

CONNOR

connections

'Never lose
hope'

St Apollo School

pages 10-11





Jack Wilson, Master of Music at Belfast Cathedral.

'An innate calling'

As a teenage Organ Scholar at Belfast Cathedral, Jack Wilson may have aspired to one day be a Cathedral Director of Music, but he never imagined it would be back in the Cathedral in which he started his career!

Jack, 25, took up the role of Master of Music at St Anne's in May, having been the Graduate Organ Scholar of Ely Cathedral for two years. His appointment followed the post-pandemic restructuring of the music department in St Anne's and the creation of this new position.

Jack grew up on the north coast. "I missed Northern Ireland," he said. "I missed the people, the culture, and the landscape. I have this love of the Cathedral and felt an innate calling to come back and serve in the music ministry here. It's an exciting time - this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to start from scratch.

"At this stage of my career, I am excited to have been given the opportunity to contribute alongside the Cathedral team as we work to achieve our goals. The music department is one part of the wider Cathedral family - we all want what is best for the Cathedral and the community it serves."

In England, Jack retained his links with St Anne's. Last September, he was at the organ for the nationally televised Service of Thanksgiving for the Life of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II held in the presence of their Majesties the King and Queen.

"It was a privilege to have been asked back by the Cathedral to play for this service," Jack said. "Although I had little time to prepare, I treated it like any other memorial service. When a loved one dies, we grieve. But instinct kicks in, and planning the funeral takes priority. I have been fortunate

enough that in my career to date I have played the organ for their Royal Highnesses the Princess Royal and the Duke of York, and now the King and Queen. On these significant occasions, you realise the sheer magnitude of those individuals present, but for me, every service is treated with the same level of preparation and commitment to deliver the best job possible. Once you play your first note, you get into the zone - even if the King is sitting only 10 metres away!"

Jack wasn't always so confident. "I think back to the first Sunday I played the organ in a service in the Church of St Canice, Londonderry. I was just 15. My hymns were passable, but the Anglican chants were unrecognisable. I was incredibly nervous - playing the organ was all I had wanted to do since becoming a chorister at the age of seven. Now, playing in front of a global audience doesn't faze me."

Settling into his new role at Belfast Cathedral, Jack is working towards building up a choir consisting of voluntary individuals. Recruitment of Lay Clerks and adult Sopranos gets under way this month (June), with recruitment for boys (primary 4 to year 8) and girls (years 8-14) beginning in September.

"The young people will receive a free, first-class musical education and build friendships that will last a lifetime. They will be encouraged, mentored and nurtured, working towards their goals as a team, singing in one of Northern Ireland's most beautiful buildings," Jack explained. "There

will also be days out and hopefully choir tours."

Currently, music at the Cathedral is provided by the organ, and Jack is hoping that from September, the new Cathedral Choir will be singing at the services each Sunday. "I would eventually like to see the resumption of week-day Evensong, where people can come to pray and to experience the ethereal," he said. "For me, there is nothing nicer, no matter what kind of day I have had, than to know that at 5pm it is time for Evensong."

Jack's position is part-time. "We as a team are going to do things gradually. The main priority is that, come September, we have a choir in the stalls, with music at the heart of our worship once more," he said.

Recruitment is currently under way for an Assistant Organist, with funding in place for an Organ Scholarship and Choral Scholarships. Reflecting on his own role as Organ Scholar at St Anne's, Jack said: "If it wasn't for that, I would not be sitting here. I would like others to be nurtured as I was.

"My goal is to create somewhere people not only want to come and sing, but where they are part of a really happy choir family. That's what I experienced when I was a chorister in St Columb's, and I want to give that back to the people I encounter. I know I am young and I'm still learning, but I want to get stuck in as we get the music department re-established, enhancing the liturgy here in Belfast Cathedral."

Dean Stephen Forde said: "Jack will combine his love for Belfast Cathedral with his commitment to seeing the highest standards of choral music at St Anne's. His ambition will ensure that the long tradition of choral singing at St Anne's Cathedral is continued and enhanced into the future."

For further information about the choirs, email jackwilson@belfastcathedral.org.

Jack's biography

Educated at Limavady Grammar School. Chorister and then Organ Scholar at St Columb's Cathedral, Londonderry. Read Music at Queen's University Belfast. Awarded the May Turtle Scholarship.

Organ Scholar at St Anne's Cathedral, then Acting Assistant Organist (2016-19). Master of Music Degree from Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge. Graduate Organ Scholar and Organ Scholar of St John's Voices. Returned to Belfast Cathedral as Assistant Director of Music in 2020. Appointed Graduate Organ Scholar Ely Cathedral in August 2021.

Summer 2023

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Cover photo:

Tabgha, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. See Bishop's letter on page 3.

Photo: Bishop George Davison



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

Karen Bushby,
Connor Diocesan
Communications Officer,
Church of Ireland House,
61-67 Donegall Street,
Belfast, BT1 2QH

Tel: 028 9082 8874
Mob: 07766 103880
Email: dco@connordiocese.org



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Times when it is important to stop



Sometimes journalists refer to a 'slow news day,' when they are scratching around to find enough material to fill their news bulletin or paper. As you will see from this latest edition of 'Connor Connections,' such days are very rare in Connor Diocese!

I want to congratulate Karen Bushby, not only for producing another great magazine, but also for gaining recognition of the quality of her work. 'Connor Connections' was awarded first prize in the 'Diocesan Magazine' category at the recent General Synod in Wexford. The judges commented favourably on the quality and variety of the articles and news items.

As we read of the activities and events which have taken place across the diocese and celebrate the people who play a part in the life and witness of our parishes, there is certainly no shortage of news to tell.

There are times though, when it is important to stop in the midst of all the busyness and remind ourselves again of what it is all about.

I had just such an opportunity last month, when I joined Canon David Humphries and a group from the diocese (and beyond) to travel on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was something I had long hoped to be able to do, and I can genuinely say that it was an experience that I will not forget! Of course, it was wonderful to see a new part of the world and I enjoyed many of the usual joys of travelling - the sights and sounds, the people and the culture, and a chance to sample different food!

This was something more than the usual tourist experience though.

We had the wonderful privilege to have the chance to spend time reflecting on familiar passages of scripture and know that we were walking in the streets and places where they had taken place. The busy streets of Jerusalem, crowded with traders and sightseers; the quietness of the moments in a boat on the Sea of Galilee; standing in the ruins of a synagogue in Capernaum; they all seemed to help the biblical narrative come alive.

To stand in places, knowing that Jesus and his disciples had walked there too, to share Communion with Christian friends on a Galilean shore, and to pray together in the hotel at the end of each day was a remarkable experience.

As we visited the Mount of Transfiguration, Canon David reminded us that, like Peter, we can want to hold on to the special experiences, but they are given to us in a moment to inspire us for the work that Christ calls us to in our everyday living.

May you know the Spirit's inspiration as you serve Jesus where you are today.

+George

Series of Connor Clergy Gatherings

The first of three Clergy Gatherings in the diocese took place in All Saints', Antrim, on February 2, and a second was held in St Cedma's, Larne, on June 7.

Organised by Bishop George Davison, the theme was 'Growing Healthy Clergy,' and around 60 clergy from across the diocese were at the first event, which began with worship, followed by thoughts from the Bishop. After a break, there was time for discussion and feedback.

This series of gatherings follows the Connor Clergy Conference held last November, when Bishop George shared his initial thoughts around 'Growing Healthy Parishes' as a vision for Connor Diocese,

Meeting once a term, Bishop George



The first Clergy Gathering held in Antrim last February, said, would help build the sense of being a clergy 'team' and give opportunities for mutual encouragement and support in the diocese. Rotating around Connor's three archdeaconries and holding the events in the evening allow non-stipendiary and Ordained Local Ministers who are in other employment to join more easily.

The third Clergy Gathering will take place on October 3 in St Brigid's, Mallusk.



Maundy honour for Joyce

Maundy recipient Joyce Bond and her husband John, former Dean of Connor.

Long-serving Mothers' Union member Joyce Bond and her husband John, former Dean of Connor, were guests at King Charles III's first Maundy Thursday service in his capacity as monarch.

Joyce attended the service in York Minster Cathedral to receive the Royal Maundy having been nominated for the honour by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison. She was one of 74 women and 74 men to receive the Maundy Purse this year.

Joyce said she had been 'shocked' to hear of her nomination in a letter from the Royal Almonry at Buckingham Palace. "I said to myself, 'why me?' There are so many other deserving people!"

The visit to York Minster wasn't the couple's first Royal engagement. John was rector in the Parish of Skerry and Rathcavan, Broughshane, for 17 years, and Dean of Connor for 15 years before retiring in 2016.

Shortly before John retired, he represented the Church of Ireland at the Inauguration of the 10th General Synod of the Church of England, robing for the Inauguration Holy Communion Service in Westminster Abbey, and attending Synod proceedings in Church House, Westminster.

Joyce said: "John was seated almost

directly opposite Her Majesty. After the service, Queen Elizabeth and The Duke of Edinburgh attended the Synod in the Circular Hall in Church House where I was in the Visitors' Gallery. It was a memorable and special occasion."

John also met the late Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh, on several occasions, and the couple attended a Garden Party in Hillsborough Castle in 2014, while in 1987, John attended a month-long Clergy-in-Service Course at St George's in the salubrious surroundings of Windsor Castle, and Joyce went too!

GUIDER

Joyce grew up near Limerick and was a parishioner of St Michael's. She remembers meeting Lady Olave Baden-Powell, who helped to develop the Guide movement. Joyce became a Guider with the 1st Limerick Girl Guide Company and was a young leader in Girls' Christian Youth camps each Easter.

During school holidays, she played the pedal organ at morning service in Ballybunion Parish Church.

John was brought up in Co Wexford, and the two met in Villiers' School in Limerick. Sponsored by Connor Diocese during training for Ordination, John had to obtain a 'Faculty' from the Archbishop because he was under age to be ordained Deacon for his first curacy in St Paul's, Lisburn, Connor Diocese. The couple married a year later. Joyce obtained a transfer in her job to Royal Insurance Group in Belfast.

"We came to Lisburn in pre-Troubles days and had a wonderful three years," said John. It was at this time that Joyce first taught in Sunday School and enrolled in the Mothers' Union, although her involvement with the organisation began well before this. "My Mum, Granny and Aunt were all members of the Mothers' Union. I had to sit at the back of the MU meetings until their conclusion to get a lift home with my Mum," she recalled.

John was serving his second curacy in St Polycarp's, Finaghy Parish, in 1970, when their first two children, Susan and Allan came along and Joyce left her job. The Troubles had started. "It was a trying, trying time, but the people were wonderfully resilient," John added.

In St Polycarp's, Joyce taught Sunday School and assisted with what was then called the Bunnies and later became the

Rainbows. "Thanks to pressure from Joyce and others, Bunnies were eventually recognised as Rainbows and part of the Guide Movement," John said. The family moved to Ballyclare in March 1977 when John was appointed rector of Ballynure and Ballyeaston. Daughter Nicola arrived soon after.

"Ballyclare was a small parish, but because of the Troubles, lots of people moved there to live," John said. Joyce started the Ballynure/Ballyclare branch of Mothers' Union in 1979/80, bringing different ladies' groups together.

She was involved in Sunday School, drama, missionary projects and Guiding. A lot of work had to be done to bring in funds for an extension to the church, including the publication of a recipe book which sold exceptionally well - particularly after Joyce managed to get RTE presenter, the late Gay Byrne, to publicise it for her! Joyce also served on the local committee of Abbeyfield Housing for many years.

CHAPLAINCIES

As the family grew older, Joyce and John travelled to France each summer to serve chaplaincies with the Intercontinental Church Society (ICS). John also served in a holiday chaplaincy in Manteca, Diocese of San Joaquin, in the USA in 1988, in a parish 50 miles south of San Francisco. During this time, Joyce took part in a Diocesan Youth Camp high in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

"The bears used to raid the bins at night and men were a bit suspicious of women leading parts of worship!! Some changes were necessary and for the better!" Joyce said. "The nice thing about these holiday chaplaincies was your family could experience them too."

Her Mothers' Union roles have been many. In Connor she has been a Diocesan Trustee; Vice-President - Faith and Policy Unit; Faith and Policy Unit Co-ordinator; Editor of the diocesan magazine 'In Touch' for several years; Diocesan Worldwide Representative and Women's Forum representative for Mothers' Union.

She was the first enrolling member in Ballynure and Ballyeaston; she served six years as branch chair in St Patrick's, Broughshane; and was Area Representative in South Belfast and South and Mid-Antrim.

She was the Mothers' Union representative on Connor Diocesan Council for Mission at the time of the signing of a partnership agreement with Edinburgh Diocese and visited Edinburgh with other Connor delegates.



Joyce and John Bond at the service in York Minster Cathedral on Maundy Thursday.

At All Ireland level, she has been Editor of 'Focus,' Mothers' Union's All Ireland magazine; PRO Officer for all Ireland and later for Northern Ireland; Worldwide Treasurer; and a member of the Mothers' Union Millennium Journey team. The Journey team started in Cork and travelled to all the dioceses in Ireland, sharing in services and events, concluding in Armagh Cathedral.

Joyce was in New Zealand on two occasions - her brother Frank, a clergyman, served in several parishes there - she linked in with MU Branches and brought greetings from the Bishop of Connor. She enjoyed the Parish Link and exchange visits with Sweden.

'His hands were warm and his eyes were kind as he spoke'

Joyce was an Ireland Women's Link ICC representative at the 4 Nations Meetings (Churches Together Britain and Ireland) for several years. Joyce's present posts are President/Chair of Women's Link (Irish Council of Churches) and a General Synod Member. She remains a member of the St Patrick's, Broughshane, branch of Mothers' Union, and is Connor Faith and Policy Unit Co-ordinator and Mid-Connor Area Chair.

"Every parish needs a Mothers' Union branch moving forward in Faith and Action, making a difference, engaging with families, the Church and Community," Joyce said.

Outside of Mothers' Union, she volunteers with the Moldova, Vision of Good Hope Charity (currently operating in Eastern Europe), and is a member of General Synod. She was a Young People's Bible Study Group Leader, a Brownie Guider and a Toddler Group facilitator until seven years ago.

The couple now has five grandchildren.

As Diocesan Curate, John provides cover where there is a vacancy or illness and takes services in different parishes on Sundays, and where he goes, Joyce worships there.

Reflecting on her day in York Minster, Joyce said: "The Archbishop of York, the Most Rev and Hon Stephen Cottrell, greeted us warmly and welcomed us to the Minster. He had a word for other Maundy recipients as he passed along the aisles. The music before the service was fantastic, played by the Sub-Organist of His Majesty's Chapel Royal and the Assistant Organist of York Minster who chose music composed from 1665-2023. The service was sung by the Choirs of York Minster and His Majesty's Chapel Royal, St James's Palace, London, and the Minster Organist played for the Service."

She added that there was 'a powerful organ fanfare' at 11am as their Majesties King Charles and the then Queen Consort arrived at the Great West Door and the various processions followed.

WARM

The Maundy Purses were distributed to each recipient by King Charles. "His Majesty said to me, 'Joyce, thank you

for your service to the Church and Community.' His hands were warm, and his eyes were kind as he spoke and placed the red and white purses with his Gift of coins in my hands," Joyce reflected.

"I said, 'Thank you, your Majesty,' and curtsied appropriately.

Joyce said her lasting memories would be of 'wonderful music, liturgy, the kindness of people we met for the first time, the beautiful posies (nosegays), the great privilege of meeting His Majesty King Charles and HM Queen Camilla,' as well as the processions, the colourful Yeomen and the Minster itself.

"It was a wonderful experience for John and myself, our son Allan (who drove us to York) and granddaughter Lauren. Thanks to Bishop George for his kindness in nominating me to be a recipient of Maundy and to the people we have been privileged to serve in ministry," Joyce said.

John paid tribute to his wife 'for the amazing and caring person she is, her exceptional support to me and the giving of herself to our family and the parishes where we were privileged to serve in our Church of Ireland for 49 years. She has touched and continues to touch the hearts and bless the lives of many in her own gentle and gracious way.'

Johnny 'privileged' to be in the Abbey

Church Lads' Church Girls' Brigade (CLCGB) senior officer Johnny Conn said he was proud and privileged to have represented the Brigade at the King's Coronation in Westminster Abbey on May 6.

Johnny, a parishioner in Carnmoney, is second in command of the CLCGB across Northern Ireland. The retired schoolteacher has been associated with the Carnmoney Church Lads' Brigade for more than 50 years.

He spoke of his surprise at receiving an email from the Northern Ireland Office six weeks before the Coronation, advising him that he had been invited to the Abbey as a representative of the CLCGB which is celebrating 130 years in the Church of Ireland.

"I was taken aback. I couldn't believe I had been chosen from the 70 million people living in the UK to go to Westminster Abbey!" he said.

As Johnny was attending a Brigade event the day before the Coronation, he



was flying from Belfast on the Friday evening, but at the airport he found his flight had been cancelled. "There was a flight ready to go, and there were a few seats on it," he recalls. "The people around me were very generous, telling me that I should get one of the seats as I was to be in the Abbey early next morning."

And so Johnny reached London that night and was ready early on the Saturday to meet his CLCGB friend David Hartley, who had been invited as one of 400 BEM awardees, to walk to Westminster Abbey. By 8am, David was seated in the Nave, while Johnny was in the Queen Elizabeth Gallery.

He had plenty of time before the service started to get to know those sitting around him, including a number of MPs, with whom Johnny established a good



CLCGB Senior Officer Johnny Conn (right) outside Westminster Abbey on the morning of the Coronation with his friend David Hartley BEM.

rapport - and he has friendly comments and signatures in his Order of Service to remember the encounters by!

"Nine-tenths of the people in the Abbey had to watch the proceedings on big screens, but the atmosphere was tangible, there was a lot of excitement and anticipation," Johnny said. "It was a lovely service, very inspiring, the music was fabulous."

He added: "One of the highlights for me was the Archbishop of Armagh handing the orb to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Archbishop John McDowell is very important to the Brigade as he is our President and appoints our Commanding Officer.

"There were a couple of occasions when the hairs stood on the back of my neck. When the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke the words 'God Save the King,' and the whole congregation shouted back 'God Save the King,' it reverberated through the Abbey - the sound just boomed.

"Another outstanding moment for me was singing my mother's favourite hymn 'Praise My Soul the King of Heaven.' Mum died last November, so it was very personal. The last verse was amazing - the choir went into overdrive!"

Leaving the Abbey, Johnny found himself in the company of a few celebrities - Ant and Dec, Katy Perry, Jonathan Dimbleby, Huw Edwards and Lionel Ritchie among others.

And as he and David crossed Westminster Bridge, smartly dressed in their CLCGB uniforms, they discovered they had acquired something of celebrity status themselves, with tourists, recognising they were fresh from the Abbey, asking for selfies with them.

"We got 15 seconds of fame!" Johnny laughed. "I was very proud to represent the Brigade and very privileged to be invited."

'Extremely blessed' - Simon Neill

Simon Neill BEM, Director of Music at St Polycarp's Parish Church, Finaghy, was a guest at a pre-Coronation Garden Party in Buckingham Palace on May 3.

Simon said he was overcome with a sense of elation when he received the invite, being very aware of the significance of participating in such a historic event.

"The Royal family's humble demeanour and genuine warmth left an indelible impression on all who had the privilege of attending," Simon said.

"The magnificence of the Palace grounds created an enchanting ambience. Guests were treated with such care and affection and with sincerity while the Royal family listened to our stories and heard about our backgrounds."

Simon continued: "The involvement of individuals from Northern Ireland added a meaningful dimension to the Coronation, fostering a sense of unity and celebrating the rich intermingled



Simon Neill BEM, Director of Music at St Polycarp's Parish Church, Finaghy, in the gardens of Buckingham Palace on May 3.

tapestries of culture and history in our province.

"I count myself extremely blessed to bear witness to their achievements, and proud to have been among their company."

Emotional day for Trevor and Karen

Connor Diocesan Development Manager Trevor Douglas and his wife Karen were among the honoured guests at the first Buckingham Palace Garden Party to take place in the reign of King Charles III.

The sun was shining when Trevor, who is General Manager of St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, arrived at the gates of Buckingham Palace on May 3.

"Walking through the gates for the first time into the courtyard was very emotional," said Trevor.

The Garden Party - the first of three announced by Buckingham Palace earlier this year - was hosted by the King and the then Queen Consort, who were also joined by the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh.

There were 6,000 guests. Trevor had been introduced to the then Prince Charles at a previous Garden Party in Northern Ireland, so on this occasion he and Karen spent much of the time exploring the gardens of Buckingham Palace.



Connor Diocesan Development Officer Trevor Douglas and his wife Karen in the gardens of Buckingham Palace on May 3.

"Our overwhelming feeling was one of emotion. We were able to sit on benches that her late Majesty may have sat on. We sat in a sun house where Queen Elizabeth would have spent her evenings, and in the pavilion in the Rose Garden. It was wonderful being in this private space you wouldn't normally be invited to."

The guests enjoyed what Trevor described as a typical English tea served in a marquee - sandwiches, salmon, buns, scones and clotted cream.

Trevor received the invite to the Palace from the Northern Ireland Office. "They don't tell you in what capacity you have been invited," he said. "It was a real honour and privilege to be there and we felt very humbled. We sat in a little Gazebo and wondered how we ended up here!"



Pictured at the presentation to David Scholes OBE, who has stood down after 50 years as treasurer are, from left: Dr Andrew Scholes, David's son and newly appointed Honorary Secretary of St Nicholas' and All Saints' Church, Belfast; the Rev Trevor Johnston, rector, St Nicholas' and All Saints'; Mrs Heather Scholes; David Scholes OBE; and the Rev Peter Blair, curate, St Nicholas' and All Saints'.

50 years a treasurer!

The work of David Scholes OBE, who has stepped down after 50 years as treasurer in All Saints' Parish Church, Belfast, was marked at the first Easter General Vestry of the new United Parish of St Nicholas and All Saints.

The rector, the Rev Trevor Johnston, said: "David has that rare combination of gifts in church treasurers of carefully accounting for every penny, but he was also a visionary who didn't want us to be a 'rich church' but rather spend for the glory of Christ and the spread of his gospel.

"He didn't let money be the determining factor as to whether the church should do something or not. Rather, he let the money follow the ministry."

David said it had been 'an honour' to serve in All Saints'. "Fifty years may seem a long time, but there was always lots to

do, which, with hindsight, made time fly," he commented. "It has been a privilege to be a part of the transformational journey of All Saints' from a normal city parish to one where it is now able to contend for Christ in a modern multicultural and diverse inner-city area."

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, added his tribute: "David's commitment to serve the Church is the fruit of a sincere Christian faith and I thank him for all his work in managing the financial resources of his parish to promote the work of the gospel in South Belfast," Bishop George said.

Dunluce exhibition raises £2,585

The 14th annual Dunluce Parish Art and Photography Exhibition raised a total of £2,585 for charity.

The event was held in the Parish Centre over the weekend of April 28-May 1. It featured 222 works by 57 artists and photographers from the north coast and further afield and was opened by Ross Wilson, one of Ireland's leading artists and sculptors, who has links to Bushmills.

Over the years, the exhibition has raised many thousands of pounds. The two charities supported this year were the Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal



Admiring the artworks. Photo: David Johnston.

and Friends of Pavestone, a vocational and rehabilitation centre in Coleraine for people with mental or physical disabilities.

On May 21, Rhoda Baxter from Friends of Pavestone was presented with a cheque by the Rev Sam McVeigh on behalf of the parish.

Ven Brian Harper

The Ven Brian Harper, rector of Magheracross Parish, Clogher Diocese, has been appointed as rector of the Parish of Dunluce.

Brian, who has been Archdeacon of Clogher since 2016, is married to Heather and they have three grown-up children. He attended Limavady Grammar School and has a Degree in Psychology from the University of Liverpool. Following graduation, he began training at the then Church of Ireland Theological College in Dublin, and was ordained in 1985.

Brian's first curacy was in St Columba's, Portadown, and this was followed by a second curacy in Drumglass Parish, Dungannon. He was rector in Ballygawley, Errigle Keerogue and Killeshill before moving to Mullavilly Parish in Tandragee, where he remained incumbent for 19 years.

Having served all his ministry in the Diocese of Armagh, Brian moved to Clogher Diocese in 2012 when he was appointed rector in Magheracross Parish, Ballinamallard.

A date has yet to be set for the Service of Institution in Dunluce.



The Ven Brian Harper

Rev Derek Harrington

The Rev Derek Harrington has been appointed Priest-in-Charge of the Grouped Parishes of Muckamore and Killead, Antrim.

Derek, 39, is currently curate of Christ Church Parish in Lisburn. He and his wife Anne-Marie, who is French, have a young daughter and are expecting their second child in July.

Derek grew up in Co Tyrone and worked as a maths teacher before training for the ministry. He was ordained deacon in 2017 and served his deacon internship in Derg and Killeter, Diocese of Derry and Raphoe.

Derek and Anne-Marie moved to Lisburn in 2018 when he was ordained priest/presbyter to begin his curacy.

Derek said the family is looking forward to this next chapter of their life and ministry among the people of Muckamore and Killead. "We are excited by this opportunity to be a part of the work that God is doing in and through the people of St Jude's and St Catherine's," he said.

A Service of Introduction was to due take place in St Jude's, Muckamore, on June 15.



The Rev Derek Harrington.

Rev Danielle McCullagh



The Rev Danielle McCullagh at the Service of Introduction with the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, left, and the Rev Philip Agnew, North Eastern District Superintendent, Methodist Church.

A Service of Introduction and Licensing of the Rev Danielle McCullagh as Chaplain at The Hub, Belfast, took place on February 15.

As Chaplain and Dean of Residences in the Church of Ireland/ Methodist Chaplaincy at Queen's University and Stranmillis College, Danielle serves in covenant alongside the Ulster University Chaplain, who is currently appointed by the Methodist Church.

She leads the staff team at the Hub, including centre management, café and ancillary staff, and serves as Dean of Residents in the Student Centre. She also serves as Chaplain to the Church of the Resurrection within The Hub.

Danielle was introduced by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison. The preacher was the Dean of Connor, the Very Rev Sam Wright. The Rev Philip Agnew, District Superintendent, Methodist Church, led the opening prayer.

Rev Trevor Johnston



At the Institution Service in All Saints', Belfast, are, from left: The Rev Canon William Taggart, Connor Diocesan Registrar; the Rev Trevor Johnston; the Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor; and the Ven Barry Forde, Archdeacon of Belfast. Photo: Norman Briggs.

The Rev Trevor Johnston was instituted as incumbent of the United Parish of St Nicholas and All Saints, Belfast, at a service in All Saints' Parish Church, Belfast, on Sunday, February 26.

Trevor has been rector of All Saints' Parish Church, University Street, since September 2014 and curate-in-charge of St Nicholas', Lisburn Road, since October 2020.

He is a former chaplain to the University of Ulster at Jordanstown and Belfast, and a former curate of St Patrick's Parish, Jordanstown. Prior to his move to All Saints', he had been Ireland Team Leader of Crosslinks Mission Agency since January 2010.

Trevor is married to Joy and they have four daughters and one son.

Trevor was instituted as rector of the new united parish by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison. The guest preacher was Dr Jonathan McClaughlin, senior pastor in Hamilton Road Baptist Church, Bangor.



Bishop George Davison with the Rev Derek Harrington, the Rev Peter Blair and the Rev Andrew Irwin following the Maundy Service in Belfast Cathedral, at which Connor Clergy and Lay Readers renewed their ordination vows.

Vows renewed on Maundy Thursday

Clergy and Lay Readers from across Connor Diocese gathered at Belfast Cathedral on the morning of Maundy Thursday at the invitation of Bishop George Davison for a service in which they renewed their ordination vows.

Welcoming all present, Bishop George said: "It is a very real privilege to share with you today in the middle of this busy season and to pause for a short time. As we share the Lord's Supper, we take time to reflect on the call God has placed on our lives and to give thanks for the privilege that has been given us to share in the work of Christ's Church."

The Service of Holy Communion was led by the Bishop, who also preached, describing the service as a celebration of the ministry each person present was called to exercise, and a celebration of individual gifts. "I want to acknowledge the gifts you bring and the commitment you

show," said Bishop George.

"I want to thank you for hearing God's call to service, to thank you for the ministry you offer out of that sense of calling, and to thank you for all that you give of yourselves as you seek to serve Christ and this Church in the particular context of the Diocese of Connor."

Lessons were read by Garvin Jess and the Rev Canon Raymond Fox and the organist was Brenda Pateman.

Following the service, refreshments were served, giving Clergy and Lay Readers the opportunity for further fellowship before they returned to their parishes.

All Saints', Antrim, goes the extra mile!



All Saints' Parish Church, Antrim, presented £4,200 to Arlene Creighton, Communication and Engagement Manager with Women's Aid, at a service on February 12, with the funds raised through the 'Extra Mile' initiative. This originated a number of years ago, when the 'Extra Mile' bucket was placed on the Churchwardens' Table to collect parishioners' loose change. The monies raised have been used to fund a variety of projects, including five extendable wheelchairs for Mozambique through the Girassol charity, and the provision of water filters for Tanzania, with £2,100 donated, enabling the parish to purchase 70 filters. Presenting the cheque are Archdeacon Stephen McBride, vicar of All Saints', and the Rev Peter Blake, curate.

Lunch club at St Bartholomew's

St Bartholomew's Parish, Stranmillis, has been hosting a weekly Soup and Sandwich Club, supported by Col MindMatters and the Benefact Trust.

The club focuses on combating social isolation by creating safe space for people to interact and enjoy each other's company.

Members of the local neighbourhood policing team, a member of the Police and Community Safety Partnership for South Belfast, and a Crime Prevention Officer attended a meeting recently to give a talk on personal safety and scam.

The rector, the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, said: "It's been a great help to get the seed funding for our project from Benefact Trust and Col MindMatters. Whilst Stranmillis is usually very busy with students, it also has a significant number of older people who live alone, so it's lovely to afford them opportunities to meet together."



A visit to St Bartholomew's Soup and Sandwich Club from the Police and Community Safety Partnership and a Crime Prevention Officer

Hospital chaplains

The Church of Ireland has hospital chaplains in most hospitals in Connor Diocese, and patients or families are encouraged to request a visit if they would like to see a chaplain.

Our hospital chaplains are:

Antrim Area Hospital - the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth; Belfast City Hospital - the Rev Rosie Morton; Causeway Hospital - the Rev Andrew Sweeney; Dalriada Hospital - the Rev David Ferguson; Musgrave Park Hospital and Royal Victoria Hospital, Royal Jubilee Maternity Hospital, Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children and Mater Infirmorum Hospital - Mrs Sanna Mallon; Muckamore Abbey - the Rev Paul Redfern; Holywell Hospital - Archdeacon Stephen McBride; Whiteabbey Hospital and Moyle Hospital - the Rev David Lockhart; Robinson Memorial Hospital - Canon Robin Lavery; Ulster Independent Clinic - Canon Kevin Graham; NI Hospice - Canon William Taggart.

'Knickers are precious' - joy beyond words

Beth and I were leading on the 'I am Girl' programme. This is a topic that we all prefer not to talk about, such as growing up and puberty for boys and girls, and it pushed us all out of our comfort zone, but Fields of Life shared their teaching plans and encouraged us to cover the topic honestly, teaching boys and girls together.

The teachers for P5-7 joined us and all were male. They acted as interpreters and took the pen for the small group exercise. This really supported the programme, as in groups of 10 they looked at changes for boys, girls and changes for everyone. It felt like we were learning together. The boys and girls needed to learn together about growing into adulthood and respecting each other and the changes that happen as they mature. We also highlighted the importance of staying at school.

Our puppet Daniel demonstrated how he used to make fun of the girls and how he was sorry and embarrassed about his behaviour. Puppet Ruth had an emergency pack her mum gave her with spare pants, a reusable pad, soap and a cloth in her school bag. With the generosity of our parish, we gave the girls 100 'I am Girl' packs.

The standout comment for me came from Bridget, our Fields of Life link worker, who said: "Knickers are precious." It made me think deeply when I have a drawer full of them! The excitement of the girls receiving their precious gift of pants was beyond words.

Beverley Ringland

Celebration Day - lots of happy smiles and poses

Celebration Day was held on our final day at St Apollo School. For this special occasion we wore traditional Ugandan clothing. At the school, we were met with large marquees filled with parents, grandparents and local dignitaries including Bishop Eridard, the Bishop of Luwero.

The children sang, danced and recited a poem they had composed about the team coming from Northern Ireland to see them. Such enthusiasm! It was wonderful to see the nursery children singing whilst wearing the golden crowns they had made earlier in the week. They really enjoyed themselves!

The children just love having their photo taken and seeing themselves on the phones! There were lots of happy smiles and poses!

Lunch was provided by the school staff. I remembered the Rev John Pickering's words on the Sunday before we left for Uganda when he said 'just take a little bit of food,' and that is what I did!

It was a day of mixed emotions - great to see the children enjoying themselves but sad for the team to be leaving St Apollo School.

Karen McKenna



'Never lose hope' -

A team from Christ Church Parish, Lisburn, was in Luwero, Uganda, from February 13-26 to work at St Apollo School.

In partnership with Fields of Life, this was the fourth parish team to visit the school since 2012, with the last team travelling to Luwero in 2017 and a trip cancelled in 2020 because of Covid-19.

The team was made up of the rector, the Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada, and 13 parishioners. A commissioning service was held in Christ Church on February 12 and involved representatives from Fields of Life and CMS Ireland

"The motto of the school, which is located in the former 'killing fields of Uganda,' is Never Lose Hope," said Paul. "It is a community that radiates hope because of its Christian faith and the opportunity for children to receive an education."

As they journeyed with the school and church community, the team heard the stories from the period of Covid-19 and about rising costs for basics such as food.

"We heard of children who had died, who did not return to school because they are now working, got married, or moved to another area or because there is no money to pay school fees," Paul added.

After the long journey to Luwero, the team members had to adjust to temperatures in the mid-30s to deliver their planned programme. "We used the diocesan guest house at Luwero as our base which meant a journey of around 75 minutes each way - of which

around 35 minutes were on the bumpy dirt roads," Paul said.

The team delivered two children's Bible clubs and used puppets to help with their teaching. Link worker Bridget, who had been with the Christ Church visitors on two previous visits, interpreted at the school, bringing a deeper understanding to the stories and all that the team members shared.

Paul delivered a seminar for the clergy of Luwero Diocese on the Friday based on Ephesians chapter 4 on the theme of unity and growth, which fitted into the diocesan theme for 2023. The seminar was held at the diocesan guest house and breakfast and lunch was provided for around 40 clergy. On the Sunday, Paul preached in church on the Transfiguration.

The team delivered two 'I am Girl' sessions to P4-5 and P6-7 children which focused on the empowerment of young girls and the boys supporting them and understanding menstruation and puberty. There was small group work including boys, girls and male teachers, with open and honest discussion and positive feedback.

The team hosted a ladies' afternoon for more than 60 ladies which was based on the story of Esther, with the team playing out part of this story based around a banquet.

Team members Raymond, Richard and Stephen painted the outside of the two school blocks, as well as the inside of the staff room and three classrooms. They were assisted by Gideon and Joshua





A wonderful welcome for the team from Christ Church, Lisburn, at St Apollo School.

return to St Apollo



The Christ Church, Lisburn, team in Luwero, Uganda. Opposite page: The Ven Paul Dundas with a St Apollo pupil. Below: Beverley Ringland with some of the younger children.

from the local community and Isaac, the team's driver. "It was a great achievement to get so much done," Paul said.

A Celebration Day at the school on the final Thursday was attended by around 600 people, including civic leaders. "We truly enjoyed the children singing songs and reciting poems and dancing," Paul said. "We did have to listen to a few speeches from political and community leaders, but Rachel from Fields of Life spoke powerfully on the impact of the partnership and for the school community to work toward sustainability.

"I spoke on behalf of the team to give thanks for the welcome of the school, the opportunity to be at the school, the women of faith we have encountered, the dedication of the staff and the opportunity to continue being a place of hope in a challenging time.

"We left the school with so many mixed emotions but thankful for the opportunity of continued partnership in mission."

Paul added: "There are so many

personal memories for each team member to thank the Lord for. God was good and he did help us all the way, but it is for His Glory alone that we embarked on this mission trip.

"We met many godly people who blessed and enriched us. We encountered a school in challenging times but trusting they were encouraged as they have such a dedicated staff and an amazing principal in Madam Esther. We witnessed the children enjoying their education at the school.

"Although we are separated by distance, we have them in our hearts and vice versa. We continue to pray for them to be a people of hope in Jesus Christ."

Christ Church, Lisburn, team members were: Paul Dundas, Janice and Richard Thompson, Stephen and Karen McKenna, Beth Harris, Roberta Thompson, Audrey Knowles, Jane Hawthorne, Beverley Ringland, Ashleigh Long, Anna Dundas and Raymond Geddis.



I hope they will remember the fun they had

As one of the 'newbies' on this trip, I was a little nervous and anxious as I wasn't sure what to expect, but overall I was just so excited! When we arrived in Uganda I knew that this was the right time and where I was meant to be. I can honestly say it was one of the best experiences I've ever had.

I met many wonderful people and made so many memories – even though in the first week I was badly bitten despite copious use of insect repellent, but I didn't let it dampen my spirits!

One memory that stands out was our Sports Day at the school – Anna and I were in charge of organising this and decided to stick to relay races as we thought these would be easy to organise with such a large group of kids. Our link worker Bridget was at nursery that morning, so Anna and I had to try and explain the relay races without demonstrate and we needed a top athlete to help us – we asked Rev Paul if he would help out, and he was more than willing!

The kids had a brilliant time and got involved with every race and the teachers took part as well. We left the equipment we used with the school, so hopefully they will make good use of it and think of us and remember the fun they had that day!

Ashleigh Long

Rehema's story

In 2017, Rehema came to St Apollo School on her own to seek help. Rehema's father died when she was five and her mother had poor health. Her grandmother had paid for her primary education, where Rehema got top grades, but was not in a position to continue to pay.

Rehema told her story to Raymond Geddis and asked if anyone could sponsor her. Raymond spoke with our Fields of Life worker and the principal of Bethel Royal School, and back in Christ Church, Lisburn, he made an appeal.

Beryl Thompson came forward on behalf of the Connor, Down & Dromore Diocesan GFS and sponsored this little girl at Bethel Royal. Six years later, Rehema is now a second year student nurse and she has gained top marks in her exams.

This beautiful girl travelled five hours just to thank us for giving her the opportunity to study. Rehema changed into her uniform and proudly had photos taken. She also was given a Christ Church GFS jumper. We shared food and spent quality time with her. We prayed with her before she departed.

I'm so proud of the GFS, Raymond Geddis and Rehema for making this all happen. This little girl may have had no future and possibly could have been sold for a customised marriage. However, a career in nursing awaits her.

Beth Harris



The vital connection of father and child

By Andy Lamberton

There's nothing I want to do more than to see my children thrive and embrace the future with that humble confidence which characterises faithful disciples.

With my wife Debbie, I want to raise our children as worshippers, not worriers. But we are parenting through uncharted territory, or if it's not uncharted, it certainly feels that way.

It is hard not to be anxious as a parent, even if we believe the pull of God's grace far outweighs anything else. As a father, I recognise the world is a scary place. I'm nervous and I feel inadequate. Debbie and I need the body of Christ to help us raise children in today's world.

The average teen now spends seven hours and 22 minutes on their phone daily.

And when I compare that to the amount of time I get to spend with my children, I wonder what impact I can have or how I can regulate what it's doing to their young minds and hearts. In short, our children don't know what's ahead of them and I don't know where to start.

But as a youth leader, walking with many young people over the past 16 years, I can tell a different story. One we as a Church need to hear.

INFLUENCE

It's my observation that the most significant influence on a young person's future is not social media, a friendship group or even their smartphone. Overwhelmingly, the stats confirm it's their parents who have by far the most significant influence in their lives. My own experience tells this story.

In light of this, I believe there are three home truths our Church community needs to hear.

1/ We live in an under-fathered society: Somewhere along the way, fathers have become discouraged, begun to believe that their role is irrelevant and, in some cases, abdicated their responsibility altogether. As a result, the potential of father-son and father-daughter relationship is unrealised in our society and in our Church.

For the young person, moments of affirmation are missed, opportunities for sharing wisdom and experience are passed by, questions remain unvoiced and the potential of making disciples at home is lost. The ministry of fathers lies dormant despite its potential.

2/ Fathers are more important than we think. Recently, through my ministry with Exodus, we read Mark Chapter 1 with 920 pupils in small groups. One of our volunteers commented that most of the young lads were giving the same answer to the last question of the class: What do you want to remember from the passage? Interesting.

Mark 1 is action-packed. From John the Baptist eating locusts to demon possession to Jesus calling his first followers. After the volunteer's comment, as I read with another 20 classes that week, I posed the same question. Every time, it was the same answer. The verse they wanted to remember is this: 'And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."' Mark 1:11.

There is something significant, something defining, about the voice of a father. God the Father was sure to affirm his son before he began his ministry, and young people are longing for the voice of an affirming father figure. I have come to realise that fathers are more important than we think.

3/ Fathers need encouragement: Fathers

Inspiring ordinary men to build a legacy in Derryvolgie

Derryvolgie Parish is partnering with 'Legacy.' The rector, the Rev James Boyd, explains why.

"When I received an invite to the launch of yet another parachurch organisation in Northern Ireland, I have to say my heart sank a little. We already have so many, yet as I looked at the invite and read the vision behind it my heart started to change.

"As the father of two girls, I am greatly encouraged that 'Legacy' is seeking to inspire and equip fathers to be fathers and men in the pews to be

father figures to those around them. Often, we have been overwhelmed with 'lads and dads' events, but the vision behind this takes this much further - ordinary men passing on the faith to the generation coming behind us.

"Andy has been along to speak in Derryvolgie and the group of men who met with him have taken on the challenge to leave a legacy to those around us. We are looking forward to partnering with Andy, enabling 'Legacy' to become part of our DNA, through the programmes that will engage us over the coming months.

"My prayer is not that this will completely revolutionise Derryvolgie Parish by using the next big idea, but rather by inspiring the men in the parish to live ordinary lives in the power of an extraordinary God building legacy as we go.

"The evening Andy spoke to our group DVM (Derryvolgie Men), he said this 'don't err on the side of caution, err on the side of connection.' What a powerful statement, so we step forward confidently, building connections as we go."

matter, and as a Church committed to passing on faith, we must realise fathers have a defining voice in raising a faith-filled generation. We must harness the latent potential that often lies unmined in our pews.

As fathers, we don't need to be patronised into manning up or being better; we need to be invited into a vision of what fatherhood is and its place in our families and society. We need to know that God believes in fathers, in fatherhood and in the father's ability to pass on faith to his children. We need to remind ourselves how God commissions fathers and father figures to play their part in his kingdom strategy - the Church, as a family of families.

VALUE

I believe we must take a lead and proclaim within our culture the necessity of family and the value of fathers. We need to say with conviction and clarity: Fathers are important, we're standing with them and we will create space for their God-given workmanship.

'Legacy' is a ministry for fathers. We provide programmes for churches to help faith and fatherhood thrive. We don't know all the answers but we want to begin to seize the opportunity. We want to offer ourselves 'on the ground' to your church. We believe this is a cultural shift for the Body of Christ, so we're not rushing, but want to develop, grow and move together.

We have four programmes: Men Behaving Dadly is a four-part series of conversations for all fathers and father figures in your church. Sharing stories, struggles and ideas without taking ourselves too seriously.

Legacy Days are facilitated days out packed with activities and conversations for a group of fathers and sons or fathers and daughters from your church.

Legacy Talks: We'd love to come and speak about the need for engaged fathers today.

The Legacy Award is a six-month journey of adventure and faith development with your child (aged 11-14).

We would love to serve you in any of the above ways. For more information, go to www.legacyfathers.org or email me andy@exodusonline.org.uk.

Andy Lamberton is Director at 'Legacy,' a ministry from Exodus. He and his wife Debbie worship in Fahan Presbyterian with their four children.



Canon Ernest Shepherd

A Service of Thanksgiving for the life of the Rev Canon Ernest Shepherd was held on May 23 in St John's and St Ninian's, Whitehouse, the parish in which he had served for 41 years.

In her address, the Rev Elaine O'Brien, who recently retired as rector, quoted some of Canon Shepherd's own words.

In these, he expressed thanks to his father and mother for 'enabling me to fulfil my youthful desire to become a clergyman at great cost to them.'

He said that while circumstances and distances deprived him of closer bonds with his brothers and sisters, he trusted and prayed they would have 'a happy reunion in the heavenly place through Jesus Christ our Saviour.'

Ernest recalled his happy marriage to his late wife Isa, saying her 'love, direction and support were a great help to me as a wife and mother to Peter, Philip and Michael and grandmother to Laura.' His words continued: "All who knew Isa loved her, and her support and help to me in my ministry was unsurpassed."

Born in March 1927 in Dublin, Canon Shepherd attended Mountjoy School and Trinity College Dublin, from where he graduated with a BA in 1948 and a BD in 1953. He was ordained a deacon in 1950 and a priest the following year, serving his curacy in the Parish of St Mary Magdalene, Belfast, from 1950-1954.

He was appointed rector of Whitehouse and St Ninian in 1954, remaining as incumbent of the parish until his retirement



The Rev Canon Ernest Shepherd. Painted by Michael Shepherd.

in 1995. He was a Canon of Lisburn Cathedral. He and Isa were married in 1954, and they had three sons, Philip, Michael and the late Peter.

In his thoughts, read at the service, Canon Shepherd said he had been 'greatly privileged to serve in St Mary Magdalene and St John's for so long. Also in St Ninian, St Peter/St James and other parishes to share support and affection with Isa and myself.'

Clergy news

Former Bishop appointed to St Paul's

Bishop Darren McCartney, rector of Clonallon and Warrenpoint with Kilbroney, Diocese of Down and Dromore, has been appointed rector of St Paul's, Lisburn.



Darren grew up in Dundrod and attended Lisnagarvey High School. He was a plant engineer before training for the ministry and taking up a post as deacon-in-charge and then priest-in-charge of St Luke's Anglican Church, Diocese of the Arctic, Canada, in the community of Pangnirtung, Nunavut.

Darren returned to Northern Ireland in 2006

and spent three years as a curate in St Nicholas', Carrickfergus, before becoming rector of St Matthias', Knocknamuckley.

In June 2012 he was elected and consecrated Suffragan Bishop of the Arctic and moved with his wife Karen to Iqaluit, Baffin Island, in January 2013.

Darren has been married to Karen for 24 years and they have a young son. The family returned to Northern Ireland in 2019, when Darren took up the post of rector of Clonallon and Warrenpoint with Kilbroney. He is also Area Dean for Mourne, and Warden to the Pioneering Ministers in the Diocese of Down and Dromore.

A date for the institution has yet to be set.



Lisburn Cathedral.



Eglantine.



Cairncastle.



Magheragall parishioner Ruth Bennett with a photo of herself at Balmoral soon after the 1953 Coronation, presenting a bouquet to Queen Elizabeth II.



Dunluce - Olivia plants a copper beech to mark the Coronation as Neil Salisbury OBE, Deputy Lieutenant, and the Rev Harold Sharp look on.
Photo by David Johnston.



Jordanstown.



Glencairn.



Cairncastle.



St Paul's, Lisburn.



All Saints', Antrim.



Kilmakee.



Muckamore.



Belfast Cathedral.

Connor marks historic Royal occasion



Agherton



Kilbride.



St Nicholas, Carrickfergus.



Floral crown by Lucy Huffington, Agherton.



Cloughfern.

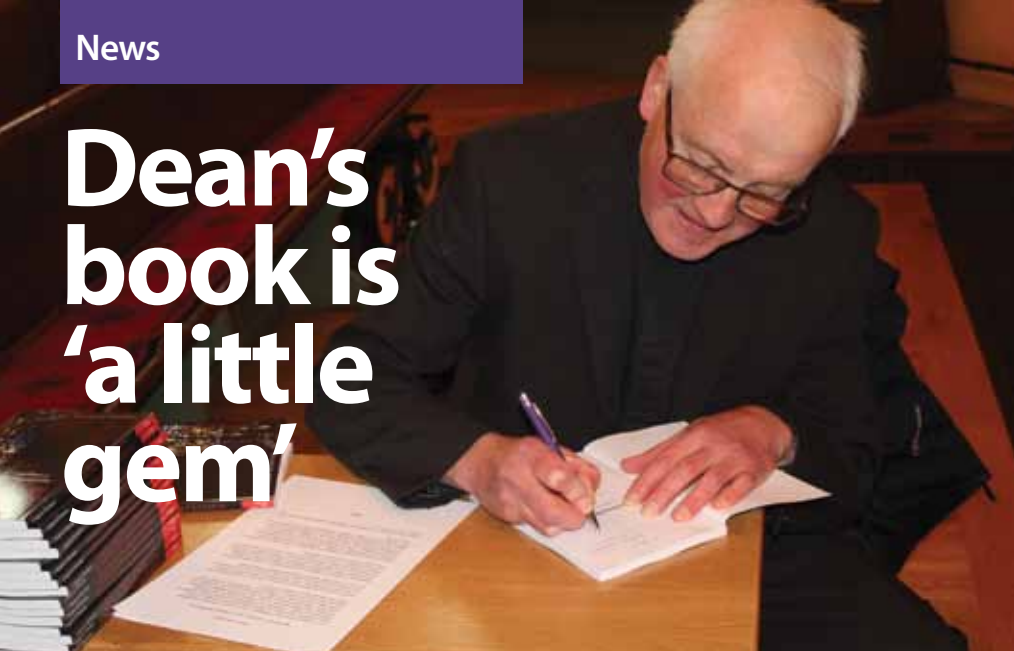


Broomhedge.



Carmoney.

Dean's book is 'a little gem'



Dean Gregory Dunstan signs copies of 'Preaching the Passion: Interpreting the Evangelists,' at the book launch in St Matthew's Parish Church.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, launched a new book on the death and resurrection of Jesus by Dean Gregory Dunstan on February 2 - in the parish where Dean Gregory ministered for 18 years.

Guests at the launch of 'Preaching the Passion: Interpreting the Evangelists' in St Matthew's, Shankill, heard Bishop George describe it as a book that was not simply 'written for its own sake, but was written out of a vocation and faithfulness of one who is called to serve Christ as a minister and teacher.'

Guests were welcomed by the rector of St Matthew's, the Rev Tracey McRoberts, who described the publication as 'a little gem.'

"We are delighted to be hosting the launch of Dean Gregory's book and honoured to have been the first audience for the series of sermons on which this thought-provoking and reflective book is based," Tracey said.

To Dean Gregory, she added: "The people of this area, not just St Matthew's, hold you in the highest esteem and it is a great



Dean Gregory Dunstan, author of 'Preaching the Passion: Interpreting the Evangelists,' the Rev Tracey McRoberts, rector of St Matthew's, and Bishop George Davison at the book launch.

privilege to see that this book is dedicated to this parish. It shows the love you have for the people in this part of the world."

Dean Gregory, a former landscape architect who was ordained in 1990 for the curacy of Ballymena, was rector of St Matthew's from 1993 until his appointment

as Dean of Armagh in 2011, where he remained until his retirement in 2020.

'Preaching the Passion: Interpreting the Evangelists' consists of six series of Holy Week sermons on Jesus' Passion, as told by each of the four evangelists. Dedicated to the people of St Matthew's, the book is published by Sacristy Press.

Speaking at the launch, Bishop George said: "With characteristic thoughtfulness, Gregory Dunstan has shared with those who will read this book many insights into the witness of scripture about the days leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection.

"It will give food for thought and for the soul whenever you choose to read it, but I have no doubt that many will find it to be a helpful book to aid their Lent devotions."

Dean Gregory described the book as an exploration of the events at the heart and foundation of Christian faith.

"The accounts of Jesus' death are the climax of the Gospels," he said. "They are like portraits by four of the world's greatest artists. Each works in his own way, in the tradition that he inherited. The subject is the same, but each shows him from a different angle, in a different context, and in a different light.

"Each portrait is complete. Nothing is missing, but we need all four of them if we are even to begin to explore the mystery of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ."

Thanking Tracey and St Matthew's Parish for hosting the event and Bishop George for launching his book, Dean Gregory drew attention to the front cover, the Crucifixion window in the south wing of St Matthew's, and read two extracts from 'Preaching the Passion.'

'Preaching the Passion: Interpreting the Evangelists' is available from Sacristy Press www.sacristy.co.uk at £14.99.

Communications competition winners!

Connor had two winners in the 2023 Church of Ireland Central Communications Board's communications competition, with the diocesan magazine and Magheragall parish both receiving plaudits.

'Connor Connections,' published three times a year and distributed free to all parishes, was the winner in the diocesan magazine category.

The competition judge stated that the winning entry 'packs tremendous quality into its 24 pages, giving a diocesan-

wide audience to some powerful stories which deserve to be heard beyond parishes.' The judge added that the magazine 'conveys a sense of a Church at work for the common good in the diocese and beyond.'

'Magheragall Parish News' was highly commended in the parish magazine category for the quality of the publication.

The winners were announced on the first day of the Church of Ireland General Synod in Wexford.



Bishop George Davison accepts the prizes for 'Connor Connections' and 'Magheragall Parish News' from Scott Hayes from sponsors, Ecclesiastical Insurance.

Fun on the beach!



The Connor Youth Forum Beach Bonfire event in May was attended by 50 young people.

Rain didn't stop play when Connor's young people headed to the north coast on Sunday May 1 for a Diocesan Youth Beach Bonfire organised by Connor Youth Forum.

While the bad weather meant the event had to be moved quickly to the local Ballyrashane Parish Hall, the young people who had travelled from across the diocese were still able to end their evening at the beautiful White Rocks Strand.

Groups came from Lisburn Cathedral, All Saints' Parish, Antrim, the United Parish of Christ Church & St John's in Ballyclare, and the Grouped Parishes of Ballyrashane & Kildollagh, with more than 50 young people enjoying fun and fellowship together.

They tucked into chips before sharing some cake, as Jonny Diamond, one of the local youth leaders was celebrating his birthday!

After a few party games, the groups went across the road to St John's Parish Church for worship led by some of the Youth Forum participants and friends.

By this stage, the rain had thankfully dried up so everyone jumped into cars and made it down to the beach to end the night!



Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie said: "A huge thanks to the Connor Youth Forum members who have organised this and several other youth events across the diocese over the last 18 months. It has resulted in closer ties amongst youth groups and renewed opportunities to come together for encouragement."

Abigail and Joel complete Gold Expedition

Two young people from Craigs Parish Church were among a group of four from Cullybackey who recently completed their Qualifying Duke of Edinburgh Award Expedition, hiking from Binevenagh to Dunseverick Castle.

The north coast weather proved a mixed bag for Craigs' parishioners Joel Roxborough and Abigail Halligan, along with fellow-expeditioners Anna-Grace Donnelly and Leah Service.

Their four-day expedition took them through the beautiful but somewhat mucky Binevenagh which overlooks Magilligan, the Keenaght Hills along the edge of the Antrim Plateau taking in many spots along the picturesque coastline, including Castlerock, Portstewart and Ballintoy, finishing at the ancient royal site of the Dal Riada Gaelic Kingdom, Dunseverick Castle, Co Antrim.

These four young people have made lifelong friendships and all would like to



Setting out on day two of their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Expedition are Craigs' parishioners Abigail Halligan and Joel Roxborough.

travel together to Buckingham Palace to receive their well-earned awards in this Coronation Year!

Sign up for CTTC

Young people are invited to sign up for the annual Connor Takes the Castle youth weekend, taking place from October 6-8.

Sleep in a castle, enjoy epic games and challenges, learn more about God and meet new friends from other churches - Connor Takes the Castle is an epic weekend, packed full of fun!

The weekend is for ages 11-18, and each group should have leaders accompany them for the weekend. Venue is Castlewellan Christian Conference Centre, and the cost is £60 for the full weekend and £20 for a day pass on the Saturday.

More details from Christina on christinabaillie@connordiocese.org.

New faces join administration team

The Connor staff team has welcomed two new members. Sue Majury (right), a parishioner of Holy Trinity, Woodburn, has taken on the role of part-time clerical officer, while David McGrory has joined the diocese as Safeguarding Compliance Officer.



Sue will be working on Synod administration, organising agendas and taking minutes of meetings of the Honorary Secretariat and Diocesan Council, along with other clerical office duties.

Her normal working hours are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9.30 to 3.45pm, with flexibility to attend meetings as required.

A native of Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, Sue moved to Carrickfergus in 1990 when she married John, and they have two daughters, Francesca and Charlotte.

Sue worked for Barclays Bank in England and after moving to Northern Ireland worked for Allied Irish Bank (AIB) for 30 years, taking voluntary severance in December 2021. She took a year out of the workplace to spend time with family and friends and to travel and took up her new post with Connor Diocese in February.

The role of Safeguarding Compliance Officer is a new part-time position, and David (right) will be responsible for ensuring safeguarding policies and procedures across the diocese are complied with.



Changes to safeguarding legislation mean that Connor, along with other dioceses within the Church of Ireland, have created this new role.

David said: "My job will be to offer parishes assistance, support and guidance in conjunction with the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Officer."

A native of Edinburgh, David moved to Northern Ireland 27 years ago. He previously worked as a manager in the Civil Service, retiring in 2021.

Speaking of his new role, David said: "It is something totally different and I am looking forward not only to the challenge, but to the variety of work. I hope to help wherever I can."



At the dedication of the new organ in St Patrick's, Jordanstown, are, from left: the Rev Brendan O'Loan, OLM; Matt Greer, organist; Claire McCollum, parishioner and broadcaster; and the Rev Canon Nigel Baylor, rector. Photo by John Lendrum.

A special service was held in St Patrick's Parish Church, Jordanstown, on February 19 to dedicate the church's new digital organ.

The instrument, a Sonus Overture from Viscount Classical Organs, was dedicated by the rector, the Rev Canon Nigel Baylor, and during the service, parishioner Claire McCollum, a well-known broadcaster, interviewed Matt Greer, organist, about the organ and his plans for the future.

The choir sang an anthem composed for the occasion by Matt, who gave a recital, 'Fanfare' by CS Lang, demonstrating the versatility and range of the organ.

The old organ at St Patrick's had served the community since the electronic console was installed in the 1960s. Over time, however, the organ began to have numerous issues, such as problems with the wind chambers, electronics and key mechanisms. After deliberation with the Select Vestry, organist and rector, the decision was taken to install a brand-new digital organ, made by Viscount Classical Organs.

Matt said the Viscount Sonus Overture is very much an upgrade. "The previous organ housed 12 stops over two manuals, whereas the new organ contains 56 stops over three manuals," he explained. "As a top of the range instrument, we also decided to purchase a state-of-the-art speaker system which recreates antiphonal sounds between different organ divisions."

Matt said the organ has numerous benefits in aiding worship. "Foremost, the previous organ was consistently stated by various members of the congregation and choir to be too loud," he said. "The benefit of the new organ is that the dynamic range of

the instrument can go from extremely soft and almost inaudible - fantastic for light choral accompaniment - to a very loud and majestic sound, complete with multiple ranks of trumpets and reeds.

"Also, there are 44 more stops than on the previous instrument which allows for a greater variety in sound and tone."

The previous organ had various tuning issues which were exacerbated by existing problems, he added. "The old organ had close to 1,200 individual pipes which all needed maintenance. As the new organ is digital, the instrument will not fall out of tune, even if there is cold or hot weather, and the general maintenance needed will be extremely sparse and much cheaper."

Restoring the old organ would have left St Patrick's without an instrument for a considerable amount of time which Matt said would have greatly restricted the music ministry and evangelism through music which goes on at the church.

Matt is in the process of reinstating the junior choir and plans to grow the existing four-part choir are well under way. "The digital instrument offers a recording and playback function for both when the organist is away or needs to conduct the choir," he said.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to develop the choir by having a conductor and allows the possibility of quick adjustments to the musical accompaniment. Overall, the church is delighted to have installed the new instrument."

Festival Service and Commissioning



At the 2023 Connor Mothers' Union Festival Service in Belfast Cathedral on March 12 are, from left: Irene Gates, Connor Mothers' Union Diocesan Secretary; Archdeacon Stephen McBride, Connor and All Ireland Mothers' Union Chaplain; Sally Cotter, Connor Mothers' Union Diocesan President; the Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor; the Very Rev Stephen Forde, Dean of Belfast; and Alberta Miskimmin, Belfast Cathedral branch of Mothers' Union.

Mothers' Union members from across Connor Diocese were in Belfast Cathedral on Sunday March 12 for Connor Mothers' Union's annual Festival Service.

The guest preacher was the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Connor MU Diocesan Chaplain and All Ireland MU Chaplain. The service included the commissioning of members of the Trustee Board and Executive Committee.

The theme was 'Transformation Now,' and worship was led by the Mothers' Union Festival Choir and the Choir of Lancaster Bible College from Pennsylvania, USA, who had also sung at the 11am service in the Cathedral that day. Soloist for the Festival Service was Janine Burnside and the organist was Brenda Pateman, Belfast Cathedral Mothers' Union branch.

The readings were by Alberta Miskimmin, Belfast Cathedral branch (Ruth 1: 1-18) and Moira Thom, a former Diocesan President (1 Corinthians 12: 12-31).

Sally Cotter, Connor Diocesan President, read the Mothers' Union Aims and Objectives, and the Prayers of Intercession were led by Margaret Nelson, Lisburn and Derriaghy Area Chairperson, and Jacqui McLoughlin, Social Policy Contact.

Diocesan and Cathedral Banners were processed down the aisle of the Cathedral and were received by the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde.



Paddy and John Wallace, Norma and William Bell and Roberta McKelvey.

All Ireland role for Connor Chaplain

The Archdeacon of Connor, the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, vicar of Antrim, is the new All Ireland Chaplain to the Mothers' Union, succeeding Canon Robert Deane.

The Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev John McDowell, said the Mothers' Union has been at the heart of the worship and witness of the Church of Ireland for more than a century. "I can think of no better person than Dr Stephen McBride to support and nurture this spirit of involvement and dedication - and fun - at the heart of the Church, so well supported by his wife Helen," he said.

Stephen is current Connor Diocesan Mothers' Union Chaplain and has had a long association with the Mothers' Union, through his mother Claire, a former chairperson of the Holy Trinity and Immanuel Parish, Belfast, branch, and his mother-in-law, the late Jean Clyde, who held diocesan posts in Connor and Armagh at executive level. Stephen's wife Helen has been a member since 1987 and is a former Antrim Parish branch chairperson.



Archdeacon Stephen McBride and his wife Helen.

Molly (100) celebrated by Lambeg branch

Molly Craig, who was 100-years-old on May 30, has been an active member of Lambeg Mothers' Union (MU) for an incredible 64 years and has held several leadership roles at branch level.

During her tenure as branch leader in the 1980s, she was approached by Mary Sumner House to take on a link branch, namely Seymour which has now become Goulburn MU in the Diocese of Wangaratta, Victoria, Australia. Lambeg and Goulburn are still in contact.

Molly also encouraged the branch to raise funds for a banner for Lambeg

MU. She drew the design used to create the banner, which was dedicated on March 25 1990.



Molly's birthday was celebrated by Lambeg branch members at an afternoon tea. Molly is pictured cutting her cake with her daughter Rosalind Bloomfield.

WORLDWIDE



Bangor Worldwide
Missionary Convention

Hamilton Road Presbyterian
18th- 27th August
worldwidemission.org

ARISE SHINE

A little look at this year's events...

Daily Events

Morning Prayer Meetings

Mon 21st - Fri 25th from 10am

Join us to pray for the work of the Convention.

Bible Studies with Chris Wright

Mon 21st - Fri 25th from 11:30am

Chris will open God's Word with us, exploring the book of Isaiah.

Gospel Truck

Mon 21st - Fri 25th from 10am - 4pm

Bangor Seafront

We have an exciting new partnership with Faith Mission this summer in the form of a 40ft articulated lorry!

Worldwide Kids [®]

Mon 21st - Fri 25th from 11am

Hamilton Road Baptist

In association with CEF with God's Word, quizzes, games and crafts.

Creche [®]

Mon 21st - Fri 25th from 11:15am

Evening Events

Mon 21st - Thurs 24th at 7:30pm

Mission reports, interviews and a time of praise together.

Mon 21 - Africa

Tues 22 - Europe

Wed 23 - Middle East

Thur 24 - UK

Highlighted Events

Worldwide 20s30s

Fri 18th from 8pm

Hamilton Road Baptist

Food | Worship | Stories | Teaching

With Pastor Steve Auld.

20s30s Equip Gathering [®]

Sat 19th from 9:30am - 1:30pm

1st Bangor Presbyterian

Worship and teaching from Dick Brogden (Live Dead), seminars, stories, discussion, prayer & lunch. Free crèche. £7.50 adults. £3 child.

20s30s Equip Gathering [®]

Sat 19th from 9:30am - 9pm

As above, plus seminar with Dick Brogden and Q&A, worship and 24/7 prayer session, Dinner and free admission to *If Prison Walls Could Speak* play. £25 adults.

If Prison Walls Could Speak

Sat 19th at 7pm

Doors open at 6:30pm. Northern Ireland Premiere of the play by Artless Theatre Company in partnership with Release International.

Mission Agencies Prayer Meeting

Mon 21st at 6pm

Ministers Lunch & Q&A [®]

Wed 23rd at 12:45pm

Hamilton Road Baptist
With Dai Hankey (Red Community) & Chris Wright.

Ladies Afternoon Tea [®]

Thurs 24th at 3pm

Bangor Parish Church

With special guests Naomi Dudgeon (Faith Mission), Kate Namate (ShineHisLight - Street Family Org Kenya).

Evening Celebration

Fri 25th at 7pm

With Dai Hankey and members of New Irish Arts.

Worldwide Youth Event

Fri 25th at 7pm

Hamilton Road Baptist

Food | Worship | Stories | Teaching
With Dai Hankey.

Growing the church in difficult places [®]

Sat 26th 10am

Lisnabreen Presbyterian.

With Dai Hankey, Naomi Dudgeon and others.

* All events take place at Hamilton Road Presbyterian unless otherwise stated.