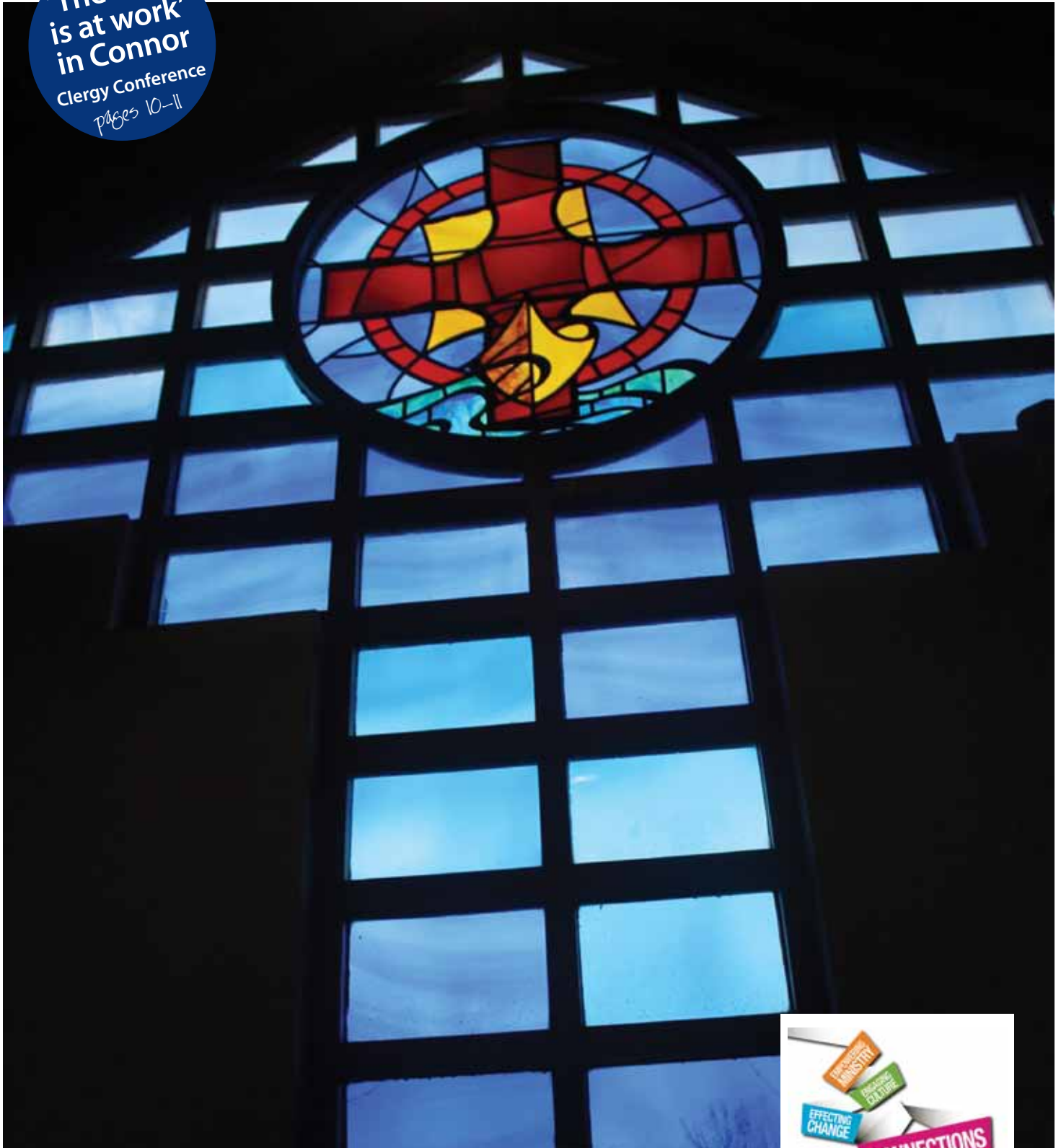


# CONNOR

## connections

'The Lord  
is at work'  
in Connor  
Clergy Conference  
*pages 10-11*



The magazine for the Diocese of Connor **Spring 2023**

## 'My faith drives me every day'

The dedicated work of district nurse Maria Betts, a parishioner of All Saints', Antrim, was the focus of a BBC1 NI series 'Nurses,' aired last November.



Filmed over 12 months, the series gave an insight into the health service in Northern Ireland through the eyes of nurses.

Maria is married to Peter and they have two children. They have been members of All Saints' since 2010.

Maria started her nursing career 20 years ago after working as a nursing auxiliary for three years. She qualified with a diploma from Queen's University in 2003 and completed her degree the following year. In 2019, she obtained a specialist practice qualification in district nursing and took up the post of district nursing sister in Antrim. She also completed a Masters' Degree in Nursing in 2020.

"The district nurse role is vast and complex," said Maria. "I oversee the caseload and manage staff." The biggest challenge in recent times, she added, has been Covid-19. "Where other services stepped down, district nursing stepped forward and filled gaps. Where shielding patients may have previously gone to treatment rooms, we visited with them at home," she explained.

The role has its rewards too. "Having one patient in the day tell me how valued nurses are is very heart-warming and makes it easy to get up in the mornings," Maria said.

"I have a passion for palliative care. I lost my own mum when I was 18 and some aspects of her care were amazing and some less so. I strive to be an advocate for palliative care patients to ensure they have access to and receive the highest quality care they deserve."

Maria's dedication to her work was recognised when she obtained the title of 'Queen's Nurse' in 2021.

"My faith in God drives me every day," Maria said. "It's a challenging job and some days it's hard to leave the feeling at the 'garden gate,' but I have a loving family at home and an even larger family in All Saints' which help me to remain strong. Not all patients have the same belief, but I can provide a listening ear which they can confide in."



## Family, fun and food

Serving up a treat at 'Family, Fun & Food' in St Michael's are the Rev Canon Jim Carson, Gary Hoy from Belfast Bible College and Sister Karen Webb, Connect Base.

Families in the Lower Shankill enjoyed some post-Christmas cheer when they visited St Michael's Parish Church for a series of evenings focused on food and fun!

The rector, the Rev Canon Jim Carson, was behind the 'Family, Fun & Food' initiative. Parish Development Officer Heather Carson said: "It grew out of his concern for families in the Lower Shankill. With the cost of living crisis, Jim felt it would be good to do something in January, which is usually cold and dark and is always a difficult month after the expense of Christmas. It's a time we could all do with a bit of cheering up."

The evenings were aimed at families who are involved in Messy Church and the parish's weekly afterschool activities, as well as any church families who wished to come along.

For three Thursday nights in January, families and friends gathered for a sit-down meal as well as a quiz and some fun challenges.

Heather said: "We provided a warm, welcoming environment with fun, laughter, dinner, dessert and tea and coffee. At our second event, we had 50 people, which was great. Emily, our youth and children's worker, ran the quiz and Frank Dillon, our community chaplain, ran the challenges."

The project was run in partnership with Sister Karen Webb, lead evangelist at Connect Base, Connor Diocese's North Belfast Centre of Mission. "Karen is fabulous at cooking for big numbers, so she and Gary Hoy, a placement student from Belfast Bible College who is volunteering with Karen, made and served dinner," Heather explained.

"We are extremely grateful to Karen and Gary, as providing nutritious and lovely food is a core element of the evenings. Karen also printed recipes for some of the meals and desserts provided, and young mums are looking forward to trying them at home."

Feedback has been very positive. One parent said 'this is great, it is helping us beat the January blues.' There were many thank-yous for the 'lovely dinner,' and people expressed their gratitude to the church for putting on evenings like this.

"It gives opportunities for the family to eat together without the cost, stress of cooking and clearing up and just have some fun as a family," Heather said. "Most of our families know each other so there is great competition and laughter."

'Family, Fun & Food' was led by Heather, Karen and the Church of Ireland Lower Shankill staff team. "It has given us the opportunity to spend more time with the families, grow and develop relationships, and show the love and compassion of Christ in a time of economic stress," Heather said.

"We have been able to talk about Messy Church to families who don't normally come and advertise our general activities."

"The initiative has been very successful and we hope to replicate it later in the year and possibly extend the initiative to other parts of our Mid Belfast Deanery."

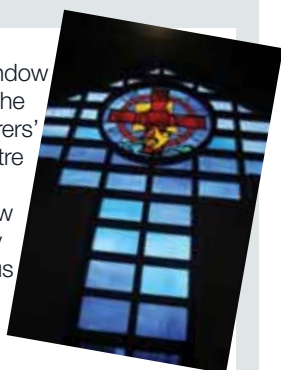


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## Cover photo:


Stained glass window in the Chapel at the Mission to Seafarers' Flying Angel Centre at Belfast Port. The Mission's new chaplain, the Rev Mark Reid, tells us about its work. See pages 4-5.




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

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# Growing Healthy Churches



Our 'Connor Connections' magazine gives us all an opportunity to have a little insight into some of the things that happen in the life of the diocese.

In this edition, you'll find a range of articles, including a number which show different ways in which the Church is endeavouring to serve the community around us. I'm really encouraged by these things because I believe that they are a sign of a healthy Church!

When we are reaching out to others, it shows that we have understood just a little of what it is to be followers of Jesus, who said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matt 25:40)

You'll also see a report on the Connor Clergy Conference which took place in November. I had the privilege of spending 48 hours with the majority of the clergy in the diocese, as we spent time worshipping together, listening to God's Word and thinking together about how we serve Christ and his people in Connor today.

'Growing Healthy Churches' was a phrase that I shared with my colleagues at the conference as an aspiration of what I hope we might have as our ambition for the diocese going forward, and I share it with you now. These are three little words that express what, together in Connor, we can strive both to 'be' and to 'do.'

Growing, healthy churches will not all be

the same! They will have different flavours and characters according to the place where God has put them, the gifts that they have been given, and the people they are called to serve. We will share certain common aspirations though!

We will all be congregations who are not happy to settle with what we are now but want to grow into who God is calling us to be - growing in Christlikeness and growing in numbers.

We will want to be places where everyone is welcome, where we help each other to find the love and forgiveness that Jesus Christ longs for each of us to know as his gift to us.

Churches will grow in Christlikeness as each of us individually grows in our own walk with Jesus. Growing healthy churches are made up of growing healthy disciples!

As the pages of this magazine remind us, there is much to be thankful for already in our life together in this diocese. I trust that the pages of future editions will have more stories to tell of Growing Healthy Churches.

Yours ever,

+George

## Carmoney's coat of many colours!

During Covid-19, members of the Knitting B in Carmoney Parish Church kept busy knitting squares, thinking that when things returned to normal, they would make a Covid blanket.

Group member Elaine Cairncross came up with a better suggestion - a coat of many colours. Elaine painstakingly sewed the squares together making a magnificent garment which is on display in the baptistry of the church.

Post Covid, the ladies have remained busy, knitting a wide variety of items including twiddle muffs for nursing homes, hats for premature babies, hats and scarfs for the Mission to Seafarers, Easter chicks distributed in the community, and poppies which were part of a Remembrance Day



Carmoney Parish Knitting B members and the Rev Andy Heber modelling the coat of many colours.

display at Lillian Bland Park, Glengormley.

Numerous knitted jumpers and cardigans have been supplied to Women's Aid and also the mission field. Well done all!



Mission to Seafarers' Chaplain, the Rev Mark Reid, left, with Centre Manager, Paul Kirker.

# 'The seafaring life is a difficult one'

The Rev Mark Reid has taken up a new role as Chaplain to the Mission to Seafarers, based in Belfast Port.

Mark, who is married to Nicola and father to Rachel (24), grew up in Carnmoney Parish. He began a career in manufacturing, joining Shorts in 1987. He was the first employee to start up the Shorts' plant at Church Road, Newtownabbey, in 1989, before obtaining a Masters' Degree in Manufacturing Management and promotion to Production Manager.

In 1997, he moved to Bemac Engineering in Lisburn where he was Shift Manager, later promoted to Business Unit Manager. In 2004, Mark joined Wrightbus where he remained until 2012, before moves to Harlequin Plastics in Moira and then Radius Plastics in Lurgan in senior production positions. "I like new challenges," Mark quips. More recently, he has had to devote time to caring for his parents, sadly losing his mother to dementia last year.

Mark's path to ministry began in Kilbride

Parish, Doagh, where he was a parish reader under the Rev Paul Redfern for three years. In 2006, he was ordained as a deacon in the Non-Stipendiary Ministry (NSM), licensed to Glenavy Parish, and as priest a year later. He was NSM curate in Glenavy until 2012 and also held an appointment as Officiating Clergy to the Military at Aldergrove Station.

In 2012, Mark was appointed NSM priest-in-charge of Upper Falls, where he had a 'very happy' ministry for nine and a half years. In 2017, he completed the transfer course to full-time (stipendiary) ministry.

The previous Mission to Seafarers' Chaplain, the Rev Colin Hall-Thompson, retired in November 2021, and Mark was informed about the advertisement for the job in the 'Church Times' literally the evening before the closing date. Just over a week later, he was offered the post!

"During the pandemic, we all shared our

appreciation for nurses, doctors, and key workers, but there was no mention of low-paid seafarers, without whom we would not have had many items in our hospitals, shops or on our tables," Mark said. "The seafaring life is a difficult one and being involved in their welfare was a major draw for me."

As chaplain, Mark will not only cover Belfast Port, but also the ports of Warrenpoint, Larne and Lisnahally in Londonderry.

Although he has only been in the role a short time, Mark is quickly finding his feet, alongside Paul Kirker, who was appointed Centre Manager last June. With a background in accountancy and retail management, Paul was most recently Regional Operations Manager for Boots NI pharmacy delivery services, overseeing deliveries of medication to care homes and vulnerable people.

"Being able to help people in trouble feels really good, and that's what drew me to the job," Paul said.

For his role as chaplain, Mark has undergone induction training with the Port of Belfast Harbour Commissioners, the Seafarers' Mission and the Merchant Navy Welfare Board.

"The training is fantastic - and I see why



as you need to be well versed in all of the regulations,” he said.

“Thanks to a Marine Traffic app, every day I know which ships are coming into and out of Belfast Port, where they are from, the size of the ship and its crew make-up. That’s a tremendous help in going about helping with the welfare of seafarers. They had a rough time during the pandemic. Once on a ship, they couldn’t leave and a normal three to six month contract became much longer.”

Mark said that while most seafarers are male, women now make up two per cent of the seafaring crews.

The Mission to Seafarers has a wide and much appreciated network of supporters. Groups knit hats and scarves and donate clothing and other items for seafarers, and Mark is hoping fundraising activities, curtailed during the pandemic, will resume.

At the Mission to Seafarers’ building, the Flying Angel Centre at Belfast Docks, visiting seafarers can make use of a variety of services - a café, second-hand clothes shop, subsidised gift shop, a bar with a special licence dating back to the 1860s (and exclusively for seafarers), and of course the church within the complex.

Many of the seafarers have been on ships for months at end, and many ships still don’t have WiFi. When in port, they can purchase phone SIM cards from the Mission so they can contact family and friends back home.

“Even today, some captains are reluctant to let the seafarers off the ships when in port because they still are worried about Covid coming on board,” Mark said.

“We have seven-seater people carriers, and our staff and volunteers can collect seafarers and take them into the city to the shops. The seafarers love to go and see the Titanic exhibition or the area where the Titanic was built. A lot of them say they have seen the ‘Titanic’ movie many times



Chapel window at the Mission to Seafarers’ Flying Angel Centre.

- it’s a big draw for them!” Gifts relating to the Titanic are available in the Mission of Seafarers’ gift shop. “Our aim is not to profit from the seafarers, but to allow them to buy affordable gifts for themselves or for those at home,” said Mark.

Many of the seafarers are from the Phillipines, possibly supporting a family of 12 at home. In addition to the separation from family, long daily working hours, the stress of living onboard for months on end and the lack of communications, today there still is the added threat of piracy and the very real risk of abandonment (when a boat owner doesn’t have funds to pay the port authorities or crew), making the seafaring life a difficult one.

## There is still the added threat of piracy and the very real risk of abandonment

“Often they are abandoned in a foreign country where the laws mean they have to stay on board,” said Paul. He highlighted a case of five seafarers, who were eventually repatriated with help from the Mission to Seafarers, having spent nearly four years on a ship abandoned off the coast of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

An article in the ‘Flying Angel News,’ the magazine of the Mission, states the men had been in ‘a living hell.’ “When our chaplain in the UAE, Rev Andy Bowerman, contacted the men in 2019, they had already been without wages for more than a year.

“They were caught in an impossible situation. If they set foot onshore without the right documentation, they risked being detained and forfeiting their right to nearly £170,000 in unpaid wages. Onboard, they faced a prison sentence with no end.”

The magazine states that abandonment is at a record high. According to the International Maritime Organisation, 76 new cases of abandonment were recorded in 2020 involving 1,000 seafarers, and just 17 had been resolved.

Incidents closer to home for the Mission have included helping a ship captain who needed heart medication, and bringing seafarers to hospital. In the case of the captain, the Mission in Belfast organised for him to be seen at a GP surgery as a temporary resident, where he received the medication he needed.

In another case, a large tanker came into port, but the owners would not allow the 20 crew on board any shore leave. “We spent two days taking supplies such as clothes, SIM cards and treats like chocolate to the ship,” said Paul. “It was great helping those guys, for even though it was August, they were working in the night and were struggling with the cold.”

The Mission has three volunteer ship visitors in Belfast Port and one in Warrenpoint. The main requirement for this role is good fitness, as there could be 60 steps or more to get on a larger ship, and Mark and Paul are always on the lookout for volunteers for ship visiting or to assist at the Flying Angel Centre.

“When the crews are socialising here, they always have a smile on their faces because the charity has a strong bond with them,” said Mark.

In his first day in the job, the Mission had a phone call from the daughter of a seafarer wanting to make a donation following the death of her father, who many years earlier had the misfortune to be shipwrecked and at the time was helped by the Mission. As a result, the seafarer’s daughter invited Mark to officiate at her father’s funeral.

Looking forward, Mark is planning to resume services within the Mission church which were suspended during Covid-19. “We have already begun shortened midweek services for volunteers, and staff members, and hopefully will commence regular Sunday worship services early in 2023,” he said.

To find out more about the Mission to Seafarers, visit the organisation’s Facebook page or website at [www.missiontoseafarers.org/](http://www.missiontoseafarers.org/).



The Rev Mark Reid and Paul Kirker in the bright and spacious common room at the Flying Angel Centre, a welcoming space for visiting seafarers of all nations.



Congratulations to Connor Youth's SERVE graduates 2022. Included in the picture is Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie, back right.

## Congratulations to Connor's SERVE graduates!

Congratulations to the seven young people who graduated from the SERVE course 2022.

SERVE, which was run by Connor youth for a second time, involved weekly meetings at the Hub Chaplaincy over seven sessions.

The programme explores how young people can step into leadership, focusing on topics like the character of a leader and reflecting on their own gifts and skills.

Speaking of the SERVE class of 2022, Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie said: "We are delighted to have these young people linked into this course to explore how they can serve and lead in their local parish. It is such an encouragement to meet with them and explore what they can offer and grow in."

The 2022 group graduated during a contemporary carol service hosted by Mettle, Lisburn Cathedral's youth group, in the Cathedral on December 11.

## Fantastic Destination Christmas Event

The parish centre at All Saints', Antrim, was positively brimming with Christmas spirit on Friday December 2 when it hosted the Destination Christmas Event, organised by Connor Youth Forum.

There were Santa hats, reindeer horns and Christmas jumpers galore, as 80 young people came together to have festive fun and share in worship.

Destination is a series of events run by young people for young people, and while the young people took the lead, their leaders and clergy were also seen to be having a great time!

There was representation from parishes right across the diocese on the evening which began at 7pm with pizza and soft drinks for all, before the young people split into three groups for a variety of activities.

There was dodgeball and a game involving a net and lots of snowball-like balls in the main hall, gingerbread-

house building upstairs (with a lot of necessary finger licking!) and a variety of tabletop games in another area of the parish centre.

At around 8.30pm, the groups all converged in the main hall to worship together in song, led by the youth band from the United Parish of Christ Church and St John, Ballyclare.

Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie said: "We were delighted to have so much support from across the diocese for Connor Youth Forum's Christmas Event, with 14 parishes attending.

"The young people from the Youth Forum planned the evening and led each aspect with great confidence and ability. We are so grateful to have such



Enjoying a game at the Destination Christmas Event in All Saints' Parish Centre, Antrim.

amazing young people in our parishes!"

Thanking the band for leading worship, Christina added: "It was such a blessing and everyone engaged really well!"

## Streetreach 2023

Streetreach is moving to the north coast, with the young people from Engage Connor Youth partnering with the Grouped Parishes of Ballyrashane and Kildollagh; the Grouped Parishes of Ballintoy and Dunseverick with Rathlin Island; St Patrick's, Coleraine; and St Andrew's, Ballysally, for Streetreach 2023 and 2024.

Streetreach will run from July 4-7. Team applications are now live on the Connor website [www.connor.anglican.org](http://www.connor.anglican.org).



# A global, women-led movement

**The Rev Louise Bowes, Ordained Local Minister in the Church of the Holy Spirit, Mossley, is vice-chairperson of World Day of Prayer (WDP). Married to Alan and mum to three sons, Louise worked in Social Services before ordination in 2019. She has recently returned from a WDP workshop in Albania. Here, Louise talks about her role in this movement which has been active for almost 100 years.**

World Day of Prayer is a global, women-led, ecumenical movement which aims to bring together people of various ethnic backgrounds, cultures and traditions for an annual day of worship and prayer on the first Friday in March. In 2022, more than 1.5 million Christians, speaking 90 different languages in 150 countries, came together in spirit to pray for relevant issues affecting women and children.

It is amazing to be part of something so huge - a massive circle and wave of prayer which envelopes the world.

Through WDP, Christian women affirm their faith in Jesus, share their hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, opportunities and needs. They are encouraged to become aware of other countries and cultures and to pray with and for them. They are also encouraged to use their own talents in the service of society. WDP aims to demonstrate that prayer and action are inseparable and that both have immeasurable influence in the world.

## THEME

The worship service each year has a special theme and biblical text and is written by Christian women from a country which has expressed a desire to prepare an order of service. The themes and countries are matched at least five years previously. WDP came to the British Isles in 1930 through the missionary activity of a Scots woman, Grace Forgan, who heard of the movement at an international missionary gathering in Jerusalem in 1928.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Day of Prayer is organised through a national committee (EWNI) that edits the service and distributes resources to its branches. These include children and youth materials. A Bible Study is included in the service booklet, and there is lots of background information on the focus country regarding its history, culture, topography, religion, economy, etc. We also produce an annual magazine, 'Together in Prayer,' which includes a prayer section with thoughtful meditations.

The generosity of those attending WDP

Services across England, Wales and Northern Ireland each year enables the movement to fulfil its mission of 'informed prayer and prayerful action' through the allocation of grants to registered Christian charities worldwide, especially those programmes which benefit women and children.

The national committee also holds Y-Pray? - an annual women's conference which this year runs from April 28-30. Everyone who is on the EWNI national committee is a volunteer but works extremely hard! I don't think that people know the full extent of the work of WDP or that it is not just a one-day wonder, but a 24/7, 365 days a year, prayer movement.

## INCLUSIVE

'World Day of Prayer' is the original title of the movement and is still used by most countries. Some later added the word 'Women's' to distinguish this day of prayer from other 'world' days of prayer. The EWNI national committee decided to drop 'Women's' and align EWNI with the rest of the world. It is also more inclusive as the Day of Prayer is for everyone.

I have been involved at local branch level since 2012 and with the Northern Ireland Executive Committee since 2014. I served as Northern Ireland representative on the national committee since September 2015. At the AGM in May 2022, I was elected vice-chairperson. The appointment began in September 2022 and I will serve two years as vice-chairperson, two as

chairperson and two as president.

My role involves attending all committee and sub-committee meetings and helping the chairperson as required. The vice-chairperson is also a Trustee, oversees an office staff, is a signatory of the WDP bank accounts, and is one of the named owners of the office building. The position comes with a lot of responsibility!

During my term as Northern Ireland representative on the national committee, I was also editor of 'Together in Prayer' for three years. I was working part-time and in September 2018 began the two-year course for Ordained Local Ministry. It's been a roller-coaster ride but I am fortunate that the Rev Peter Jones is a very supportive rector and parish work has fitted in with everything else. I'm a firm believer (and testimony) that God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called!

This year's WDP service is once again highly relevant and topical. The focus is on Taiwan, a country that for many years has been caught in a superpower struggle. It has been isolated internationally for decades and, as of April 2022, only 13 of the 193 UN member states and Vatican City/Holy See have recognised it as a sovereign country. China continues to claim Taiwan as its sovereign territory, although a majority of Taiwanese reject reunification with China. The risk of conflict is now at its highest level for decades.

## ENCOURAGEMENT

The theme of this year's service is 'I have heard about your faith,' and is based on Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 1, verses 15-19. It includes letters of encouragement for women who face suffering and injustice. Taiwan is very much in need of prayers, not only for the country itself but also for world peace.

The Day of Prayer benefits churches locally as it brings people from different denominations, different age groups and different experiences together to worship and pray and, specifically, to pray together for a particular country. The services are organised by local committees made up of women from the different churches.

There is a sense of unity and togetherness between Christian sisters and brothers as the global wave of prayer goes around the world on the Day of Prayer.

Further information about World Day of Prayer can be found at [www.wwdp.org.uk](http://www.wwdp.org.uk).



The Rev Louise Bowes presenting Isobel Jack with a gift on her retirement (June 2022) as Mossley Parish representative on the local WDP committee. Isobel first invited Louise to a WDP service in 2012.

# Rev Ross Mungavin

**The Rev Ross Mungavin, youth pastor at St James' Church, Gerrards Cross with Fulmer, Buckinghamshire, has been appointed associate minister for the Inner South Belfast Mission Area, Connor Diocese.**

This is a new position. The Inner South Belfast Mission Area comprises the three parishes of St Aidan, St Mary Magdalene and St Simon with St Philip located in the Donegall Road / Donegall Pass area of South Belfast. St Aidan and St Mary Magdalene are formally grouped, but over the last number of years each of the parishes has been under the care of different clergy on a part-time basis.

The new associate minister will be supported and overseen by the Archdeacon of Belfast, the Ven Barry Forde, as priest-in-charge of the Mission Area.

For Ross, this will be something of a homecoming. The 32-year-old grew up in Jordanstown. He was baptised and confirmed in St John's Parish, Whitehouse, but came to faith through



The Rev Ross Mungavin.

St Patrick's Parish, Jordanstown, where he attended youth ministry.

A past pupil of Belfast High School, Ross began a Degree in Law with

Criminology at the University of Ulster, but later switched to the Open University, graduating with a Degree in English Literature in 2015.

He worked as a classroom assistant at Ashfield Girls' High School and in a daycare nursery in Ballyclare before joining BCMS Crosslinks as a ministry apprentice where he served from 2011-2013, focusing on youth ministry and in particular summer camps.

Ross married Emma in 2011, and in 2013 they moved to St John's, Downshire Hill, in Hampstead, where Ross worked in youth and children's ministry for four years before he entered training for ordination at Oakhill College, North London. Following ordination, in 2020, Ross was appointed youth pastor in St James', Gerrards Cross.

He and Emma have three young boys. Outside of church and his family, Ross enjoys rugby. He formerly played for Instonians when in Belfast, and for Saracens Amateurs in England. He still takes to the field occasionally,

Ross will take up his new role in mid-2023.

## Rev Arlene Moore

The Rev Arlene Moore was introduced as priest-in-charge of Kilwaughter and Cairncastle with All Saints', Craigyhill, at a service in All Saints' on October 18 last.

She grew up in Glynn and later lived in Craigyhill, before moving to Antrim. She has a BSc Joint Hons in Biochemistry and Pharmacology from Dundee University. Arlene worked in cancer research in the Department of Medicine and Therapeutics at Aberdeen University before qualifying with a PGCE and teaching in Scotland and Northern Ireland.



The Rev Arlene Moore.

She was accepted for ordination in 1992 and during her time at Theological College developed a love of world mission, completing an elective placement in South East Asia. Overseas trips continued throughout Arlene's curacy years in St Mark's, Portadown.

Moving to England in 1999, Arlene worked as a research assistant in a second curacy at St Thomas' Church, Crookes, Sheffield, and then in disabled student support as an assistant lecturer in both Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam Universities whilst studying for various further qualifications, including two Masters' degrees

Returning to Northern Ireland in 2009, Arlene took up the role of full-time NHS chaplain in both the Mater and Musgrave Park Hospitals and priest-in-charge in the Church of the Good Shepherd, Monkstown. In 2016, she moved to St Comgall's, Rathcoole, as part-time priest-in-charge whilst training in the Facilitation of Lectio Divina and qualifying as a Spiritual Director.

Preacher at the Service of Introduction was the Rev Alan Lorimer.

## Rev John Farr

The Rev John Farr was introduced as priest-in-charge of Gartree Parish at a service in the scenic church close to the shores of Lough Neagh on October 16 2022.

John was ordained a deacon in the Non Stipendiary Ministry in 2008, and ordained a priest the following year. He was curate in Muckamore, Killead and Gartree Parishes from June 2008, until moving to Stoneyford Parish as priest-in-charge in 2011. He also also helped out in other parishes in Connor Diocese during vacancies.

John is married to Angela, and they have two daughters, Cathy-Ann and Victoria, and one grandson. Prior to ordination, John worked as a farmer and market gardener in the Glenavy area, and since 2012, he and his daughter Victoria have run Rathlane Care Farm, a social farm and equestrian centre which offers opportunities for people with learning difficulties.

Gartree Parish Church was packed for the Service of Introduction, which was also a celebration of Harvest Thanksgiving. John was introduced by Bishop George Davison, and the preacher at the service was the Rev Ivan Dungan.

Supper was served in the parish hall, where John and Angela (pictured) enjoyed a specially-baked welcome cake. John is now priest-in-charge of the Grouped Parishes of Stoneyford and Gartree.





## Rev Geoff Haugh

The Rev Geoff Haugh was instituted as rector of the Parishes of Billy and Derrykeighan at a service in Billy Parish Church on December 9 2022.

Geoff is married to Karen and they have four daughters and four grandchildren.

A native of the Birches, between Dungannon and Portadown, Geoff, 55, is a past pupil of Killycomaine Junior High School and Portadown Technical College. He served with Her Majesty's Forces in Northern Ireland for 17 years, and also worked in agriculture as a sales representative in animal medication and later animal nutrition.

Geoff began his ministry in 2013 as a deacon in Ballymore Parish, Tandragee, Diocese of Armagh. He moved to St Philip and St James' Church, Holywood, Down and Dromore Diocese, as curate in 2014. Remaining in Down and Dromore, Geoff was incumbent in Knocknamuckley Parish from June 2017.

Geoff was instituted by Bishop George Davison. The preacher at the service was the Rev Graham Spence, rector of Acton, Drumbanagher and Loughgilly, Diocese of Armagh.



Bishop George Davison, Mrs Karen Haugh, the Rev Geoff Haugh, the Rev Malcolm Ferry and the Rev Graham Spence (preacher).

## Rev Adrian Halligan

The Rev Adrian Halligan was instituted as rector of the Grouped Parishes of Craigs, Dunaghy and Killagan at a service in Craigs' Parish Church on October 13 2022.

Adrian has been priest-in-charge of the parish since September 2018. He is married to Wendy and they have one daughter, Abigail.

A former telecommunications engineer, Adrian was ordained a deacon in January 2011 in All Saints' Parish Church, Antrim.

He served as curate in All Saints' and was ordained there as a priest in November 2011. He did his first curacy in Antrim before moving to Skerry, Rathcavan and Newtowncrommelin in Broughshane for three years. During this time, he transferred from non-stipendiary to stipendiary ministry.

The Very Rev John Bond, former Dean of Connor, was the preacher at the Service of Institution.



The Rev Adrian Halligan, front centre, with his wife Wendy, right, daughter Abigail, left, and clergy at the service in Craigs' Parish Church.

## Rev Danielle McCullagh

The Rev Danielle McCullagh, vicar of Lisburn Cathedral, has been appointed chaplain and Dean of Residences at The Hub, the Church of Ireland/ Methodist Chaplaincy at Queen's University and Stranmillis College.

She succeeds the Ven Barry Forde, Archdeacon of Belfast, Priest-in-Charge of the Inner South Belfast Mission Area.

In her new role Danielle, 32, will serve in covenant alongside the Ulster University Chaplain, currently appointed by the Methodist Church. As chaplain, she will lead the staff team at the Hub, including centre management, café and ancillary staff, and serve as Dean of Residences in the Student Centre, which during term-time is home to some 50 residential students and ministry interns.

Danielle grew up in Glengormley. She was ordained deacon in 2016, serving her deacon internship in St Brigid's, Mallusk. After ordination as a priest in August 2017, she was curate-assistant in Lisburn Cathedral until her institution as vicar of the Cathedral in June 2021.

Danielle is the current Chair of Engage Connor Youth. She has a BA (Hons) Degree in Childhood Studies and Professional Practice Studies from Northumbria University, Newcastle upon



The Rev Danielle McCullagh.

Tyne, and before training for ordination, she worked in Carnmoney Primary School as a Classroom Assistant with children with special needs.

Danielle said she was very excited about her new role. "I had the opportunity to get to know a few of the students when I spoke at a recent Hub weekend," she said. It was, in part, her own experiences at university that drew her to the role of chaplain. "I found my undergraduate years some of the hardest for me to be a Christian, and I

realised how critical and how formative this time is for young people," she said.

"In Lisburn, I have been involved in youth ministry and 20s' and 30s' ministry. From a parish perspective, we invest in them and then send them on to university. As chaplain, we can continue to invest in them in an intentional way."

Danielle will be living next door to the students. "It is incarnational living - you have to live among them even more than in a parish setting," she said. "One of my favourite aspects of ministry is working one-to-one."

She will also serve as chaplain to the Church of the Resurrection within The Hub. "The chaplaincy role is a dual one," she said. "I will be chaplain to a group of students, but also to an all-age worshipping community at the Church of the Resurrection."

Danielle said she is looking forward to the opportunity to build on all that Archdeacon Forde has achieved. "He has done an incredible job, and it is a privilege to go into such a healthy ministry," she said.

Danielle will be the first female chaplain since the role of chaplain / Dean of Residences in the then Queen's College, Belfast, first came into being in 1849. The chaplaincy itself opened in 1954.



Dr Maurice Elliott guiding Bible Study at the Connor Clergy Conference.



Small group discussions were a feature of the conference.



The Revs David Lockhart and Gareth Campbell.



Animated group discussions.



The Rev Danielle McCullagh, Bishop George and the Rev James Boyd.



Dean Stephen Forde and Canon Kevin Graham.



The Revs Chris St John and Heather Cooke.

# A real sense is at work' i

Clergy from across the Diocese of Connor g  
Cavan in November 2022 for the first clergy

More than 70 clergy and those involved in ministry in the diocese joined the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, and diocesan staff for the three-day conference.

Bishop George led a number of sessions and Dr Maurice Elliott, Director of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, led Bible studies over the three days.

The liturgy for all services for the conference was prepared by the Rev Canon Peter McDowell, rector of Ballywillan, Portrush; and the worship was accompanied by music from the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth (Ballynure and Ballyeaston); the Rev Trevor Johnston (All Saints', Belfast); Archdeacon Stephen McBride (All Saints', Antrim) and the Rev Stu Reid (Ballymoney, Finvoy and Rasharkin).

Conference opened on Tuesday afternoon, November 8, with worship, followed by Dr Elliott's first Bible study on the theme 'Moving forward on the principal of turning back' (Psalm 51).

The first session led by Bishop George was

**'You have m  
together... by  
engaging s**





Participants in the 2022 Connor Clergy Conference, held in the Slieve Russell Hotel, Co Cavan, in November 2022.

# e the 'Lord n Connor

gathered at the Slieve Russell Hotel in Co  
conference since 2018.

entitled 'Sharing a vision,' and during the session, clergy gathered into their Rural Deanery groups for small-group discussion. After dinner, the first day concluded with a short talk from Archdeacon Barry Forde on pioneer ministry, followed by Evening Prayer.

Wednesday morning opened with a Service of Holy Communion, led by Bishop George assisted by the Rev Gareth Campbell.

Dr Elliott's second Bible Study was on the theme 'Moving forward on the basis of solid ground' (Mark 15: 25-39), and the sun shone as all delegates moved outdoors

ade this time  
y thinking and  
so readily'

shaped Life,' with people again gathering in smaller groups to talk about the issues presented by the bishop.

There was some free time on Wednesday afternoon, with the opportunity to take a walk, chat with colleagues, play a round of golf or simply relax and recharge. Following the evening meal, Bishop George led his third session 'Building the Family,' with many

contributions from the floor following group discussions.

Richard Cotter, Diocesan Finance and Administration Manager, gave an update on the new diocesan Content Management System, and Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie spoke about Clusters, a Youth Council initiative for clergy and youth leaders. Wednesday evening concluded with a Service of Compline.

Dr Elliott's final Bible study on the Thursday morning was entitled 'Moving forward by means of a spiritual health check' (Col 1: 1-14). The Rev Canon Kevin Graham, Diocesan Director of Ordinands, spoke about ordination in stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministries and Ordained Local Ministers, and the Rev Peter Jones, Warden of Readers, talked about readers' ministry.

Bishop George led his final session on the

theme 'Growing the team,' and Church Army Evangelists Karen Webb and Stephen Whitten, from Connect Base, Connor's North Belfast Centre of Mission, gave an outline of Church Army's Faith Suite resource.

A small gift was presented to Dr Elliott by the Very Rev Sam Wright, Dean of Connor, as a token of thanks for his inspiring Bible Studies. Dr Elliott commented: "I want to affirm and encourage you for a real sense that the Lord is at work within Connor Diocese."

Before the conference ended with closing devotions, Bishop George said that the event had been 'really positive and encouraging.'

"I trust and pray that some of the conversations we started here will be conversations that will carry on, and we are going to be working with you to encourage those conversations to grow and develop," the bishop said.

He thanked his staff team, the hotel staff for their hospitality, Canon McDowell for organising the worship and liturgy, and those who had provided the music. To the clergy, he said: "Thanks to each one of you for coming. It is you who have made this time together what it has been by thinking and engaging so readily in the conversations. Thank you for that and for what you are already doing."



Bishop George gives a talk during Clergy Conference.



Opening worship at Clergy Conference 2022.



Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev John McDowell, President of the Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade in Northern Ireland, presenting Jennifer Lockhart, Captain of Dobbin Church Girls' Brigade and Melvyn Lockhart, Deputy Governor Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade, with the Brigade Cross.

## Prestigious award for CLCGB leaders

Two members of the Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade (CLCGB) have been presented with the highest award - The Brigade Cross - for exceptional service.

Melvyn Lockhart (Deputy Governor) and Jennifer Lockhart (Captain of Dobbin CGB) accepted the awards from CLCGB President, Archbishop John McDowell, in the presence of other Regimental staff.

Melvyn began his Brigade life as a member of Christ Church, Lisburn, Church Lads' Brigade (CLB) Company and came up through the ranks, eventually becoming an Officer and then a Training Officer.

In 2014, he was appointed Commanding Officer of the CLCGB NI by the Archbishop of Armagh and served in this position for two four-year terms. Last year, Melvyn was one of the nominees who received Maundy Money from His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales (now King Charles), at Windsor in recognition of his contribution to the Church and community.

Jennifer joined St Saviour's, Dobbin, Church Girls' Brigade Company in primary school and went up the ranks, eventually promoted to an Officer and then Captain - a position she has held for many years.

She was a Battalion Commanding Officer from 1985, completing two four-year terms. Until late 2021, she also held the post of Communications Officer for the CLCGB NI.

## Gillian's top shot!

Congratulations to Glenavy parishioner Gillian Steele, whose stunning picture of St Aidan's Parish Church in the snow scooped the top prize in the 'Church of Ireland Gazette' December photography competition, appearing on the front cover.

Gillian and Glenavy Parish both received a prize from the competition sponsors.

# Tractor Run a big success in Gartree

Gartree Parish Church, located on the estate of RLC Langford Lodge Ltd near Crumlin, held a very successful fundraising Tractor Run and Open Day.

All proceeds from the event were in aid of Gartree Parish Church Building Fund, and the RLC Langford Lodge Ltd 2022 charities - Castle Tower School, Fleming Fulton School and Parkview School.

After registration, 115 tractors of different shapes and sizes set off on a short run around the estate, located on the Lough Neagh shore, which served as Northern Ireland Base Command for United States troops during World War Two.

On their return, lunch, included in the registration fee, was served, and all Tractor Run participants received a commemorative medal. Later, there was an auction of farm produce, including hay, silage, power tools, coal, a turkey, straw and much more!

Elizabeth McBride, a local history enthusiast, gave a talk in the church on the history of the Packenham family and Langford Lodge site.

Throughout the day, visitors were able to look around the 19th century church and adjoining graveyard and were entertained in the afternoon by music played on the recently repaired 'Glen Millar' organ.

Dundarave Farm Shop was on site, while Randox was offering health checks. There was hot food, a car boot sale, tombola, vintage teas and an ice cream van. The event raised around £8,000.



Enjoying the tractor run at Gartree Parish Church!

Priest-in-charge, the Rev John Farr, said. "The estate is not normally open to the public, which is why we had such a great response. To get to see around the site is a real privilege."

He credited parishioner Bertie Graham with the vision for the Tractor Run, held on October 8. "The day was a raging success. There was a lot of work done by a lot of people, but especially Bertie," John said. "There were prayers for good weather beforehand, and the sun shone all day!"

## Ballymacash churches' community cafe

In response to the ongoing cost of living crisis, churches in Ballymacash - including St Mark's Parish - have come together to offer a free lunch five days a week to anyone who wants to drop in.

The Rev Lynne Gibson, rector of Ballymacash, explained: "The idea and vision for the cafe came from Jonathan Oates, manager of the local Costcutter for the past 20 years. Jonny has been witnessing at first hand the food and fuel pressures people are already experiencing.

"Following discussions with the four churches in Ballymacash and our community centre, and with the support of local sponsors, the community cafe was

launched."

The drop in café - nicknamed 'A Bowl and A Roll' - first opened on October 31 2022, and runs five days a week from 12-2pm, providing hot soup and a roll along with tea/coffee and biscuits.

Each local church runs the café on a particular day - it is held in St Mark's on Fridays. Lynne added: "It has been heartening to have the local churches working together to help their own community and to have local sponsorship.

"This service is free and available to everyone who wishes to drop in for warm food in a warm space with warm conversation."



## Organ scholars rewarded

The Down, Dromore and Connor Organ Scholarship Choral Evensong was held in St Columba's, Knock, on October 23.

Chancellor John Auchmuty, Chairman of the Board, and Secretary, the Rev Canon David Humphries, welcomed the scholars.

Sean Turner from Ballymoney Parish was presented with his award following his three years' tuition under the direction of Dr Joe McKee.

The scholars past and present led the service, directed by Dr McKee and accompanied on the organ by Alfred Casement. Brain Clements, Ronnie Drury and Rebekah Wilson, all past recipients of the award, sang with the present scholars. The Rev Canon Walter Laverty intoned the service. Chancellor Auchmuty preached.

The Down, Dromore and Connor Organ Scholarship scheme is in its 32nd year and aims to provide training in organ



Chancellor John Auchmuty, front left, the Rev Canon David Humphries, front right, and Dr Joe McKee, back left, with scholars at the Organ Scholarship Service in St Columba's, Knock, on October 23 2022.

playing, choir accompaniment, choral direction and vocal techniques, along with experience in a wide variety of liturgical music.

Current organ scholars are: Lucy Steele (first year), Glenavy; Clare Kelly (second

year), Jordanstown; Larissa Fleck (second year), Armoy; Dr Mark McKinty (second year), Larne and Inver; Grace Steed (second year), Dundela; Tanya Zachara (third year), Dundela; David Dunlop (third year), All Saints' & St Nicholas. (Report by Angela Kerr).

## A beacon of hope in north Belfast

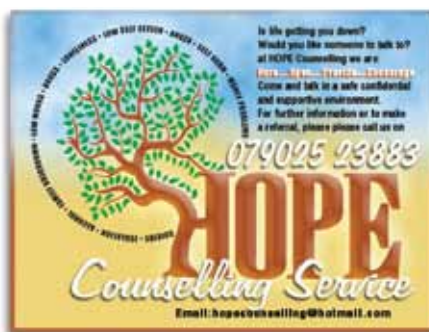
Hope Counselling Support, based in the Parish of St Paul and St Barnabas, Belfast, offers professional counselling and pastoral support to people with mental health issues.

The project was established following a meeting of the Select Vestry in May 2018 to support an area of special need in and around north Belfast.

Select Vestry member Alan McIntosh and his daughter Claire, both professional counsellors, were present at that meeting in May 2018.

They named the project Hope Counselling Support. Its logo, depicting a tree blossoming within the letter H of the word Hope, is inspired by the cherry blossom and ash trees gracing the lawns of St Paul's Church.

"The psychotherapeutic significance of the tree growing and blossoming is representative of someone who has felt the need to take that all-important first step in seeking help by making a phone call or emailing the Hope address, to engaging with one of the therapists, to benefiting



from that experience, and to bringing about positive change in their wellbeing and daily lifestyle," Alan said.

Hope Counselling Support is part of the counsellors' professional body, the British Association of Counselling Psychotherapy, and the Association of Christian Counselling.

Alan and Claire initially trained as integrative counsellors, focusing on the knowledge and skills, application and delivery of

therapeutic models of person-centred, cognitive behavioural and psychodynamic therapies. In addition, they each have 15 years' experience in counselling, having worked in various agencies in the Belfast area. In that time, both accrued further knowledge and skills in the application and delivery of other successful therapeutic models to work with what best suits a particular client presenting needs.

A client may present with one or more of a range of mental health issues. These can include attempted suicide, suicide ideation, self-harming behaviour, addiction from prescribed or illegal drugs or substances, or addictive behaviours in gambling or online shopping.

They may also suffer from such mental health issues as anxiety, stress, low-mood, bipolar, clinical depression, PTSD, family conflict, bereavement, or be experiencing a crisis in faith or loneliness.

"The outworking of these negative issues impacts on the ability of an individual to function in their daily lifestyle and wellbeing and most likely will negatively affect their families, loved ones or those who they come into contact within their life circle," Alan said.

Anyone wanting to find out more can contact Alan and Claire by email at [hopecounselling1@hotmail.com](mailto:hopecounselling1@hotmail.com) or on 07902 523883.

# Agherton Parish welcomes refugees

When M is asked to show the cross tattooed on his shoulder, he looks around nervously. "Is it okay?" he asks. Only when he is assured by the Rev Malcolm Ferry that it is perfectly acceptable to display the cross of Christ here in Northern Ireland does M roll up his sleeve.

This is something he could never have done in his homeland of Iran, where being a Christian can result in persecution, forcing Christians to worship in secret or - if they are discovered - to flee for their lives.

M is one of a group of men who have had no choice but to leave their families behind in their home country, and who have found a warm welcome in Agherton Parish in Portstewart. We are using their initials to protect their families at home.

Since early November, the parish hall is open to them on two afternoons a week, allowing the refugees from Iran and many other countries, including Syria, Sudan and Eritrea, to leave the confines of their nearby hotel and meet socially for sport and recreation.

M was the first of the refugees and asylum seekers to come to a service in the church. Others followed him, and at Christmas a number of the men participated in the retelling of the nativity, reading from their Persian Bibles while their words in English were displayed on the big screen.

They are also being taught English by volunteers from the parish and have been helping with chores around the church and church hall as, because of their status as asylum seekers, they are not permitted to undertake paid work.

Parishioner Maureen Glover, a former special needs teacher, is helping with the English lessons. "It is a big thing for them to have confidence in the language," says Maureen. "Learning is a path to employment. They are so lovely, respectful and keen to learn."

"I am finding this stimulating and challenging. They have a sense of humour, and it is good to have a laugh."

Fellow parishioner Sir Paul Girvan, who has a background in languages, is also helping with the classes. "The range of English is quite wide," he says. "A couple are quite fluent, while others don't have any English at all."

His class is made up of bakers, builders, plumbers, electricians and more. "They have come from jobs that they are good at," he comments, adding that the men, who did not know each other before arriving on the north coast, get on well together.

"The church is becoming something of a centre for them. I have only known these guys for a short time, but already I know more about them than I do about many of my fellow parishioners," Paul says

We visited Agherton Parish Centre on a Thursday afternoon in January to meet some of those who have joined the



M can finally show his tattoo of a cross without fear for his life - but even now we have to blur his face in print.



Two asylum seekers enjoy a game of table football.



Aged just 22, A hoped to go to university. He does not know when he will see his family in Iran again.



Learning to play the piano in Agherton Parish Centre.



Refugees and asylum seekers enjoying some down time with the rector of Agherton, the Rev Malcolm Ferry, right, and parish volunteers Sir Paul Girvan and Maureen Glover, who are helping teach the men English. In all our photographs, the refugees' faces have been blurred to conceal their identity and protect their families at home.





The Rev Malcolm Ferry, rector of Agherton Parish, has the opportunity to say hello to M's three-year-old daughter in Iran via What's App.

Agherton church family. Their stories are harrowing.

AR was born in Tehran and is married with two daughters aged 18 and six. His English is excellent. He had to leave the country after he was identified protesting against the regime. "I had to escape, I had no time to make decisions. My family had to arrange my escape, we did not know where I would be going," he says.

He shows a picture of his six-year-old daughter. AR has not seen his family in person in three months. "My youngest daughter thought I had left them. She would not speak to me at first, she is too young to understand," says AR.

"My first target is to get asylum and get my wife and family here as quickly as possible, but that decision is in the hands of the Home Office. If I return, we will be in fear of our lives. People here are so kindly, so hospitable, smiling as us, even as strangers, and that is strange to me."

AR has a Degree in Tourism Management but says he will be happy to work in any field. "I will and I must," he emphasises.

M looks younger than his 37 years. He left Iran because he is a Christian. "I cannot do church freely in Iran. I had to park several streets away to go to the home which was our church. There were nine people who would meet with our priest."

He has had to leave his wife, two sons and three-year-old daughter behind. He is a skilled pastry chef and also a welder and kitchen cabinet designer.

M reveals that his work as a chef has



A game of snooker for this asylum seeker on a Thursday afternoon in Agherton Parish Centre is a welcome change from the confines of a hotel room.

already attracted attention here and that has led to a job offer - but as an asylum seeker he cannot take that offer up. During our visit, he and Malcolm chatted to his little girl via What's App.

## **'I cannot go back because if I do, I will be under a death sentence'**

B shows us photographs of bullet wounds he sustained during a protest in support of rights for women. He had to go into hiding for a month before fleeing his country, his wounds treated by his brother, a nurse, in secret. The scars, both physical and mental, are still raw. His wife, 11-year-old son and twin daughters aged just three, are still in Iran.

B worked as a builder and welder. He

has little English, but through AR says he would like to stay here and work. "I like Mr Malcolm, your people are very good and kind," he says.

A is just 22. He does not know when he will see his parents and younger sister again. He received a warning from the police for his part in joining a protest in support of young women. "I had to leave, I was in danger. Still the police go every day to my family and ask, 'Where is A?'" he says.

"I miss my family, but the police have my picture and I cannot go back because if I do, I will be under a death sentence." He pauses. "I had wanted to go to university, but as an asylum seeker, I can't."

A says that until there is a change of government in Iran, he will not see his mother or sister. "The people in church here are very kind and help me. At Christmas, I read for other people in my language, and people said it was very good and they clapped. I am proud of me."

X is an Iranian Christian. He has left behind his wife and two daughters aged 15 and 40 after he was photographed attending a church service. "The police raided the church and took my picture, so I had to escape. I feel this country is safe, people are very kind, like friends," he says.

The men are all currently living in the Rambler Inn, close to Agherton Parish Centre.

Malcolm explains how M first came to church last November, where he was warmly welcomed, and in the following weeks brought other refugees along. M brought his Persian Bible with him, his friends followed. "He has become quite the evangelist!" Malcolm quips.

"Opening the hall, allowing them in to use equipment that was here anyway seemed an easy offer, so they come in two days a week and that gives them the chance to leave the hotel."

The men are now planning their baptism in Agherton Parish. "They are really determined to publicly state their faith, and our parish will stand with them as Godparents," Malcolm adds.

Meantime, Malcolm is looking forward to the meal M plans to cook him for his birthday, and to taking on any of the refugees and asylum seekers in a competitive game of pool, table football, or even table tennis. As the light fades, we leave them to their games in the heart of their new church community.



The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, Dean Stephen Forde and, in the background, the Rev Canon Raymond Fox, all wrapped up warmly on the first day of the 2022 Black Santa Sit-out at Belfast Cathedral.

# Black Santa - need is as great as any across the decades

The 2022 Black Santa Sit-out at Belfast Cathedral raised almost £130,000 and this was distributed to some 130 charities at the annual Good Samaritans Service on February 5.

The Christmas sit-out ran from December 19 until the afternoon of Christmas Eve. It was Dean Stephen Forde's fifth sit-out, and the 46th year of a tradition started in 1976 by Dean Sammy Crooks and maintained by his successors.

Dean Crooks was dubbed Black Santa by the media because he wore a black Anglican clerical cloak to protect him from the elements, and the name has stuck for

more than four decades.

The 2022 appeal focused on registered charities supporting the most disadvantaged families and individuals in the community, and charities working directly with refugee communities here.

The Cathedral had decided that to increase the impact of the appeal's support for local charities, grants would be awarded to those registered charities whose annual

income was £150,000 or less in 2021.

Dean Forde said the Cathedral wanted to focus on supporting those smaller local charities who are on the front line of giving direct help to people struggling most with the cost of living crisis.

"Earlier in the year, people had to choose between 'eating and heating.' Now they find that they cannot afford to do either. Forty-six years after Dean Sammy Crooks started the first Christmas Sit-out, the need is as great as any across those decades," Dean Forde said.

The sit-out got off to a lively start, and at one point on the first day, three bishops, past and present, were helping the Dean, along with the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Tina Black, who was fitted out with a Black Santa cloak to help receive donations into the wooden barrel.

Lord Lieutenant, Dame Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle DBE DStJ, and her staff delivered the collection received at the Lieutenantcy Carol Service and further colour was added by the staff of Christian Aid who stopped by in their bright red hoodies.

Later in the week, Steve Baker, Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office, took time out of a busy schedule to wrap up in a Black Santa cloak and join in thanking those who had come to make a donation.

Reflecting on the sit-out, Dean Forde said: "As the fifth Dean since 1976, I had a good idea that that the week before Christmas would mean standing on the Cathedral steps in Donegall Street. But I did not realise how important the role of Black Santa is to the wider community, and how loved across the generations."

He revealed that he had been given a gift of a paper model of Black Santa, complete with an umbrella for the rain and a black cloak to keep warm!

"Whether it is children with their bags of coins, taxi drivers or Porche drivers with £20 notes, or the passer-by who quietly hands over a bundle of cash, people know that the Black Santa Appeal is a Christmas tradition to which they want to give generously," the Dean added.

Of the decision to focus on charities whose income was £150,000 or less, Dean Forde said: "We are being true to what I believe are the origins of Black Santa - to support small local charities, rather than big national charities, with Christian Aid the one exception."

The Christmas sit-out was Dean Forde's second in 2022 - during Lent, he raised more than £56,000 for those whose lives had been impacted by the war in Ukraine.

## ReLENTless Prayer 2023

ReLENTless Prayer returns to north and west Belfast for Lent 2023, with prayer spaces open from February 27 until March 31.

Stephen Whitten, Church Army Evangelist with Connect Base, Connor Diocese's North Belfast Centre of Mission, said: "In a busy world, God can seem far away and difficult to connect with, but giving time to earnestly pray can create doorways through which the reviving life of God can bring change and blessing on us and our communities."

"With this hope in mind, we will be running ReLENTless Prayer again this year through the season of Lent and inviting other churches to get involved in creating space for people to connect with God."

ReLENTless Prayer provides space for people to pray along a series of shared themes. Each venue offers prayer space in its own tradition. There will also be a book that 'travels' between each venue - a journal which gives people opportunity to include prayers of interest, pictures and prayer themes.





Members of Lisburn Cathedral's Nimble Fingers' group unveil the knitted model of the Cathedral and surrounding buildings at the 400th anniversary launch service on January 15. Photo: Norman Briggs.

# Ladies knit model of Lisburn Cathedral!

A year of celebrations to mark the 400th anniversary of Christ Church Cathedral, Lisburn, is underway, with a special launch service held on January 15.

The celebratory year kicked off the previous weekend with '400 Minutes of Prayer' on January 7, with both silent and led prayer and prayer stations all around the Cathedral.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, and the Mayor of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Councillor Scott Carson, joined Dean Sam Wright, members of the Cathedral Chapter, former members of the clergy team, and the wider Cathedral community for the service on January 15.

Afterwards, the Cathedral's Nimble Fingers' group unveiled an incredible 3D knitted model of the Cathedral, graveyard and some of the key historic buildings in Bridge Street, Castle Street and Market Square.

This project was many months in the making, after Cathedral groups were asked to consider how they could contribute to the 400-year celebrations. Members of Nimble Fingers met late last spring to discuss their contribution, with the model idea inspired by a knitted model of Cloughmills village created by a craft group there.

Goup leader Margaret Fullerton said: "The discussion continued and ideas emerged. Could we knit the Cathedral? Could we knit other buildings?"

The 400 Years' Celebration Committee thought it was a great idea, and after a visit to Cloughmills by two members of Nimble Fingers, the group adopted the project.



Mayor of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Councillor Scott Carson, Bishop George Davison, Dean Sam Wright and vicar, the Rev Danielle McCullagh, at the 400th anniversary service in Christ Church Cathedral, Lisburn. Photo: Norman Briggs.

"Ken Gibson was instrumental in suggesting buildings in and around the Cathedral," said Margaret. "Photos were taken and when we met in September we began to make plans. By October, members had decided what they would knit. Eleven ladies were involved - some knit grass, paths and roads and others knit buildings."

Margaret added: "Teamwork was extremely important when inspiration dried up!"

The project was completed by the middle of January, just in time for the launch service. "As a group we are delighted with the response from the congregation and feel very proud of what we achieved in such a short time," Margaret said.

Details of other anniversary events will be shared on the Connor website.

## Commemoration of the establishment of the RUC in 1922



RUC standard bearers pictured with the Rev Campbell Dixon; the Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey, Alderman Stephen Ross; and the rector of Kilbride, the Rev Canon David Humphries. Photo: David Holmes.

A service to commemorate the formation of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in place of the Royal Irish Constabulary in 1922 was held in Kilbride Parish Church on October 2 last.

The formation of the RUC, on June 1 1922, followed the partition of Ireland. In the wake of the Patten Report, the police force was reformed and renamed as the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) on November 4 2001.

The special service in Kilbride recognised the contribution and sacrifice made by police officers in Northern Ireland over 100 years. This was the main service for the Borough of Antrim and Newtownabbey and the Worshipful the Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey, Alderman Stephen Ross, was in attendance, together with other councillors and local MLA, Dr Steve Aiken OBE.

The lessons were read by former officers and the praise was led by the PSNI Ladies' Choir. The preacher was the Rev Campbell Dixon MBE, a former officer in the RUC and later the PSNI, who was ordained following his retirement in 2007 and served in Connor Diocese.



Five new benches were dedicated in the grounds of St John's Parish Church, Islandmagee, as part of the Harvest Thanksgiving Service on October 16. The benches were generously purchased by parishioners in memory of family members, and dedicated by the rector, the Rev Canon Mark Taylor, pictured.



Pictured with Carolyn Moore, front right, at the cheque presentation to Dawn McConnell from Hope House are some of those involved in organising the coffee morning in Carnmoney Parish - Heather Seeds, Shirley Earley, Jean Scott, and Lynne Heber.

# Carolyn shows faith and hope in action

When Carolyn Moore received a terminal cancer diagnosis in July 2021, she feared she might not see her 50th birthday.

More than 18 months on, surrounded by prayer and with ongoing treatment and a positive mental attitude, Carolyn is doing well.

Last October, she decided she wanted to 'give something back.' She organised a coffee morning in Carnmoney Parish Church in support of Hope House, a respite facility for adults with cancer, their carers and adult friends, based in Islandmagee. The event raised £3,015.

Now living in Doagh, Carolyn grew up

in Carnmoney Parish where she was a regular attendee at church with her mum Shirley Earley and her late father Alec. She sang in the choir, helped in the creche and also had the chance to take part in a cross-community trip to America.

Mum to daughters Courtney, aged 20, and 15-year-old Kelsey, Carolyn recalled how in July 2021 she had been referred to Antrim Hospital for an X-ray after experiencing numbness in her pelvic area. After MRI and CT scans, she was told the following day that she had a 4cm tumour on her right

kidney and this had spread to the sacrum area of the lower spine. The pressure was causing the numbness she was experiencing. The diagnosis was stage four Renal Cell Carcinoma.

"I went home, told my family what was going on, had a cry and that was that," said Carolyn. "The next day, I met with consultants in the City Hospital and began a five-day course of radiotherapy. On September 24 2021, I had my right kidney removed."

Carolyn started on immunotherapy drugs, but she struggled with the side-effects of these and is now taking a chemo target pill. She visits the City Hospital to have her blood tested and to see the consultant every two weeks and has CT scans every three months.

"Touch wood, I am great, I have been going every month since June for bloods, and they have been good for the last few months," she said. "I get a bone injection every month to protect my bones as my immune system is low. I am tired, so if I need to go back to bed, I do."

Hope House, overlooking Brown's Bay, was established by Dawn and Roy McConnell who have both had to fight cancer themselves. "They realised there wasn't really a place for adults to go to find peace for a weekend break," said Carolyn. "They felt they needed to do something. Hope House is amazing. It offers respite to those who have cancer, those who are in remission and their families."

Carolyn spent a weekend there with her mum and two friends. "It was the end of July last year. We were there over my one-year cancer anniversary," Carolyn said. "It was so special to be with the best people in such a fabulous place. There is a lovely tranquil sitting room with a massive window, looking out to sea."

It was after this special experience that Carolyn decided to hold the coffee morning. "I just wanted to give something back to the people who have helped me," she explained.

"On the day I went for my first radiotherapy, the consultant told me I would have six months. I asked if I would see my 50th birthday. A second consultant told me I would have 18 months to two years.

"I turned 50 in February 2022 and friends from England came over to surprise me. I cried and cried. It was very special. I didn't know how long I would have left. I have always stayed positive. I know there are a lot of people praying for me and I do have faith, but who knows how long anybody has."

## A big thanks to Clonard Monastery

Clonard Monastery nominated Baby Basics Belfast for its Crib Appeal for Christmas 2022, and on January 22 presented a cheque for £4,000 to Karen Webb, Church Army Evangelist in Connor's North Belfast Centre of Mission.

Expressing her thanks to Clonard Monastery, Karen said: "Baby Basics Belfast provides much-needed support to families in crisis on both sides of our community and is based in our Centre of Mission, St Columba's Church, Ballygomartin Road.

"The referrals all come through a



Karen Webb, Connect Base, receives a cheque for £4,000 from Father Peter Burns, rector, and Father Claron O'Callaghan of Clonard Monastery.

variety of support agencies including midwives, health visitors and social workers."



# The Rev Trevor Kelly

The Rev Trevor Kelly, curate in the Parishes of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion, died on October 15 2022 after a short illness. He was 55.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, described Trevor as 'the epitome of a Christian pastor, a man of sincere faith with a gentle soul and genuine care for people.'

Ordained in the Non-Stipendiary Ministry in 2010, Trevor served as curate in the Parishes of Craigs, Dunaghy and Killagan until 2016, when he moved to Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion as curate in 2016. He taught in Hazelwood Integrated College for more than 30 years.

A Service of Thanksgiving for Trevor's life was held in St Colmanell's Parish Church, Ahoghill, on October 19. Mourners heard the Rev Malcolm Ferry, rector of Agherton Parish, Portstewart, describe Trevor as a 'wonderful and amazing dad.'

Trevor was born on January 24 1967 and was educated in Cookstown, Magherafelt and Stranmillis College in Belfast, where he and Malcom first met. Trevor was very industrious when at college, Malcolm recalled. "He was a worker. He just had that way with him - he would click into action and nothing would distract him from his task."

Trevor met his wife Aurelia at Stranmillis. Tragically, Aurelia died in a road traffic accident in November 2021. Malcolm said their's had been 'a happy marriage and a wonderful partnership.'

As a teacher, Trevor worked in Maghera and Dungannon before securing a job in Hazelwood Integrated College.

"From the principal to the teachers to the non-teaching staff to the pupils, Trevor was very highly regarded," Malcolm said. "In a school of that size, you need to be special to stand out and Trevor did just that."

He said Trevor had pioneered the role of chaplaincy for the school, and was in the Senior Management Team and a Head of Department. "You cannot give 30 years of your life to a workplace and not leave a big, big impression. His rapport with staff and pupils alike will be acutely missed," Malcolm said.

"But perhaps Trevor's greatest career was in the home where he and Aurelia were blessed in the birth of Andrew and Rebecca. They were front and centre. At times of need, Trevor was there, and over



The Rev Trevor Kelly.

the past year he drew closer to each of them, if that was possible. He was Dad yes, but also the person they could share the joys and sorrows and challenges that they faced," Malcolm said.

"It is never easy to put into words the way you feel about a parent, but the words that I heard about Trevor were 'devoted, amazing, loving,' and most of all were about his concern for others."

**Trevor was 'the epitome of a Christian pastor, a man of sincere faith with a gentle soul and genuine care for people' - Bishop George Davison**

Malcolm went on: "Trevor Kelly's life was to be lived out as a Christian in a way that attracted you to him and to the God he worshipped. The Christian qualities instilled in him from childhood became the foundations of his adulthood. He was a true friend to many."

Describing Aurelia as Trevor's 'soulmate' as well as his wife, Malcom said: "They are together now in the nearer presence of God - together for eternity."

The service in St Colmanell's was led by the rector, the Rev Dennis Christie. The preacher was the Rev Canon Derek Kerr, rector of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion.

In his sermon, Derek referenced Jonathan,

the friend of David, likening him to Trevor. Jonathan was three things to David, Derek said - firstly, a spiritual lifeline, helping David to take courage in the Lord. Secondly, he was always wanting what God wanted. And thirdly, Jonathan was steadfast when it became a costly friendship. He incurred the wrath of his father, risking his very place in the family.

"Trevor was, for me, a spiritual lifeline and helped me to take courage in the Lord when circumstances conspired to do the opposite. How would he do this?" Derek told mourners.

"He was a man with a steady head and would say to me 'don't say that,' or 'don't put that in writing.' He would talk sense to me when there wasn't much sense being talked by me.

"Secondly, he was a man with a caring heart. He cared by ringing to ask how this meeting or that meeting had gone. I know he was concerned, and I loved him for it. That care emanated out to all he met and had dealings with. In the farmhouse kitchen, hospital bedside or pulpit."

Derek continued: "He had a great sense of humour that gelled with mine and we laughed often... When I was tempted to get overwhelmed by something that was going on, Trevor would help me get perspective, often with a laugh.

"In all these ways, Trevor helped me be a better servant of God... However, Trevor was more than just these.

"In being a Jonathan to me... Trevor wanted what God wanted. He wanted this for the congregation, for me and for himself. He was never discontent but was always wondering if God might have more for him to do or something different for him to begin."

And, Derek said, Trevor was steadfast when it got a bit costly. "As Jonathan suffered his father's wrath so, at times, life was a tad awkward for Trevor. Still he was loyal and helpful and, again, made it easier for me." He went on: "Trevor... was the visual aid to point to the spiritual lifeline of all spiritual lifelines, Jesus Christ, God on earth."

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, spoke at the committal following the service, when Trevor was laid to rest beside his beloved Aurelia.

He is survived by his son Andrew, daughter Rebecca, daughter-in-law Laura, his mother Betty, brother Glenn and sister Lynne, to whom sincere sympathy is extended.



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