

CONNOR

connections

Freezer
Ministry
in Portglenone
pages 8-9



DIOCESE OF
CONNOR

Growing Healthy Churches



Dedicated Scout leader Gordon Edgar.

Silver Wolf Award for Scout Gordon

A lifetime of dedicated service to the Scouts has been rewarded with the presentation of a Silver Wolf Award to Gordon Edgar, a parishioner of St Michael's, Belfast.

This was presented to Gordon by NI Chief Commissioner Stephen Donaldson at an event in Ardnavey Activity Centre in Castlereagh on June 10. Gordon also attended the St George's Day Parade in Windsor last April.

Gordon, 77, grew up in Mayo Street in the Shankill area of Belfast and after he married Heather they moved to Upper Cavehill Road in 1983. They have a son, Alan, also a Scout Leader, and a daughter, Caroline.

Gordon was baptised and confirmed in St Michael's and joined the Select Vestry

when he was just 20. He has been glebe warden and rector's warden.

INSTRUCTOR

He joined the Wolf Cubs (the youngest section of the Scouts) in 1954, at the age of eight. "I never left our Cubs. As soon as I became a Scout at the age of 11, I was asked to stay on as a Cub instructor. We were in a small hall in Emerson Street, above garages which had once housed pigs! We had no lights in winter, and the hall was heated by a coal fire. There were about 20 boys.

"I was doing something with the Scouts two nights a week. In 1978, we moved to a band hall in Lanark Street, and then to a classroom in Forthriver Primary School, before getting our own hall.

"Mum was a member of the parents' association, and did lots of fundraising, and we were able to move to a two-storey building in Glencairn Estate."

Gordon is a member of 50th Belfast Scout Group, which was formed in 1921. He modestly claims he 'wasn't a good Scout,' and never achieved first class awards because, in his own words, he was 'probably too lazy!'

But he was a Rover Scout from the age of 18 and went on to be Assistant Cub Master and later Assistant Cub Scout Leader.

WOOD BADGE

Gordon earned his 'Wood Badge' in 1969, and in 2007 was presented with his Silver Acorn Medal of Merit.

"I was amazed to get the Silver Acorn and dumbfounded when I heard last November that I would be getting the Silver Wolf. The nearest I have been to Commissioner was Group Scout Leader. Only one person in my group has the Silver Acorn. He is now 89 and was Assistant Scout Master when I joined the Cubs."

Gordon says Scout numbers are picking up post Covid-19. Being a Scout, he said, gives a young person confidence in themselves. "You learn things you can use throughout your life, simple things like lighting a fire safely, first aid, canoeing and rafting."

The citation for Gordon's Silver Wolf Award read: "Gordon is a fantastic asset to Scouting with over 50 years of dedicated service. Gordon remains committed to his own group, the 50th, his District North West Belfast, and is a loyal member of Team 5 at Crawfordsburn.

"Striving to ensure the group's succession, Gordon stepped back a few years ago as Section Leader to allow others to take the helm. Never far away, he remained able to help, support and guide as needed. When a Section is short of a Leader, Gordon is the first point of call and always keen to help. The man behind the scenes, it is often Gordon who ensures the hall is open and ready for the various Sections and users coming in on a weekly basis."

The former laboratory manager said the Silver Wolf Award was an honour. "I did a voluntary job, I just plod on and do things the best I can," he said.

Autumn 2023

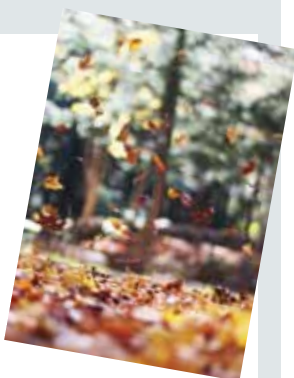
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Cover photo:

The beauty of autumn.

Photo:
Unsplash



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

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Thank you for your faithful service



Dear friends in Connor Diocese. In many ways, the life of the Church is like the life of any family.

As we have begun a new season of ministry in the diocese this autumn, we welcome new faces and say farewell to some familiar ones, we share together in the everyday patterns of life and worship that shape us. We enjoy hearing about the different things that family members have been up to and celebrating their achievements!

In putting together this edition of 'Connor Connections,' Karen has captured a cross-section of many of the things that have been happening in our Connor family recently. I have been particularly interested to hear about some of the ways in which members of the diocese have used time over the summer to engage in connecting with Christians in other parts of the world and serving alongside them.

Those opportunities can bring blessing, not just to those who participate, but also to the church families that they come back to, with new insights and things learned and enthusiasm for new patterns of service!

I trust that you will enjoy reading the

magazine and will use it to inform your prayers so that we can encourage and support one another as we serve Christ together across this diocese.

As I conclude though, I want to say how much I also appreciate the faithful service of those family members (clergy and lay) whose faces don't appear in a magazine, but who week in, week out, serve faithfully too. Many of the important activities which sustain our life together are not necessarily things that would make an interesting article for us to read, but are nonetheless vitally important.

In the pulpit Sunday by Sunday, in a monthly vestry meeting, preparing an activity for a child in Sunday School, washing dishes in the kitchen of a church hall, and in the quiet unnoticed act of thoughtfulness to a stranger, the work of the kingdom of God takes place. Thank you to all of you for the difference that you make.

Yours in the service of
Jesus,

+George

Organ Scholars are celebrated



At the Down, Dromore and Connor Organ Scholarship Service in St Columba's, Knock, on September 17, David Dunlop, All Saints', Belfast, and Tanya Zachara, St Mark's, Dundela, were presented with certificates for completing the course. There are currently nine scholars: Year 1: Helen Neale, St Mark's, Dundela; Rachel Smyth, St John's, Malone; Laura Smyth, St John's, Malone. Year 2: Katy McKnight, Holy Trinity, Portrush; Lucy Steele, St Aidan's, Glenavy. Year 3: Larissa Fleck, St Patrick's, Armoyle; Clare Kelly, St Patrick's, Jordanstown; Dr Mark McKinty, St Cedma's, Larne & Inver; and Grace Steed, St Mark's, Dundela. At the June meeting of the Organ Scholarship Board of Management, thanks were extended to outgoing office-bearers, the Rev Canon John Auchmuty and Mr Gerald Hill. The Board also thanked the Rev Canon David Humphries who served the committee for almost two decades. New office-bearers elected were the Rev Canon Stephen Fielding (Chair, St John's, Malone), and Mrs Beth Aiken (Honorary Secretary, St Mark's, Dundela). Photo: Annette McGrath.



'The greatest honour is in serving God

The Rev Tracey McRoberts MBE.

A commitment to peacebuilding in the community in which she serves earned the Rev Tracey McRoberts, rector of St Matthew's Parish, Belfast, and Rural Dean of Mid-Belfast, an MBE in the King's Birthday Honours.

Tracey still does not know who nominated her for the award, which was announced on June 17. "All I knew was that it was for services to the community in Belfast," she says. "I thought it may have been someone in Scouting as I am the only chaplain left in Belfast, and perhaps because I am chaplain to the retired members of the Royal Irish Rangers on the Shankill Road, but when I received a call from the Cabinet Office, I learned it was for my role in peacebuilding."

The citation referred to Tracey's presence on the streets during the riots in Lanark Way in 2021 and to her standing beside Father Martin Magill at Clonard during Novena in 2022, speaking about the work they do together in peacebuilding.

Along with Fr Magill, Tracey established the Farset Group with members of their respective parishes and this has now been meeting for the last 18 months. The group is facilitated by Corrymeela. "We started looking at the Decade of Centenaries 1912-1921/22, exploring Irish history north and south, and after that the group decided to continue, so we looked at Moving Beyond Violence," she explains. "There have been trips to the Somme Centre,

to areas of Belfast impacted by the Blitz during World War Two, and to Glasnevin and Grangegorman Military cemeteries in Dublin. It is now more like a friendship group who laugh together while sharing safely and learning from each other.

"Since the riots in 2021, things have calmed down considerably. On the first anniversary of the riots, we held a prayer walk, but this is not something we want to continue to mark."

VISIT

The group came to the attention of the leaders in the Irish Council of Churches, and members received a visit from Archbishop John McDowell, Archbishop Eamon Martin, and Bishop Andrew Forster among others. The Rev Jack Lamb, a retired minister who served in Townsend Street Presbyterian Church, gave the visitors a guided tour of the area.

Tracey and Fr Magill continue to work together on a weekly basis. "It is time-consuming, but I very much believe in building relationships within as many communities as possible. We were both invited to speak at a number of events

around the Good Friday Agreement anniversary. After the Agreement, it was almost as if the churches said peacebuilding was done and dusted, we don't need to do 'cross-community' work any more, and returned to the struggles within our own parishes, without looking to other communities.

"The Lanark Way riots showed that faith leaders in the area did not know each other, so we realised we needed to do better in building friendships and bring that into our parishes. We have been trying to learn about each other and our shared experiences. Often the discussions are interesting - we see things in a different way, or we hear things differently, but because of the friendships formed and plenty of humour, it has been great."

Tracey grew up in Donaghadee at a time when a career in ordained ministry was not an option for women. "From the age of five or six, people would say to me, 'Tracey, if you were a man, you would be a minister.' I have no idea why! But it was an avenue that was closed to me, so even if it resonated, it wasn't a possibility.

"I left school at 16 and worked in the office of Spence Bryson Carpets in Bangor, working my way up to Office Supervisor. But when I was 27, the business closed and we were all made redundant. That

same week my husband left me after 10 years together. I had had two miscarriages in the previous year and was three months pregnant with my son Philip.

"I knew I had to restart my life. For me, the worst thing was that my faith in God was being deeply challenged. I knew if I could get that back on track, everything else would follow."

When Philip was three months old, Tracey went to technical college to do an A Level in RE. "I needed to go back to learn more about God," she says. Within months, her tutors suggested she should go to university as a mature student. Tracey was successful in earning a place at Union College to study Theology for three years.

"It was very challenging. I was a single parent to a child with autism and I had to work, otherwise I would have had no income. I data processed the NIE payroll overnight and did my lectures during the day while Mum and Dad looked after Philip. I completed all my studies during term time so I could spend the holidays with Philip. I couldn't have done it without my parents. They were an absolute blessing to me."

As ordination of women was now happening, Tracey had hoped to go straight to the Church of Ireland Theological College after finishing her degree, but personal issues meant that it was 10 years before she began her training for ordination. During that time, she did a PGCE to teach RE at secondary level and worked as church co-ordinator in Orangefield Presbyterian Church, helping guide it to a place where it began to move forward with plans for a new building.

"The Church of Ireland was still very much my spiritual home, so I spoke to Bishop Harold Miller who said I should move to work in the Church of Ireland through my two-year vocation period. I worked in the Ballymacarrett Group of Parishes as an assistant minister, before being selected to go for ordination training."

While she was at Theological College, Tracey also did a Master's Degree in Leadership & Pastoral Care through All Hallows College. In 2009, she earned her Master's and was ordained in the Diocese of Connor for the curacy of St Thomas's, Belfast. Eleven years ago, she was appointed rector of St Matthew's, Shankill.

Tracey says she is honoured by the MBE. "It is nice to feel that the work being done has been noticed, as generally speaking I do try to keep a low profile. But really, the greatest honour is in serving God and the people of the area. It is their care and support that has enabled me to receive this award."

India ministry trip 'a great blessing'



With Dr Neva at the ICMC are the Templepatrick Ministry Team: Matthew, Nicole, Jeremy, Phil, Josh and Rory.

A team of five young people from Templepatrick and Mossley parishes, led by the rector of Templepatrick and Donegore, the Rev Jeremy Mould, spent two weeks in India over the summer.

They flew out on July 10 and were based at the Indian Christian Mission Centre (ICMC) near Salem in Tamil Nadu with nine young people from an Exodus team. Travelling with Jeremy were Rory, Josh, Matthew, Phil and Nicole.

The ICMC supports 150 orphans at the Promised Land Complex, providing them with clothing, accommodation, meals and an education, up to degree level, at the Graham School.

ICMC also runs an Arts and Science College and a Nursing College on the site, a school, St Basil's, and Omega Church in Salem city.

The team ran a full three-day Bible Holiday Club for the primary aged children, with around 50 taking part each day, whilst the Exodus team ran activities for around 100 secondary aged children.

The team also visited a small orphanage in Rasipuram for the day to run a Bible Holiday Club there, took a church service on Sunday morning at Omega Church in Salem, went to the first-year nursing students Lamp Lighting Ceremony and the opening ceremony of the Rev Tom Keightley Outpatients Clinic.

They also had time to go shopping for souvenirs, coffees, saris and pyjamas, and to head up into the mountains to feed the monkeys and go boating on a lake.

Each day was very busy, beginning with breakfast at 8.30am, team quiet time at

9.30am, followed by the Bible Club or other activity from 10.30am until lunch at 1pm. Bible Club activities continued from 3-6pm, with further team time at 7pm before dinner at 8.30pm.

Jeremy said: "Our teams got on very well together but had separate group quiet times in the morning and team times in the evening.

"The Lord answered all our prayers, and we believe the trip was a great blessing to all the children and students we met. ICMC thanked us and said it was a great encouragement to them. We were the first group to visit them since 2019 and they are looking forward to our return in 2025."

To learn more, please contact Jeremy at jermould@gmail.com or on 07896 839488.

New address for diocesan office

The offices of the dioceses of Connor and Down & Dromore are now located in the Titanic Quarter at Channel Wharf, Unit 1, 21 Old Channel Road, Belfast, BT3 9DE.

Central Church staff have moved to 18-22 Hill Street, Belfast. All Access NI vetting forms should be sent to Claire Geoghegan at this Hill Street address.

Phone numbers and emails for staff remain unchanged. There is limited parking for visitors at the new office.



Mrs Gertie Campbell.

After 50 years, I feel a burden has lifted

Half a century after a terrorist bomb devastated her family, Gertie Campbell is finally able to talk about the guilt that has haunted her and how she lived with such a profound loss.

Gertie and her husband Jim lost three family members when a bomb ripped through Railway Road, Coleraine, on June 12 1973. Jim's father Francis, mother Dinah, and his Aunt Elizabeth all died in the explosion. His sister Hilary suffered life-changing injuries.

The four had been on holiday in Jim and Gertie's caravan on the north coast and had gone into Coleraine to do some shopping.

The 50th anniversary was marked on June 12 in Coleraine, and Gertie, a parishioner in Magheragall, attended as she has always done. But this year Gertie, now a widow, says she felt something had shifted.

"I have always felt the guilt, but after this memorial, I feel the burden is lifted. I have always felt myself shaking inside with the anxiety of it, I cried off and on when I tried to talk about it. I have been reliving it for 50 years, but now I feel I can talk about it and that is bringing me some relief," she says.

Gertie was confirmed in Magheragall Parish Church where she married Jim in 1965. The two had met at a dance five years earlier and had been married 52 years when Jim died in 2017.

Gertie worked at Stewart's Factory in Dunmurry Lane, and when it closed she moved to RFD (now Survitec) in Dunmurry, where she remained until retirement. Jim



Gertie and Jim's family remembered on the new memorial unveiled in Coleraine on the 50th anniversary of the bombing on June 12.

was a motor mechanic and went on to be a supervisor in Coca Cola, but his career was cut short five years after the bomb, when he took a heart attack and was unable to return to work.

"It had been a very hard five years for him after what had happened. He had to identify them. It took it out of him," Gertie says.

"We bought the caravan in Ballycastle in March 1973. We wanted somewhere we could bring Jim's mother and father.

"I was in the house after work when the police came. They talked about Francis Campbell and I asked if he was hurt. They

said yes, and wanted to know where Jim was. We were trying to get a telephone in but didn't have it at the time. An uncle took me to Jim and I told him he had to come home, there had been a bomb and his dad was hurt.

"We had to drive to Coleraine that evening. We hadn't a clue about how serious things were. When Jim asked about his mummy, they said they didn't know anything more. At the police station in Coleraine, we were told to go to the hospital where Jim had to identify all three of them."

Gertie said Hilary was on a ward. "She couldn't see Jim, but knew him by his voice. Hilary doesn't remember the bombing. She still has the scars. She has no toes on one foot and has sight in only one eye," Gertie says.

"Seeing her injuries was very hard. She stayed in hospital for a while, and when she was there, we went up to the caravan every weekend because we were working during the week. Then we brought her home with us. I took a week off to see how she would do. There were a lot of injuries to keep clean, and I had to lift her into and out of the bath.

"I kept having to contact the hospital to ask them to remove bits of metal from her legs – it was shredding her tights." Hilary was eventually able to return to work.

Gertie was 34 at the time of the bomb, and Hilary was 10 years older.

She believes the family had planned on going on a picnic that day, as they had food in the back of the car. "Francis, Dinah and Elizabeth all died at the scene. We know Francis died in a man's arms. They were very badly injured and missing limbs. When Jim went to identify the bodies, he had trouble telling who was his mother and who was his aunt. He took that with him to the grave," Gertie recalls.

"It was very hard for him. For five years he never got a good night's sleep. He would have been up walking about. Post-traumatic stress – that's what the heart attack stemmed from. We had received no counselling or emotional support after the bomb."

Francis and Dinah were buried together at Roselawn. That same afternoon, Elizabeth's funeral took place – also at Roselawn.

"It was very hard, but I had good friends, they all went out of their way to help me, and Jim's colleagues looked out for him.

"After Jim's heart attack I continued to work. He found that difficult. But I never had to lift a finger in the house. In the years



Gertie and Hilary at this year's memorial service in Coleraire.

we were married, we never argued or fought, we just lived for one another."

Can she forgive the bombers? "We did talk about it. It was hard for Jim to sit in the court - he wouldn't let me come because he knew I would cry all the way through - knowing he could almost touch the shoulder of the man behind the bomb."

Sean McGlinchey spent 18 years in jail for his part in the car bomb attack.

"That man ended up being Mayor of Limavady. That was very hurtful. He came to the memorials in Coleraire. I never spoke to him. We never said we forgive you, but it's over and done with and what can you do?" says Gertie.

Poignantly, the morning after the explosion, Jim and Gertie received a postcard from their aunt, saying she had never had such a good night's sleep as she had in that caravan.

"What really hurt Jim and I was that if we didn't have the caravan, and they hadn't gone there, this wouldn't have happened," Gertie says softly.

But the 50th anniversary service has given her some closure. "I felt a change after the memorial service this year. It was always in the back of my mind - if it hadn't been my caravan - but Nicholas [the Rev Nicholas Dark, who also attended the Memorial Service] said it could have been anyone's caravan."

Gertie now feels she can talk about the tragedy. "Last year, on the 49th anniversary, they laid a foundation stone for the memorial, and this year, after 50 years, there is a solid memorial at the site of the bomb. That brings a bit of comfort. It is something to visit in the future.

"I think Jim would have been happy to see the memorial erected. And I feel that after 50 years, a burden has been lifted off me.

"What happened has had a huge impact on my life, but I was always by Jim's side. We were very blessed to have each other and were both very happy in our life. I am just sorry I didn't have his parents long enough to be with them and to enjoy the caravan with them."

Deputy Lieutenant honour for Kevin

The Rev Canon Kevin Graham, rector of St Bartholomew's in Stranmillis, has been appointed as a Deputy Lieutenant (DL) for the County Borough of Belfast.

The appointment followed his nomination to serve as a DL by the Lord Lieutenant of Belfast, Dame Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle DBE DStJ DDL (Hon QUB), to His Majesty The King.

Canon Graham had worked closely with the Lord Lieutenant and the Belfast Lieutenancy team over the last number of years. As a Deputy Lieutenant, he may be called upon to represent the Lord Lieutenant, who is His Majesty's representative for the County Borough of Belfast, on such occasions as royal visits, citizenship ceremonies and honours presentations.

Canon Graham said of the appointment: "I am thrilled to be a part of the Belfast Lieutenancy team and very much look forward to serving His Majesty and the Lord Lieutenant in this role.

"I am most grateful for the trust the Lord



The Lord Lieutenant, Dame Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle DBE DStJ DDL (Hon QUB) presenting Canon Graham with his Commission as a Deputy Lieutenant. Photograph by Dr Alan Boyd DL, Vice Lord Lieutenant of the County Borough of Belfast.

Lieutenant has in my ability to fulfil this role and feel honoured to serve the County Borough of Belfast in an additional way alongside my ministry in the city. I look forward to the adventures that await in my new role as a Deputy Lieutenant."



Gifts dedicated in Eglantine

Parishioners of All Saints', Eglantine, were honoured to have the Rt Rev the Lord Eames OM with them to dedicate a new altar, acolyte torches and a cruet set on July 30. The altar was dedicated in memory of the late Heather and David Kingan. The acolyte torches and cruet set were dedicated in memory of the late Jim and Molly McQuaid whose daughter Karen is parish treasurer. The service of dedication was in the context of a Sung Eucharist, with Lord Eames preaching.

Former Dean returns to launch new book

Former Dean of Belfast, John Mann, returned to St Anne's Cathedral on September 28 to launch his latest book.

'Journeying to the Light; Daily Readings Through Advent and Christmas' was launched by the

Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, and the Very Rev Canon Edward O'Donnell, PP of St Brigid's, Derryvolgie, and Ecumenical Canon of St Anne's.

The book is available from The Book Well at a cost of £11.95.



Bishop George Davison, the Rev David Ferguson and Ordinand Mrs Shona Bell at the anniversary service.

Celebrating 175 years in Ballycastle

Celebrations took place on July 22 and 23 to mark the 175th anniversary of St James' Church in the Parish of Ramoan and Culfeightrin, Ballycastle.

Events started with a Fun Day on the Saturday and, on Sunday, Bishop George Davison visited and consecrated an extension to the church graveyard.

This was followed by a Service of Thanksgiving attended by the MLA for the area, Mr Robin Swann, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and councillors from Causeway Coast and Glens Council, and other representatives from the local community. Bishop George preached at the service.

Guests and parishioners then enjoyed lunch in the Parish Centre. A cake was cut by Mrs Beth Colgan who, as a 16-year-old, sang in the choir at the 100th anniversary and, now in her 90s, had travelled from England for the weekend's events.

Appointment to Monkstown

The Rev Nathan Ervine, curate in St Nicholas', Carrickfergus, has been appointed priest-in-charge of the Parish of Monkstown.

Nathan is married to Grace, and they

have two young sons. Before training for ordination, Nathan did an undergraduate Degree in Theology at the Irish Baptist College. He also worked as Youth and Families' Worker in St Peter's, Belfast. Previously, he trained as a joiner.

Nathan was ordained a deacon in 2020 and served his deacon intern year in Magheragall Parish before his ordination as a priest in 2021 and his move to St Nicholas'. A Service of Introduction will be held on December 5 at 7.30pm.



Portglenone Freezer Ministry team members, from left: Lorraine Surgenor, Anne McCullough, Michael McCullough, Phyllis McGaughey and Lena Kirkwood.

'A simple gesture provides a real lift'

A mouth-watering scent of home cooking wafts through Portglenone Parish Centre - follow your nose and it is not hard to find the hub of the parish's very successful Freezer Ministry - the kitchen!

There, chefs Michael, Lena, Phyllis, Anne and Lorraine are putting together a scrumptious range of dishes which will eventually find their way into the homes of people in need in the local community.

It is a ministry which has earned the gratitude of people across the area both within and outside the parish, and one which is drawing new people into the village church.

On the menu today is vegetable soup, chicken and leek soup, cottage pie and chicken and potato pie. Other popular recipes include beef stew, wheaten bread and sausage and mash pie.

The sense of teamwork is evident as the chefs set the dishes out to cool - they will all eventually be frozen in different-sized portions - and clean up the dishes. Only then, is there time to sit and chat.

Portglenone Parish launched its Freezer Ministry in March 2022, with a core team of six volunteers all trained in food hygiene, and all necessary preparation made in liaison with environmental health legislation.

Parish Reader Michael McCullough is a primary school teacher. "We are blessed by what we are doing. The initiative grew out of Front Room, which we set up during Covid, as a drop-in centre one Saturday a month where people could come for tea



Lena Kirkwood prepares a chicken dish as part of the Freezer Ministry in Portglenone Parish.

and coffee, and for prayer and a chat. We then started serving soup, and when the Freezer Ministry began, we started giving frozen meals to those in need who visited the Front Room - many would live on their own.

"It is a practical way of showing God's love in a way that people can visualise and see."

The Rev Dennis Christie, rector of Ahoghill and Portglenone, said that at Christmas, the parish hosts a free Christmas meal for local people, mainly older members of the community, in the Parish Centre.

"During the Covid pandemic this couldn't take place, so we decided to prepare and hand deliver the Christmas meals to those who would regularly attend. This was so well received and people were so encouraged to know that they were being



Yummy! Soup made by the Portglenone Freezer Ministry chefs which will be distributed to people in need in the local community.

remembered that we decided an all-year-round Freezer Ministry was something we could provide."

Michael's mother Anne, a part-time bookkeeper, sees the benefits of the project, and not just to those who receive the meals. "It is well appreciated and needed. Both churches (Ahoghill and Portglenone) and the whole community benefit. People cannot believe that we give them these meals and don't charge for it."

Recipes have to be suitable for all, as Lorraine Surgenor explains: "The meals go to a lot of elderly people so we can't make anything too spicy." Fellow chef Phyllis McGaughey nods. "My aunt is 86 and my uncle is 90 and they really appreciate the meals."

The project was initially funded by the team members, but a collection in the two churches raised money for ingredients and containers for the individual meals. McAtamney's Butchers in Galgorm kindly provides quality meat at catering rates.

"We are always aware of people in need," Michael explains. "We hear through word of mouth and Dennis has a community prayer app so we know if people are in difficulty."

This could be through ill-health or bereavement - sometimes for individuals and sometimes for families. Phyllis herself benefited from the Freezer Ministry when she was unwell with Covid-19. "I really appreciated it," she said.

Phyllis works as a shop assistant but is off work on a Friday - which is normally the day selected for Freezer Ministry food preparation. "I don't mind helping out," she says. "I enjoy it, we all get on so well."

"We always have a laugh," Lena Kirkwood adds. "I don't much like cooking at home,



Michael McCullough spoons out the freshly cooked food for cooling and freezing.

but coming here is different. It's not drudgery and everybody gets on so well."

Once cooked, cooled and packaged, the food is stored for up to three months in a new freezer funded by an anonymous donor. The team meets to prepare new meals when stock gets low, so it is a ministry very much driven by demand.

"Prayer needs to go on in the background, it is very important," says Anne. "But you must be seen to be practical, especially in the world we are living in when many people are struggling."

Portglenone is a growing, healthy church which, Michael says, is helped by outreach projects like this.

Dennis adds: "I see our Freezer Ministry as a key part of both our pastoral and outreach ministries. We provide meals as a helping hand to those who are struggling, regardless of their religion or church connection. We provide for people who have had a bereavement, who are unwell, those recovering from an operation, or for those who are just going through a rough time.

"It might seem like a simple gesture, but it can provide a real lift, both spiritually and practically, to those who are going through a difficult time."

Climate change prayer vigil



The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, and the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, former Bishop of Connor, at the climate prayer vigil at Belfast Cathedral.

Former Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, and his wife Liz held a prayer vigil at Belfast Cathedral on September 16, inviting people to come together to reflect on the impact of climate change.

The vigil ran from 10am until 12 noon, with silent prayer on the Cathedral steps and a prayer space with visuals in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit inside.

As he stood on the steps, flanked by posters urging people to think about the legacy of climate change and to act to stop the fossil fuel economy, Bishop Alan said he considered climate change to be 'the most important issue of our time.'

"For us, it has become really important as we have three grandsons - what legacy are we leaving them?" he asked.

Liz said: "As Christians, we are distressed that the most vulnerable are going to suffer the most, with hunger, drought, floods and home loss being realities for them."



Three ladies from 'Cameo,' Lisburn Cathedral's Senior Citizens' group, celebrated special birthdays over the summer. Jacqueline Houston, left, was 99, Ivy Bell, centre, was 102, and Molly Williamson was 100! Congratulations to all three ladies.

Christmas Tree Festival in Kilroot

Kilroot Parish is holding a Christmas Tree Festival from December 7-10. The theme is 'Favourite Bible Stories.' Donations will support the NI Children's Hospice, Alzheimer's Society, and church funds. Refreshments will be available.

Ballymoney hosts Diocesan Synod



Safeguarding Compliance Officer David McGrory introduces his role.



The Rev Malcolm Ferry speaks in relation to the Council for Mission report.



Finance and Administration Manager Richard Cotter speaking on the diocesan accounts.



Mrs Judith Cairns pays tribute to the work of the Hub Chaplaincy.

Connor Diocesan Synod was held in Ballymoney on June 22. It began with a Service of Holy Communion in St Patrick's Church, followed by refreshments served at the parish's beautifully restored Old Schoolhouse.

The business of Synod was held in the main parish hall. In his Presidential Address, Bishop George Davison spoke about changes in the Monarchy, the Connor Clergy Conference and his vision for 'Growing Healthy Churches.'

Addressing around 250 clergy and lay members, Bishop George called for an end to the stalemate in Stormont. "The continued political vacuum in Northern Ireland, the absence of meaningful government in this province, is having real and profound effects on our health service, on our schools, on our economy," Bishop George stated.

He said political representatives must be urged to 'knuckle down,' take the difficult decisions and make political progress for the good of all.

The Bishop paid tribute to the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, and the team at Belfast Cathedral for the 'meticulous planning' in preparation for the Service of Reflection for our late Queen in September 2022.

PROUD

"I think that we can be immensely proud of the role played by many members of our diocese on this solemn but important occasion in our national life. The ultimate compliment came from the lips of our new King as he left the Cathedral at the end of the service and told me that it had been 'just perfect!'" the Bishop said.

Looking back to the Clergy Conference held in Co Cavan last November, the Bishop spoke about his hopes for 'Growing Healthy Churches.' "'Growing Healthy Churches' can serve a statement of both what we want to do and what we want to be in the diocese," the Bishop said.

"We all know the challenges that we face... but the gospel of Jesus Christ is a message about new possibilities, about transformation, about new life, about hope. If we are being faithful to the call and commission of Jesus, then each of our parishes, our church communities, our spiritual families can and should be a 'growing, healthy church' by definition."

The Bishop spoke about new clergy appointments in the diocese and paid tribute to those who had retired. He also outlined changes within the diocesan staff team, and the relocation of Church House from Donegall Street to Titanic Quarter.

The Rev Canon William Taggart reported on Communications from General Synod, and elections were held.

Following lunch, the Report of Diocesan Council was proposed by Mrs Alberta Miskimmon and seconded by the Rev James Boyd.

Archdeacon Stephen McBride introduced Mr David McGrory who took up his post as Safeguarding Compliance Officer for Connor Diocese in April. Mr McGrory outlined his previous experience, and spoke about his role, saying he was looking forward to supporting parishes as they worked towards safeguarding compliance.

A number of Synod members spoke in relation to reports from Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie and the Rev Philip Benson, former Chair of Connor Youth Council, and from the current Chair, the Rev Danielle McCullagh.

In respect of the report from the North Belfast Centre of Mission, Ms Joanne Martin, the United Parish of St Nicholas' and All Saints', highlighted the Baby Basics project, thanking parishes for their support.

ACCOUNTS

After Mr Richard Cotter, Connor Finance and Administration Manager, outlined the diocesan accounts, the Rev Rob Jones, from the Diocese of Dublin and Glendalough, gave a presentation on Pioneer Ministry.

Synod members also watched a video presentation from the Church of Ireland Marriage Council, featuring the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, rector of Ballynure and Ballyeaston, and Marriage Council Chair.

Two notices of motion, one relating to the Diocesan Financial Scheme and one relating to Fair Share were passed unanimously.



Bishop George Davison and the Ven Paul Dundas in Ballymoney Parish's Quiet Garden with Synod members from Christ Church, Lisburn.

During the year, the Parishes of St Nicholas, Lisburn Road, and All Saints, University Street, came together as a United Parish. Joanne Martin thanked Bishop George for his guidance through this process, adding that she hoped this union might be an inspiration for other parishes in a similar situation.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Bishop George responded that the formation of the United Parish of St Nicholas and All Saints had been 'a real encouragement' in the diocese.

Speaking to his report, the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, Director of Ordinands, urged those present to encourage anyone who may be called to ministry, and the Rev Peter Jones, Warden of Readers, reported that interest in Parish Readership continues to grow within the diocese, with 43 Readers now in Connor.

Connor Mothers' Union's many activities were outlined by Diocesan President, Mrs Sally Cotter, and there were comprehensive reports written by Dean Sam Wright on the activities of Lisburn Cathedral, and by Dean Stephen Forde in relation to St Anne's Cathedral.

Mrs Judith Cairns, Lisburn Cathedral, addressed Synod in relation to the Hub Chaplaincy report, saying she was speaking as a parent whose son had been resident in the chaplaincy for three years.

"Young people are negotiating challenging times, and the chaplaincy team is there helping them. I am thankful that the Church sees the importance of investing in our students," Mrs Cairns said.

The Chair of Connor Council for Mission, the Ven Paul Dundas, reflected on the visit to Northern Ireland by global partners of CMS Ireland and SAMS Ireland, including Bishop Levi of Yei Diocese in South Sudan,

for the Kingdom Voices event in August 2022. He also spoke about Christ Church Parish's visit to St Apollo School in Uganda in February which was supported by the Connor Mission Support Fund.

The Rev Malcolm Ferry, rector of Agherton, said a parish harvest appeal had raised £9,000 which was to be used to bring a priest from Yei to Agherton where they will be upskilled in business management and will return to Yei with two years of salary to run the diocese's coffee growing project.

The Council for Mission was also acknowledged by the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, for its support for his trip with CMSI to Nairobi, and an Exodus team doing mission work in Spain.

The Report of Diocesan Council was adopted. Bishop George thanked the Rev Andrew Sweeney, rector of Ballymoney, and those in the parish who had worked to host Synod. Archdeacon Paul Dundas expressed thanks to Bishop George for guiding members through the business of Synod, and the day closed with The Grace.



Enjoying the Quiet Garden during a break are Lillian Lyttle from Kilbride, Jeanette Allen and Sally Hutton both from Mallusk. Photo: David Holmes.



Sharing the Peace during the Service of Holy Communion in St Patrick's, Ballymoney, which preceded the business of Synod 2023.



John Richardson, Carrickfergus, and Garry Richmond, Holy Trinity, Woodburn.



The Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, the Rev Andrew Sweeney and the Rev Canon Peter McDowell.



George Briggs, Jim and Rosemary Patterson and the Rev Amanda Adams.



The Rev Anne Locke and other Synod members enjoying Ballymoney Parish's Quiet Garden.



The Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth with some of the young people living in Kayole, Nairobi.

Nairobi visit informs path of partnership

The Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, rector of the United Parish of Ballynure & Ballyeaston, Ballyclare, travelled to Nairobi, Kenya, last May, with a small team from CMS Ireland.

The partnership with Ballynure and Ballyeaston came about in 2019 when the parish hosted Antony Njoroge for his sabbatical. "Antony very quickly became part of the church family, making new friends," Jonny said.

"After Antony's departure, we received some updates on the work in Nairobi, but that's not how I define partnership - it's got to be two-way. Post Covid, we sat down with Roger Thompson from CMSI to see how we could grow this partnership, and this led to us developing a three-year

partnership plan, created in consultation with the people in Kenya. My visit was therefore to learn more about our partners in Kenya."

In 1991, Antony and many other families were displaced by the Government from their homes on the edge of Nairobi. Overnight, they were relocated to a settlement in Kayole where there was 'absolutely nothing.'

"Antony's mum Lucy began to build a new community group which is called Tujisaidie



A typical street in Kayole settlement, Nairobi.

to look after the 350 families that had been displaced. Today, this community has grown and the projects to support them are wide and varied, with CMSI having been involved since 1992. The informed settlement is huge, housing approximately 80,000 people," Jonny said.

"This is a makeshift community of corrugated buildings, sitting on the edge of Nairobi. In the midst of this, Lucy and her community are trying to make a difference to the people around them.

"Our partnership is not with a church, but with people in the community who oversee the initiatives within Tujisaidie and also the Tumaini foundation run by Antony. The major part of Tujisaidie includes water provision, care for the elderly, and support for the Tujisaidie Community School, educating 300 children. Meanwhile Antony is building a Centre of Excellence, aiming to transform the hearts of people through education and feeding programmes - for example, each Saturday, his team feeds those 300 children who for the rest of the week are fed at school."

The school currently has 13 teachers. "They are not paid much. They are doing it for the love of the children," Jonny said. "In a lot of families, the fathers are absent. Trying to provide for their children, the mothers head into the city each morning to try and find work."

Jonny said that to grow this partnership, it was important for him to see the reality of life in the settlement before asking his parish to become involved in mission. "Until we actually see it ourselves and walk into the children's homes, I don't think your heart can change," he said, but he added that mission is not all about taking a team out to do building work - "It's prayer, it's sharing of skills, it's encouraging each other through God's word. And most importantly this works both ways.

"Antony's abilities in leadership are immense. He has built up a team of people who understand his vision and can run it. He also runs a football squad for teenagers who would otherwise be involved in petty crimes and drug abuse.



Children queuing for lunch, provided by the Saturday 'More Than Just a Meal' project run by the Tujisaidie community group.

"Lucy is one of a generation of older women in this community who provide godly wisdom to those coming after them. They now number around 30 and are known as the 'little grandmothers' - they are at the heart of every decision and meet every week to discuss what is right for their community.

"By the end of my visit I had a good picture of life there. This informs how we pray for them, how we can in some way help. But the helping is to be done in such a way that we don't try to tell them the right answer."

During his time in Nairobi, Jonny, as Chair of the Church of Ireland Marriage Council, had the opportunity to encourage a group of married couples in Antony's church, running the Alpha Marriage Course with around 20 couples. Antony now wants to be trained to run the course himself, and Jonny will pass on these resources for Antony to use.

Now the parish is able to grow this partnership. Jonny said funds raised in Ballyclare were being distributed where they would make most difference. "Partnership is about sharing the generosity that God has given us. We are now better informed and we have a plan in place.

"This will involve praying for each other in churches in Ballyclare and Nairobi, linking our youth groups and possibly offering the school principal a sabbatical in Northern Ireland to see how our schools run, which might help inform him when he goes back.

"For me, the visit has softened my heart. It has made more real that what is most important for me as a minister is relationships with people. I watched how important it is to invest in people and that's what these guys are doing. I feel so blessed."

This trip received support from the Connor Mission Support Fund.



The Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth meets some of the 'little grandmothers.'

Choir tour to St Paul's



Members of St Polycarp's Choir and Renaissance are pictured in St Paul's Cathedral with Simon Neill-O'Brien BEM (middle row, extreme right) and the Rev Louise Stewart, rector of Finaghy and Upper Malone (middle row, extreme left). Photo courtesy of St Paul's Cathedral

The choir of St Polycarp's, Finaghy, celebrated its 10th annual summer tour by singing Evensong in St Paul's Cathedral, London, on July 31 and August 1.

Due to the pandemic, this was the choir's first tour since 2019, when members sang in Truro Cathedral. In previous years, they have visited Westminster Abbey three times, as well as the chapels of three Cambridge Colleges, Portsmouth and Chester Cathedral and Dublin's St Patrick's and Christ Church Cathedral.

Members of the Renaissance chamber choir sang alongside St Polycarp's. Renaissance's Artistic Director, Simon Neill-O'Brien BEM, is also St Polycarp's Director of Music.

At St Paul's, choir members were warmly welcomed each evening. Conducted by Simon, the joint choirs sang the canticles 'Magnificat' and 'Nunc Dimittis' in different settings on both evenings.

They also sang two anthems: On the Monday, 'How lovely are thy dwellings' and on the Tuesday, Haydn's 'Insanae et vanae curae.' The organist was Martin Ford, Acting Sub-Organist of St Paul's.

Choir members were supported by family members and friends. Between rehearsals and preparations for the services, there was time for sightseeing, shopping and theatre-going, and on the Tuesday, members enjoyed a short tour of St Paul's.

Reflecting on the tour, Simon said: "The historical significance of this Cathedral, combined with the collective singing of our choirs, created an atmosphere of transcendence. There was an indescribable connection to the countless musicians who have graced this sacred ground before me and continue to do so.

"I am indebted to all our singers for their dedication, willingness and talent to make such an occasion possible, to our talented organist for such a sensitive yet powerful accompaniment, and to the clergy and vergers for their kindness, warmth and best wishes."

Report by the Rev Clifford Skillen

Time to Read seeks volunteers

A project which supports children in their reading is seeking volunteers. Time to Read provides volunteers who spend one hour each week helping two pupils in a primary school to read better. They give one-to-one tuition that the class teacher cannot provide.

Time to Read is sponsored by Business In The Community. Many volunteers are released by their employer for an hour, while others give of their own time. Volunteers do a short training course.

There are currently 98 schools involved in the programme across Northern Ireland with 525 pupils receiving help.

Jeffrey Johnston, a parishioner of St Patrick's, Jordanstown, has been a volunteer with Time to Read for seven years. "The commitment is small for the volunteer but the benefit to the pupils is substantial," he said.

For more information, please contact Jeffrey on 028 9086 4993 or at jeffreyjohnston175@gmail.com.



Camp at Mount Kilimanjaro's landmark Lava Tower where Simon's group had lunch at 4,600m.

Kilimanjaro dream come true for Simon

Simon Hunter, a parishioner of All Saints', Craigyhill, and St Patrick's, Cairncastle, hiked to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro in July, raising funds for Cancer Focus Northern Ireland.

Kilimanjaro is the highest single free-standing mountain in the world, at 5,895 metres above sea level and about 4,900 metres above its plateau base.

Simon summited on July 6. Before leaving for Tanzania, he was commissioned at a special service in his church which included prayers and blessings in Swahili.

"Africa and 'Kili' have always held a certain fascination for me," said Simon. "I am a keen walker and a desire to trek Kilimanjaro has always been at the back of my mind. So, in December 2022, I turned 40 and decided it was time to tick this dream off my list, talked it over with my wife and booked a trek via Action Challenge for June 2023.

"I wanted to use the trek as an opportunity to raise funds for a good cause and decided on Cancer Focus NI. Just about everyone knows or has known someone who has been affected by cancer."

The name 'Kilimanjaro' means 'Mountain of Whiteness,' or 'Shining Mountain.' "Many today will say the name 'Kilimanjaro' actually means 'Mountain I Fail to Climb,' simply because getting to the summit has proved tough for even the most experienced climbers," Simon said.

"Making a trip up is challenging due to the combination of extreme weather and high altitudes, causing altitude sickness. Less than 60 per cent of those who plan to climb it make it to the top, so it was with a sense of determination I set off from Belfast on June 29."

After a flight delay and a sprint between terminals at Heathrow, Simon joined the rest of the Action Challenge group as they travelled onwards to Kilimanjaro. The 16-strong group ranged in age from 20 to 65 and came from all over the UK.

SUPPORT CREW

"Everyone had their kit checked and weighed. Groups ascending Kilimanjaro rely on a team of leaders, medics, guides, porters and other support crew," Simon explained. "Climbers only carry their day sack containing water, waterproofs, warm clothing, snacks, walking poles, medication and ID documents. Everything else, food, tents and our main bags, is carried by the local porters. It is strictly regulated that they can only carry 15kg."

The walk began the next morning. "We would be climbing via the Lemosho Route, which is known to have the most varied scenery and some incredible views over

the surrounding landscape," Simon said. "Although one of the new and quieter routes, it has a good summit success rate as it allows for a 'trek high, sleep low' pattern to become accustomed to the increasing altitude."

As they walked through the rain forest towards Big Tree Camp, they spotted their first wildlife - a Colobus Monkey. It was humid but dry as the path undulated through the forest edged with flowers.

MONKEYS

The group reached camp in the late afternoon. "We could hear the Colobus Monkeys high in the surrounding trees. I ventured out of the tent just after dark to find the toilet and was followed by a pair of yellow eyes hiding in the bushes. I didn't investigate closer!" said Simon.

It was a 5am start the next morning, with the path emerging bit by bit from the rain forest. The first challenge was the 'Elephant's Spine,' a steep ascent out of the forest and onto the moorland.

"We kept a slow pace and were constantly overtaken by the local porters, carrying their loads and effortlessly navigating the narrow path. They passed us smiling, calling out 'Jambo' (Hello), 'Hakuna Matata' (No worries!) and 'Polé polé' (slowly slowly) which was to become the mantra of the trek!"

Before lunch, Simon had his first clear look at Kilimanjaro. "It was outstandingly beautiful, surrounded by blue sky and a dusting of cloud touching the peak. It made it very real that I was somewhere I had always wanted to be doing something I had always dreamed of."

After a more gradual trek, the group set their tents at Shira II camp which lies above the cloud line. "As the sun set, I sat outside my tent with a spectacular view of Kilimanjaro in front and Mt Meru behind," Simon said.

Next morning, the local guides and porters danced and sang a traditional Swahili greeting. "It really set the whole group up for the day."

The day took the group from moorland to Alpine zone and the path became rocky in places, leading to the highest point of the day, the Lava Tower. "We were noticing the effects of the altitude by now and as oxygen levels increased on the descent into Barranco Camp, it was perceptibly easier to walk a little faster," Simon recalled.

The night-time temperatures were close to freezing, although Simon said a group the previous week had to deal with ice on the



Simon Hunter on the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.

inside of the tents for most of their trek.

The group tackled the Barranco Wall, on the southern base of Kibo, which is a part of Mount Kilimanjaro. "It is what climbers would refer to as a scramble, meaning we would have to use our arms to pull ourselves over and up the rock face. A challenge for someone of my 5ft 6 stature!" Simon said.

QUEUES

They started walking just after 7.30am to avoid queues on the wall. "It was a challenging but rewarding experience which took just under two hours to navigate. We were elated and felt on top of the world, but a glance towards the snow-capped peak ever in front of us told us we weren't quite there yet!"

The onward path was a descent into a deep ravine and on to Karranga Camp.

Next morning, it was on to Kosovo Base Camp.

"The path to Kosovo Base Camp is one of the main arterial routes on the mountain and our group, in single file behind another group in single file, looked like a colony of ants as we scrambled uphill," Simon reflected. "We arrived in camp at lunchtime and the afternoon consisted of a briefing from our medic and our leader, Will, who told us: 'Uhuru Peak by sunrise, and everyone get to the top.' It was then off to lie down for a few hours before waking at 11pm for our summit attempt."

The group began to trek, their way lit by head torches and a full moon. "The terrain was slippery with lava shingle and the higher we got, the colder it got and the more difficult it was to breathe," said Simon. "The guides were motivating and helpful, positioning themselves at the more

difficult points or sheerer drops to keep us safe.

"We reached Stella Point before 5.30am and enjoyed a cup of hot sweet tea. It tasted like nectar, but we didn't stop long as we wanted to push on towards the summit. We followed the crater rim around. The air was thin and the wind was picking up. Everyone had their own pace but kept on going. It was hard to move and difficult even to breathe.

"The sun was rising as we caught sight of the signpost at the top. It was one foot in front of the other as we followed the rim, higher and higher until the ground flattened out under our feet.

"One of our team collapsed just metres from the peak. The medic gave him oxygen and he felt well enough for the guides to support him, one under each arm, to the sign for a photo, before whisking him down to a safer, more comfortable altitude.

'FREEDOM' PEAK

"We had made it! Uhuru 'Freedom' Peak. The wish I'd made on a shooting star had come true - the whole group of 16 of us had achieved our goal."

Simon said he couldn't put into words the sense of achievement. Photos, he added, do not do justice to the views. "It is breathtaking, awe-inspiring and incredible. A dream come true."

The descent to base camp was quicker, although Simon said it was difficult treading through ash. After a rest, it was on down to Millennium Camp, and the next day they descended below the cloud line.

"As we came through the mist, the surroundings got greener, and the rain started. The mud under foot was slippery and I took a tumble," Simon said.

"We heard singing as we walked towards Mweka Gate and the exit from the National Park. The guides and porters sang us off the mountain and presented us with garlands as we finished the trek.

"Kilimanjaro is something I have wanted to do for a very long time. It was an incredible experience. I had the time of my life, and it has left me with memories I will reflect on for a long time."

Simon has raised more than £4,000 for Cancer Focus NI.



Teens shine in Tarragona



Ballyclare teenagers leading a Holiday Bible Club in Tarragona, Spain, during a summer mission trip with Exodus.

A mission visit to Tarragona in Spain by a group of six teenagers has had a 'huge impact' on their lives going forward, said team leader, the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, rector of Ballynure & Ballyeaston.

The group travelled to Spain with Exodus, an organisation founded in Coleraine which works to equip young people for mission.

But the trip itself was just part of an ongoing journey for the young people from Ballyclare.

"We see many examples of young people going to Sunday School, getting confirmed, and then they fall off the precipice," said Jonny. "How do we keep our teenagers and young adults in church?"

Tim Burns, a parishioner and former Down and Dromore Youth Officer, opened his home to young people every Friday night for dinner and Bible study, and that led to more opportunities for them to grow in their faith.

"They got involved in the SERVE programme run by the diocese, and what was next was to get them involved in leadership," Jonny explained.

"We chatted to Exodus who this year took 60 teams from Northern Ireland. They gave us options for places to go, but it is not about where you go, it is about doing it and taking the young people out of their comfort zone."

The team had 20 weeks' preparation which included mission, working together and fundraising - each member had to raise their own personal funds for the ministry they would be doing, and the team



The Ballynure & Ballyeaston team with friends they made in Valls, Spain, this summer.

members were also supported through CIYD's Young Leaders programme.

There were nine on the team, including Jonny, two co-leaders who are young adults and the six teenagers.

"We were involved in children's ministry and outreach in the town. Five teams from Northern Ireland were out at the same time, but each was based in a different church. We were in Valls, in an Evangelical church with a congregation of around 30 including a small number of youth."

The pastor is Victor Rubi Sanchez. In a city of 30,000 people, there are only around 100 Christians.

The team left Northern Ireland on July 21. On arrival there was an orientation day in Salou with the other teams, before the Ballyclare group headed to Valls the next day.

"The love that we received from that church," reflected Jonny. "We ran the kids programme in the hall - which was a garage - in the morning, had a siesta in the afternoon and spent the evening with the young people of the church, socialising, visiting the beach and doing wider street evangelism in the little squares in Valls.

"Our young people all gave their testimonies. In Bible Club, there were 25 kids, and we did all the stuff with the children that we do at home. We didn't need Spanish!"

During down time in the evenings, the group visited local sites, including natural ravines, where they had the chance to go caving. They returned home on August 1.

"The highlight of the trip was that seven young kids decided they wanted to follow Jesus," said Jonny. "Those teenagers, they shone. When they had things to do, or to prepare for the next day, they did it. They fully engaged with the work. The church family in Valls just loved them and deep friendships have been formed."

He said many of the young people would like to go back. "We are going to help them fundraise to bring the Valls youth to Summer Madness - partnership should be two-way," Jonny added. "After that, we will develop another team to go out to the same church.

"I now have a group of six teenagers who are equipped for leadership. Some are heading to university, but they will never forget this experience. I think we have made a huge impact on their lives for the future."

In a message, the Spanish youth leaders had said they were genuinely sorry to see the team go in the same way as the Ballyclare team was sad to leave.

"The Exodus programme has done exactly what we wanted it to do, and we now want to build it into our programmes. These young people did Summer Madness, Kilbroney, Exodus, and during August they led a Holiday Bible Club here in Ballyclare," Jonny said.

"In Tarragona, they learned that they have a role to play in God's Church. Let us invest in our young people."

David publishes the story of St Polycarp

The Rev David Luckman, Lambeg Parish, has published a third title in his series of children's books.

'Polycarp - Faithful unto Death' focuses on Polycarp, who lived in the second century - in Connor Diocese the church in Finaghy is dedicated to St Polycarp. The book is the latest release in the Trailblazers series of Christian Focus Publications.



David Luckman.

As an old man, Polycarp was hunted down by the Romans and died a martyr's death.

David said: "Polycarp is known as an 'early church father' and he was such a significant figure in history that I think it's important for children to know something about him.

"I also think it's important for young

Christians to read and learn something about the hardships and successes of other Christians' lives and ministries, because it can be a great encouragement and help to them when they face similar experiences growing up as Christians."

To date, David has released two other books in the Trailblazer series: 'Jack Turner - Truth in the Arctic' is currently on the publisher's CF4K Top Sellers list, and 'Thomas Cranmer - The King's Ambassador.'

A book to commemorate the 700th anniversary of John Wycliffe's birth next year, 'John Wycliffe - According to the Word,' will be released in January 2024.

David Luckman is the Church Planter at Hilden Community Church in Lisburn, which is part of Lambeg Parish.

Canon Ken Ruddock marks 70 years since ordination



Canon Ken Ruddock in 2019 when he retired as Connor Diocesan Curate.

Congratulations to the Rev Canon Ken Ruddock, who recently marked the 70th anniversary of his ordination, making him, one of the longest serving members of clergy of the Church of Ireland.

At a Service of Thanksgiving for Canon Ruddock's 70 years, former Dean of Connor, the Very Rev John Bond, said: "The Church of Ireland has been richly blessed by a truly remarkable servant of the Word and Sacrament, who has touched and blessed countless lives in his 70 years as deacon and priest."

The Dean continued: "Canon Ken has made his own unique contribution to the wider Church, he served on General Synod, various committees, community groups, and the Mission to Seamen.

"His wise counsel, shrewd judgment, and his sanctified common sense in all things spiritual and temporal will long be remembered... An exceptional parish priest, he has the confidence, respect, and love of people - the young and the young at heart."

"We give thanks to Almighty God for 70 exceptional years in the life of Canon Ken and we assure him, Kathleen and family of our Christian love and prayers," he said.



At a service in St Matthew's, Shankill, on September 17, four new Parish Readers were commissioned for the Rural Deanery of Mid Belfast. They are: front row, Gillian Nicholl, Jacqueline Carrigan, Penny Purdy and Frank Dillon. Back row: The Rev Don Gamble, the Rev Adrian Bell, the Rev Canon Jim Carson and the Rev Tracey McRoberts MBE.

Retirement of Canon David Humphries

The Rev Canon David Humphries led his last Service of Morning Prayer as rector of Kilbride Parish on Sunday August 27, prior to his retirement on August 31.

David was rector of Kilbride for almost seven years, and many visitors from other churches and organisations came along to wish him well, along with representatives from Antrim and Newtownabbey Council, Ballyclare Victoria Flute Band, various Masonic Lodges, and many personal friends.

To mark the occasion, a gift cheque was presented to David by Ivan Topping, Secretary of the Select Vestry, who paid

tribute to the service that David had given to Kilbride during his time as incumbent, also mentioning his work outside of the parish with the Down and Dromore and Connor Organ Scholarship Scheme and in particular his leadership of a number of pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

David Holmes paid a personal tribute to the rector for the help he had given him in his role as Parish Reader for Kilbride, and presented him with a photo-book containing photographs taken during his ministry.

Report and picture by David Holmes



Meet our deacons



Stanley and Oriel Gamble and Edith Burns present items from St Paul's, Lisburn, for patient care.

Chaplain thankful of support for patients

Over the last few years, parishes and Mothers' Union branches and individuals in Connor have supported the ministry of the Church in Belfast hospitals.

Sanna Mallon, Hospital Chaplain, writes: "Our Church family has reached out so generously to supply toiletries which have made such a difference to those who are not in a position to readily access simple necessities from home.

"There is great demand from patients in all the wards, especially the Emergency Department where many arrive at very short notice."

Sanna said the Mothers' Union in St Paul's, Lisburn, had presented a huge number of items, including washbags for adults, and blankets, hats and cardigans for neo-natal babies. "I was so shocked as I imagined I was there to perhaps receive a bag of items," she said.

Other examples are Dorothy and Helen from St Polycarp's, Finaghy, who regularly deliver washbags to Sanna for patient care, and Sally from Eglantine Parish who knits little teddies for children in the Emergency Department. The teddies are also used to comfort patients in the Neurological Ward in Musgrave Park Hospital.

"Such simple things can bring rest to troubled souls," said Sanna. "I can't mention every parish, but I wish to express my sincere thanks to the many who have given so generously in support of the Church's ministry to the sick this year."



Helen and Dorothy from St Polycarp's, Finaghy, deliver washbags for hospitals

Cameron Mack – Belfast Cathedral

I first heard of the Church of Ireland when I landed on the doorstep of its chaplaincy at Queen's 10 years ago and asked to stay.

I found in the Church a spiritual home, and its worship and liturgy and community brought my faith to life in different ways. Megan and I met at the chaplaincy, married, and were spun together out into the world of work: I spent time as a carer, as a civil servant in Cardiff, and in HR.

Over this time, I gradually began to believe that God had been moulding me into someone whose gifts and loves could be made use of in ordained ministry. I am deeply grateful for my time at CITI and, though it's daunting, I am enjoying making the slow transition from learning into doing.

Working at St Anne's is an amazing privilege, and I am as excited to be learning liturgy and leading worship as I am for the pastoral and missional opportunities the Cathedral presents.

Between times, I will endeavour to peel myself away from my dissertation long enough to make a dent in my growing stack of novels and to spend more time with friends and family now I'm in Dublin less often.

Melanie Sloan - St Patrick's, Broughshane

I am mum to two boys and I am getting married next year to my fiancé Mark. I have two dogs and I enjoy running, going to the gym and drinking too much coffee.

I have worked for several years in the NHS and have held a variety of roles across the organisation, my current role is a Senior Organisation Development Practitioner within the HR division.

I would say I was a reluctant traveller on the path to ordination. It has been extremely challenging at times, but ultimately a great joy and privilege.

I embarked on this journey because I wanted to tell people about the tremendous, transformational power of God's love for each of us and draw those of no faith into a relationship with him.

I am looking forward to the pastoral aspects of parish life - hospital visits, home visits and getting to know and walk alongside my new church family. I have been blessed to be placed in such a welcoming church family



and I look forward to discovering what the year will bring.

Brian Shaw – OLM, Agherton Parish

I grew up attending Sunday School and Boys' Brigade but drifted away as a teenager. I felt a pull back to Church 14 years ago, when, doing a course in photography, I was documenting images of Christ Church, Carrowdore. I never imagined that Canon Kevin Graham, who took the time to chat to me that day, would be officiating in my service of ordination all these years later!

The journey was one of recognising that there was something missing from my life, and a calling to do something different. Going to church regularly, I felt a sense of belonging, and the call to serve developed quickly. I undertook the course for Diocesan Lay Readers in 2016.

My wife Naomi is from Portstewart, and when expecting our first baby in 2018, we moved to live there. A period of discernment followed which led me to go forward for selection for OLM, encouraged by the Rev Malcolm Ferry. I continue to work full-time as an employment officer for Triangle Housing. We now have two boys, so life is busy but hugely enjoyable.

Shona Bell – Ballywillan Parish

I come from the north east of Scotland and moved to Northern Ireland in 1998 to work for the Corrymeela Community.

As a qualified teacher, I found my passion in cross-community schools' work. In 2004, as a response to the changing political environment, I joined TIDES Training to develop civic training schemes to support and develop skills in the community sector. We delivered training on group work, conflict management, diversity, controversial issues, and mediation. We set up mediations related to local conflicts.

During this time, I learned to work across all sectors of the community both locally and internationally. In my current role, I am the Manager of Sectarianism in Corrymeela - hopefully working out ways beyond violence.

My house is always busy with my son, our dog and two noisy guinea pigs... and my husband!

I am delighted to have started as a deacon in Holy Trinity, Portrush, and I have received a warm welcome. I look forward to learning more about the work of the parish and in turn to serving where I can be useful.



Great fun at Madness and Streetreach



Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie, far left, with Connor's enthusiastic Streetreach team.

The young people of Connor Diocese enjoyed a great start to summer 2023! First there was the annual Summer Madness camp which ran from June 30 until July 4 at Glenarm Estate.

Damp weather didn't deter the young people and leaders from 20 Connor

parishes who came to camp or to spend a day at the annual Christian youth festival, with the Connor sub camp buzzing with food and fellowship. The ever-popular Sunday barbecue, with Bishop George Davison helping flip the burgers, was a great success! Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie said:

"What an amazing time! Huge thanks to all the groups who came, camped, day tripped, helped with the catering and for all of you who made Connor sub camp so special!"

Hot on the heels of Summer Madness was Connor Streetreach which ran from July 4-7 in partnership with the Grouped Parishes of Ballyrashane & Kildollagh, the Grouped Parishes of Ballintoy & Dunseverick with Rathlin Island and St Patrick's, Coleraine, & St Andrew's, Ballysally.

The young people were involved in organising kids' clubs, outreach, practical and prayer teams across all the parishes, with pop-up prayer meetings in each church.

Bishop George joined the young people in Dunseverick one evening when they shared stories about what God was doing during Streetreach, with the Bishop encouraging the team never to underestimate how God can use us, even in the little things.

And we have lift off!

There was much fellowship and laughter at Connor's 2023 Launch event for youth and children's ministry leaders held in Broughshane on September 2.

At this now annual event, leaders came together to be encouraged and resourced for the year ahead.

It was organised by Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie and Children's Ministry Development Officer Victoria Jackson. Fifty-one leaders from 17 different parishes and parish groups attended.

After refreshments and a welcome from Christina and Victoria, Bishop George Davison shared a biblical reflection and led prayers.

Christina introduced Beverley Ringland, Christ Church, Lisburn, who spoke about the growing success of JAM youth ministry within her parish.

Key to growth was linking into diocesan activities, Beverley said, with young people attending the Connor Takes the Castle youth weekend, the diocesan Christmas event last December and Summer Madness.

Beverley said that Messy Church had been revived, and one Messy Church date turned into a family fun night which attracted 90 families, including many who were not members of Christ Church.

"Everything is coming together. At Synod,



Children's ministry leaders have fun learning games at Launch.

Bishop George talked about growing healthy churches," Beverley said. "That challenged me to think about how we would do it and I asked our prayer group to pray for our young people. On my own, I can do nothing, but when we are together, we can do so much."

Following Beverley's inspiring talk, leaders involved in youth ministry left for a workshop led by Christina, while Victoria introduced Chris and Ross from Play it By Ear Christian drama group. Chris and Ross introduced a variety of games for children - by encouraging all the leaders to try them out. A challenge accepted by all which prompted much fun and laughter!

At lunch, the two groups came back together for questions and discussions, before the event ended.

New youth resources

Connor Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie has developed two new resources which can be used in groups in parishes.

'Faith Practices' and 'I am' are written to be easy to use, adaptable for different contexts and seek to help young people explore faith in practical ways. Both are available free to download on the Connor website (www.connor.anglican.org).

'Faith Practices' is a series of activities to allow young people to do spiritual practices together as they seek to know Jesus.

The 'I am' resource has 14 sessions exploring the 'I am' statements of Jesus, and identity statements about who we are in Christ.

Exploring leadership

Connor Diocese is once again running the SERVE Programme for young people and young adults aged 15 to 20 who are exploring leadership in their local parish context.

The course began in September and will run until late November. This year, young people from five parishes are taking part.

Back to the Castle!

The annual Connor Takes the Castle youth residential returned to Castlewellsan Castle over the first weekend in October. We will have a full report in our next magazine.



At the Service of Ordination of Lee Boal and Gareth Campbell as Priests for Connor Diocese in Lisburn Cathedral on September 10 are, from left: the Rev Danielle McCullagh, preacher; the Rev Harold Good, Methodist Church; the Very Rev Sam Wright, Dean of Connor; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; the Rev Lee Boal; the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, Director of Ordinands; Bishop George Davison; the Rev Cameron Mack, Bishop's Chaplain; the Rev Gareth Campbell; the Ven Barry Forde, Archdeacon of Belfast; the Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada; and the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Archdeacon of Connor.



At a Service of Ordination of Deacons in Belfast Cathedral on September 3 are, back row, from left: The Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, Director of Ordinands; the Rev Canon Peter McDowell, rector of Holy Trinity, Ballywillan. Middle row, from left: The Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Archdeacon of Connor; the Very Rev Stephen Forde, Dean of Belfast; the Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor; the Rev Dr Andrew Campbell, rector of Rathcavan & Newtowncrommelin (Broughshane), preacher; the Ven Barry Forde, Archdeacon of Belfast; the Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada. Front row, from left: New deacons Melanie Sloan; Shona Bell and Cameron Mack.



The Rt Rev Darren McCartney was instituted as rector of St Paul's, Lisburn, on September 7. Pictured are, front row from left: The Rt Rev David McClay, Bishop of Down and Dromore, preacher; the Rt Rev Darren McCartney; and the Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor. Back row, from left: The Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Archdeacon of Connor; and the Rev Nicholas Dark, Rural Dean. Photo: Norman Briggs.



The Rev Brian Harper was instituted as rector of Dunluce Parish, Bushmills, on August 18. Pictured at the service are, from left: Billy Creighton, people's churchwarden; the Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada; the Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor; the Rev Brian Harper, rector of Dunluce; the Rev Gareth Morgan, team vicar in the Diocese of Liverpool, preacher; the Rev Malcolm Ferry, Rural Dean, and Ronnie Garvin, rector's churchwarden. Photo courtesy of the Coleraine Chronicle.



Bishop George Davison and the Rev Derek Harrington who was introduced as Priest-in-Charge of Muckamore and Killead on June 15.

RIGHT: The Rev Ross Mungavin, was introduced as Associate Minister for the South Belfast Inner Mission Area at a service in St Mary Magdalene Parish on June 25. At the same service, the Ven Barry Forde, Archdeacon of Belfast, was formally introduced as Priest-in-Charge of the Mission Area. Pictured are, from left: The Rev Canon Kevin Graham, Director of Ordinands; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; Bishop George Davison; the Rev Ross Mungavin; the Ven Barry Forde; and the Rev Matt Beedy, rector of St James', Gerard's Cross and Fulmer, where Ross was formerly youth pastor.



RIGHT: Brian Shaw, centre, who was ordained an OLM deacon in Agherton Parish on September 3, with the Rev Malcolm Ferry, left, rector, and Bishop George Davison.

LEFT: At a service in All Saints', Antrim, on September 10, the Rev Claire Thompson was ordained an OLM priest by the Bishop of Connor. Claire and Bishop George Davison, front row, are pictured with, back from left: The Rev Canon Kevin Graham; the Rev Aaron McAlister, Archdeacon Stephen McBride and the Rev Peter Blake, preacher.

