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Standing
together

in Greinisland

pages 4-5



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Growing Healthy Churches



Trudy Hull, founder of Trudy and Her Tea Ladies, shows the Rev Aaron McAllister, rector of Christ Church, Derriagh, the award the tea ladies won at the Northern Ireland Funeral Awards.

Funeral catering - a 'vital ministry'

The funeral of a loved one is a difficult time for any family, but a group of ladies in Derriagh Parish make things just that bit easier by taking on the task of providing catering.

And earlier this year, that group, affectionately known as Trudy and Her Tea Ladies, were voted Community Caterer of the Year at the inaugural Northern Ireland Funeral Awards.

A number of the ladies travelled to the Plaza Hotel in Belfast on May 24, where they were presented with the award for what the rector of Derriagh, the Rev Aaron McAllister, described as 'a vital ministry in itself.'

Trudy Hull, 76, has been catering in Derriagh for the past 18 years. "We have a team of about eight," Trudy explains. "All ladies, but husbands and other gentlemen come down to clear the hall and set the tables up. I like everything to be done the day before, I don't like to leave it until the day of the funeral."

"Catering at a funeral isn't something we want to be doing, because it means we



All set for the Awards ceremony are from left: Margaret McCullough, Mildred Leathem, Barbara Morrison, Trudy Hull and Penny Jarvis.

are losing a parishioner, but it does help the family and they are very appreciative. They just have to give us an estimate of numbers, and everything is laid on."

Trudy and Her Tea Ladies catered for nine funerals in 2023, and by early August this year there had already been eight funerals.

"The team members are all very helpful,

if I am on holidays someone else will take over," Trudy says. "We buy in the traybakes and sausage rolls and make the sandwiches from scratch."

"Ada Kirkwood and Pat Allan started this up with me 18 years ago for people who wanted help with catering at a funeral. I remember when my father died 20 years ago, the ladies in the Mothers' Union did a wee tea in return for a donation."

The service they offer is non-profit. "We charge £6 per head and a pound more if it is a funeral of a non-parishioner," Trudy explains. "It covers costs and any money over goes to the church. People are always more than grateful."

After Ada died six years ago and Pat moved away, Trudy was the only original tea lady. "People have continued to help and I have always had a team," she says.

"Before last Christmas, I had a phone call saying that I had been nominated for an award. I thought it was a prank but the lady said she had got my number from Rev Aaron. She had received a lovely letter from someone and read it out."

"I was in tears and I had the girl in tears. It was beautiful, but I don't know who wrote it. It spoke about how much what I did meant to the bereaved family and how everything was so nice and caring."

This was the first year the Funeral Awards have been held in Northern Ireland. There are several different categories, all open to the public vote.

"Five of us went to the Plaza Hotel, all in our long dresses," Trudy says. "When they called out my name, I thought 'Oh Heavens!' I don't know how I managed to walk up and collect the Award!"

Trudy is a lifelong member of Derriagh Parish, and is married to Robert. They have two sons and a daughter, Barbara, who, as a tea lady herself, accompanied Trudy to the Awards ceremony.

Trudy sings in the choir, is a parish recorder, chair of the parish youth council and a member of the Select Vestry and Mothers' Union. She was also a cub leader for 11 years and rector's churchwarden to Canon John Budd. A former secretary, she worked in Crazy Prices supermarket after her children were born.

"I think it's a good service to provide because when the family come for their tea after the funeral service, most of them know us," Trudy says. "They know that we know the person who has passed on and that there are personal connections. It makes it easier and less stressful for the family."



Welcome to Alison

Alison Crothers, right, has taken up the post of receptionist with clerical duties at diocesan office in Titanic Quarter.

She lives in Carrickfergus and is married to Pete. They have three grown-up children.

Alison has had a varied career, having worked in insurance, the Ministry of Defence, the Northern Ireland Hospice, out of hours GP service, an integrated primary school and the Ambulance Service. She also volunteers with St John Ambulance as Emergency Ambulance Crew and is a Cadet Manager.

Autumn 2024

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Cover photo:

Musicians and singers at the Connor Big Sing in Lisburn Cathedral on September 22.

Photograph by Norman Briggs.



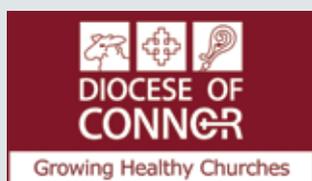
Please contact us if you would like to contribute to the next issue of 'Connor Connections.'

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God at work in the midst of brokenness



One of the things I enjoy most about reading 'Connor Connections' is the opportunity to hear a little bit about how God is at work in the lives of parishes and individuals within the diocese.

The wide variety of stories speaks to me about the whole range of people whose lives have been touched by God and who in turn are giving something of themselves in the service of Christ's Church. It's great to be encouraged by what God is doing among us!

Sometimes, the moments of inspiration come at the most unexpected times and places. It's not always in the joyful, positive moments that we see the hand of God at work among us.

As you will be well aware, one of our parishes recently suffered a tragedy. Having celebrated their 70th anniversary with a busy weekend of activities for church members and the local community, parishioners of The Church of the Holy Name, Greenisland, then watched in disbelief on the Sunday evening as their precious church building went up in flames! It was, and is, a tragedy for them, but even in the midst of the brokenness and disbelief and loss, God was at work!

- God was at work in the minds of the parishioners who could say 'It's only bricks and mortar, we are the Church!'

even as tears rolled down their cheeks as they considered their loss.

- God was at work in the hearts and actions of members of the local community and sister churches in Greenisland as they said 'We're here with you, our doors are open - how can we help?'
- God was at work as churches and people across the island and around the world said 'We'll give something to help you get back serving Christ in your community again.'
- But perhaps God was most at work on the lips that spoke to little boys whose actions had caused this catastrophe and said 'Jesus still loves you and we are still here for you!'

Our love and prayers as a diocesan family are with Isy and Chris and the people of The Church of the Holy Name in these times. May we all take inspiration from how God is at work in them!

Yours in Jesus,

+George

Christina thanked for her 'legacy'



Connor staff say farewell to Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie, front centre.

Staff at Diocesan Office have said a sad farewell to Christina Baillie, who has served as Diocesan Youth Officer for nine years.

Christina moved to a new position as Project Development Lead with Youth for Christ at the end of summer but was able to join her former Connor colleagues for coffee and buns on September 23.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, thanked Christina for her work in

and for the diocese. "We are very thankful for all that you have given in the role of youth officer in Connor Diocese over the past nine years, and thankful for the things you have done and set up. You have built a real legacy for us in this diocese," the Bishop said. He wished Christina all the best in her new position.

Christina said she had had an 'incredible' last nine years, adding: "It has been an absolute privilege."



The Church of the Holy Name, Greenisland, and Parish Centre at the height of the fire on September 1. Photo: Chris Bennett.

Joy turns to sorrow as parish hall burns

Joy turned to heartbreak on the night of Sunday September 1 when hours after The Church of the Holy Name, Greenisland, celebrated its 70th anniversary, flames ripped through the parish hall attached to the church.

At the height of the fire, there were nine appliances and 49 firefighters at the scene. Thankfully there were no injuries. The flames were captured on camera by Greenisland Parish community chaplain, the Rev Chris Bennett, who watched from the street along with priest-in-charge, the Rev Dr Isy Hawthorne-Steele, Bishop George Davison, and many others from the local community.

The following night, the Fire Service had to return as smoke was seen coming from the roof of the main church building. Tiles were removed and the roof saturated. The entire site is now closed for safety reasons.

Three boys, two aged 11 and one aged 10, who had been charged in connection with the fire, no longer face criminal proceedings. They will instead be dealt with through a youth diversionary programme aimed at achieving a restorative outcome.

For a time in the aftermath of the blaze, it was feared 70 years of documented history had gone up in flames, but amazingly,

many of the photos and other personal memorabilia telling the story of seven decades of worship in the parish were rescued by the Fire Service.

Chris, who lives near the church, was on the scene in Station Road soon after the alert was raised by members of the adjacent Baptist Church who were finishing up their evening service around 9pm. He said the Fire Brigade was already there when he arrived and he could see the bins at the back of the church hall were alight.

Speaking on the Monday, Chris said: "I just thought we were going to have a few melted bins, although the smoke was coming thick and fast. But all of a sudden the fire seemed to spread all over the roof and take hold. It was very emotional to watch the building crumbling, the roof caved in - it was a fierce, fierce blaze."

Chris said that thankfully the church and hall were empty at the time. "The building has never been fuller than it was over the weekend when we had the most

unbelievable 70th anniversary celebrations. It is hard to think back 24 hours. This time yesterday (Sunday) we were on cloud nine.

"Today, there is so much grief. It is incredible how much people's lives are bound up in the building where they have been baptised and married."

On the Wednesday after the fire, the community of Greenisland united for Standing Together – a gathering which had been planned as part of the 70th anniversary celebrations. The service went ahead in the Baptist Church

Bishop George led prayers and spoke at the service, saying: "Amidst all the sorrow and the questions of the loss of a building, the thing that stays with me is that on Sunday afternoon I shared with an amazing group of people who were so thankful for all that God had been doing amongst them for 70 years and for all that God was doing amongst them here and now. And there was a sense of warmth, a sense of welcome, a sense of joy, and that lifted my spirits."

He described the Church of The Holy Name as 'a little church that holds a place in the hearts of many.'

A GoFundMe page has raised more than £24,000, and individuals and parishes across Connor Diocese and beyond have been donating in church and to Greenisland Parish directly. To donate, please visit <https://gofund.me/9767b386>

'Overwhelmed' by the support received

The Rev Dr Isy Hawthorne-Steele, priest-in-charge of Greenisland Parish, visited the homes of three boys who were charged with arson following the devastating fire at The Church of the Holy Name on September 1.

"I wanted them and their families to know that this was something that had a great impact on the church and the wider community, but that we are a body of people who promote that Jesus forgives," Isy says. "I wanted to give the children a hug and tell them Jesus loves them."

Greenisland is Isy's home parish, the community in which she grew up. A former teacher who later moved to youth work and community development at Ulster University, she married her husband Sam in The Church of the Holy Name, and it was here she trained as a Lay Reader.

Returning to Greenisland as priest-in-charge four years ago was, she said, 'a real privilege.'

She reflects with pride mingled with sadness on the 70th anniversary celebrations which preceded the fire, beginning with a community festival on the Saturday before the following day's Service of Celebration.

IRREPLACEABLE

So much of the church site now sits in ruins, with the entire area closed off for safety reasons. Isy speaks with sadness of the irreplaceable items lost in the display of memories which had been in the church hall, and the Kalos garden project, not long completed. Almost everything in the garden - the bespoke benches, barbecue, juice bar, plants - was destroyed. But a wooden cross survived.

And, says Isy, the crosses inside the church building also survived. Even those on the roof remain in perfect condition. "This is a big message and it says there is a crucifixion but also a resurrection and the cross is a symbol of that," Isy says. "We may have lost some things, but we haven't lost our faith or our hope."

"The Bishop said to me on the night of the fire 'out of the ashes...' That's a lovely thing. At the Standing Together service the following Wednesday night, everyone was blown away by the Bishop's message of hope."

The future remains uncertain. "A Fire Report is still to come in so we know if the



The Rev Dr Isy Hawthorne-Steele with some of the cards and messages of support she has received from near and far.

rafters have been affected by the heat," Isy says, "but we are hopeful that the walls will be solid enough. We are having the stained-glass windows assessed. Unfortunately, when the church started smoking on the Monday evening and the Fire Brigade returned, the slates had to be taken off the church roof, so inside is now water damaged. The organ and pianos are probably not salvageable."

Once insurers give the go ahead, the church will be gutted as the parish begins to rebuild the physical.

Isy said the loss of the parish shop which was attached to the church hall has been devastating for the community. The not-for-profit business sold food at low prices. "It was a lifeline for many people," Isy reflects.

A GoFundMe account set up in the aftermath of the blaze has already raised more than £24,000, while Isy said donations have also been sent direct to the church. All this money will be used to help with any shortfall in funding fixtures, fittings and building work.

Many of those who donated to the GoFundMe appeal came from all around

the world, from as far away as Argentina, Australia and Africa," Isy says.

Local primary school children sent handmade cards, and Isy recalls the kindness of one child as the tiles were being taken off the church roof. "I was really upset, and this wee girl rocked up with a container of Angel Delight and said 'Rev Isy, I know you are very sad, but this will cheer you up.' All I could do was cry.

"I feel overwhelmed by the support of people, and seeing that the message has got out that we are a people who glorify God in all this. All the messages we received spoke of God's love.

CONNECTION

"For me, the most significant thing is how many people in the community came out that night, hugging us and crying. Everyone has such a connection with the church over so many years."

At present, the congregation is meeting in Greenisland Methodist Church on Sundays at 9.30am. Some activities are taking place in the Jubilee Community Hub, the ladies are meeting in the local football club, and the parish is using office space in the Presbyterian Church. Isy says the offers of help from all churches, schools and the community have been amazing.

It is estimated that it will take a year to 18 months before the church can meet again in its own building. Isy plans to be there throughout. "For such a time as this, God has given me a real privilege. It is an awesome calling for God to say 'Isy, you are leading this thing,' and for however long he wants me, I will be there. It is so humbling to be a leader, to be part of a team, and to see God's plan out of this. He did not want this to happen but he was there with us."

For news of future fund raising events, check Greenisland Parish on Facebook.

Church 'not a burnt building' - Bishop

In a statement in the immediate wake of the fire in Greenisland, the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, said The Church of the Holy Name is not a burnt building.

"It is a vibrant group of people who love their God and love the community he has given them to serve. They are devastated, but they are also strong and courageous and they will continue to worship together and reach out to others with Christ's message of forgiveness and hope," he said.



The Exodus Tarragona team from St John's, Ballyclare, and All Saints', Antrim.



The young people had the opportunity to go caving!

Impacting young lives in Tarragona

A youth team from St John's, Ballyclare, and All Saints', Antrim, made a big impact on young lives when they travelled to Tarragona in Spain with Exodus in July.

The team of 13 was based in the local evangelical church in Valls, where, along with local teenagers, members led a children's holiday club each morning and supported other churches in street evangelism in the evenings.

Team leader was the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, rector of Ballyclare, co-led by the Rev Claire Thompson from All Saints'. Preparations for the trip started in January, with regular gatherings discipling the young people and preparing them for mission. As part of their preparation, team members raised nearly £5,000 to support the ministries of the local churches in Tarragona.

Over the 10-day trip, the team kept people at home updated on their activities through videos, photos and messages on a WhatsApp group, to which the team gave us access so we could share their stories as they unfolded each day.

Charlotte was first up, her video diary (vlog) on July 20 was just after their arrival for induction sessions in Salou. This time was a mix of meeting the Spanish churches and their leaders and worshipping together in both Spanish and English. "We found

the Spanish are very lively worshippers," Charlotte said. "There was a split where the Northern Irish were just standing on one side and the Spanish were jumping up and down - they told us we needed to get some more energy!"

The team inductions included time to pray, time to explore the cultural differences and time to get to know one another. Each Mission Team was prayed over by another team leader, and the Antrim/Ballyclare group met Pastor Victor who brought them to the church in Valls.

'It is really amazing to see these teenagers and young adults connect to their faith on a deeper level.'

The following day, Sunday, the young people attended their host church service to get to know people and to become integrated into the worship life there.

Reflecting on the service in her vlog that evening, Isla, a member of St John's, said it had been deeply encouraging, with herself and three other young people singing the worship song 'Praise' in both Spanish and English, and playing with the children present.

Afterwards, there was a concert led by an Argentinian worship band, which Isla described as 'so cool,' with lots of joy in our worship, dancing, and 'lots of jumping around!'

Bible Club began on the Monday, which Josh Campbell-Smyth, one of the co-leaders, described as 'such an encouragement.' "It was so exciting to see the children and leaders engage in Christ and learn more about him," Josh said.

Pastor Victor was very keen to integrate his Spanish team and the Irish team, so later that day the team visited the beach where they swam and played volleyball. In his vlog, Josh said: "As a leader myself, Cameron, Claire and Jonny can all say the same, it is beautiful to see these teenagers walking in that next step in their faith and putting their faith into action. It is really amazing to see these teenagers and young adults connect to their faith on a deeper level. It's an honour to be part of their life."

Lauren, a member of All Saints', gave the Tuesday update, speaking about the kids' club. "The kids remembered the memory verse in English and Spanish and did all the songs and actions. They were really enthusiastic," she said.

That evening, the team took part in an evangelism event in Tarragona, near Valls. "This was really, really, really good," Lauren enthused. "People were giving heartfelt testimonies and singing praise to God. It was amazing how many kids just came and interacted with us. Not a lot of people are Christians here in Spain,

but when we were out and seeing how amazed the kids were to get their faces painted and to make the bracelets, it was so special - a powerful moment."

Cameron in his video reflects on the impact of the kids' club. "All the kids and leaders are engaging perfectly," he said. "They run in every day excited to start it and it is such a blessing. Everyone has been doing all their roles, there's no tension within the



Leading worship in Valls.

team, and everyone is helping to uplift each other.” Teen Bible studies, he said, were also working well with the older children and the crafts were ‘going crazy!’

Cameron also spoke about the downtime that the team was having, with an expedition into the mountains to go caving, which he described as dusty and mucky, but fun. “Crawling through that last cave we had to twist our bodies to get through,” he said. “We came out into the ravine to a beautiful sunset. We are having a blast!”

Team leader Rev Jonny shared his thoughts the following day. He had a message for the parents of the team members. “Your young people are amazing, your young people have blessed me so much and your young people are very much being shaped by the Lord in their own journeys.”

He spoke about visiting a large plaza in Valls that evening for street evangelism. “That was amazing,” Jonny said. “This is a plaza where people sit for coffee and socialising. We had conversations with people sitting in the plaza about life and faith, and from those conversations this local church has been able to invite a lot of people to services this Sunday.”

In a video shared the following day, Friday, Isabella, one of the team’s Spanish hosts, said: “We are so blessed to have a great time with all the people.”

Caleb shared an update about the team’s Karaoke night near the end of the week, in a broken voice that suggested he had done a lot of singing and cheering! “Today was the first day we did not have Bible school which was quite nice and sad at the same time because although we love doing Bible school, you can feel everyone is tired. We loved doing it for five days - we will see them tomorrow in church,” he said.

The young people took the opportunity to go shopping for thank you presents for their Spanish friends and went to nearby Cambrils for street evangelism, which was enjoyed by all, with Josh saying it was

‘such a blessing to see all the people,’ and Cameron saying the dancing and singing were great fun.

Rebekah had the opportunity to give her personal testimony, something she has never done before. “It was great,” she said.

On the final Sunday, the team led many elements in the service in the church. Claire gave her testimony and Jonny preached.

In her vlog on Sunday evening, Rosa said that the young people had gone to the front as a team, and Victor had prayed for each of them individually. “A couple of people cried... the kids got certificates and stuff, it was very cute, they were giving us lots of hugs,” Rosa said.

In a vlog, Rev Jonny said the Sunday had been the start of goodbyes. “There were a few tears as the team realised that they won’t see some of the children again. The evening was spent on the beach with the youth of Valls Church, worshipping and reflecting on what God has been doing in each of us.”

As the teams got ready to leave for home, everyone gathered back in Salou for a time of thanksgiving, prayer and reflection. “There was lots of encouragement this morning,” Rev Jonny said. “Lots of team time as we considered what God has been doing in each one of us separately, never mind as a team this week.”

Upon return from Spain, the youth team from St John’s, whilst tired, were straight into other ministry opportunities through the remainder of the summer. Rev Jonny reflected that the blessing of this summer has been incredible.

Exodus this year has sent almost 60 teams on mission from Northern Ireland across the world with more than 500 young people serving God this summer. Rev Jonny said he is happy to share with local churches about the benefits of young people becoming engaged in mission, and how this grows young people across the diocese.

Clergy appointed to new roles in diocese

The Bishop of Connor has made a number of recent appointments. Building on the work done by former Diocesan Director of Ordinands, the Rev Canon Kevin Graham DL MBE, and the Rev Peter Jones as Warden of Readers, Bishop George has announced a new ‘Discerning Ministry’ team.

The Bishop said that as part of the diocese’s ‘Growing Healthy Churches’ ethos, nurturing an understanding of the call to Christian service is vital in order that parishes are resourced and equipped. The new team will seek to assist clergy and parishes as they encourage every Christian to discover their own vocation and discern the different roles where God may be calling them to serve.

The team is: Vocations Director - the Rev Peter Jones, team leader, strategy and resourcing parishes; Diocesan Director of Ordinands - the Rev Danielle McCullagh, discernment and nurture of vocations to ordained ministry (Stipendiary and OLM); Warden of Readers - the Rev Canon Amanda Adams, support and development of reader ministry; Pioneer Ministry Co-ordinator - the Rev James Boyd, development of pioneer ministry, vocational support of pioneer candidates.

In taking up her new role as Director of Ordinands, the Rev Danielle McCullagh will leave her position as Chair of Connor Youth Council. She will be replaced by the Rev Dennis Christie as Chair, assisted by the Rev Lee Boal as Vice-Chair.

“I’m delighted to make these appointments and am immensely grateful to Peter, Danielle, Amanda, James, Dennis and Lee for their willingness to serve the wider diocese in these roles,” the Bishop said.

“I have no doubt that each of them will use their own particular gifts and warm personalities to equip the Church in the roles which they are taking up at this time.”



New appointments to roles in Connor Diocese: Clockwise from top left: The Rev Peter Jones; the Rev Danielle McCullagh; the Rev Canon Amanda Adams; the Rev Lee Boal; the Rev Dennis Christie; the Rev James Boyd.



The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde; the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison; and the Bishop of Down and Dromore, the Rt Rev David McClay, with clergy from the dioceses of Down and Dromore and Connor and Cathedral vergers at a service on the afternoon of Sunday June 2 which celebrated the 120th anniversary of the Consecration of Belfast Cathedral. Photo: Norman Briggs.

A day of celebration at Belfast Cathedral

Belfast Cathedral welcomed civic, political and community leaders as well as clergy and representatives of parishes across Connor and Down and Dromore on Sunday June 2 as it marked 120 years since the Consecration of St Anne's.

Those present for the Service of Choral Matins at 11am also included representatives of charities which have been supported by the cathedral's annual Black Santa Appeal, along with the Bishops of Connor and Down and Dromore and other Church Leaders.

The preacher at the service was the Most Rev John McDowell, Church of Ireland Primate and Archbishop of Armagh, who also dedicated 500 new chairs, and many of those who had sponsored their chairs in memory of a loved one or in thanksgiving were present.

Later that afternoon, representatives of parishes from the dioceses of Down and Dromore and Connor came to the cathedral for an anniversary Holy Communion - as they did on the day the cathedral opened 120 years ago. The preacher was the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde.

The service featured the world premiere of a new communion setting written for this 120th Anniversary Service by Lucy Walker which she has dedicated to St Anne's Cathedral as the 'Missa Sanctae Annae.'

In his sermon, Dean Forde spoke of the differences between the world of 1904 and the world of 2024. "A cathedral that was



Dean Stephen Forde at the 120th anniversary Choral Matins in Belfast Cathedral with, from left: Deputy Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Aine Groogan; Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly; the Rev Dr Ruth Patterson and the Rev Canon Tracey McRoberts MBE. Photo: Norman Briggs.

built by the great industrialists must now be a cathedral for the people of Belfast, and beyond, in all their variety and diversity and richness of origins," the Dean said. "Because in today's world our voice must compete with many other religious voices, and also with those who stridently speak out for NO religion."

He looked at the role of the cathedral in the decades that lie ahead. "Those who celebrated the Consecration of this cathedral 120 years ago today assumed Christianity to be the constant of civilisation. Today in 2024 we have no such self-assured certainty. Our Christian future is not a given! Instead, it has to be won, it has to be earned, it has to be prayed for, and it



Belfast Cathedral's 120th anniversary service. Photo: Norman Briggs.

has to be lived to the full.

"A cathedral for the 21st century is to be a place of awe, enquiry, discovery and Christ-centred service, sending us all out into the world of today. So then, whether as cathedrals or as parish churches, in our communities of faith, let us 'Like Living Stones' be built into a spiritual house, and a holy priesthood, in order that we may proclaim the mighty acts of him who has called us out of darkness and into his awesome light.' For this will be the foundational cornerstone on which the church of the twenty-first century can be built for Christ's sake."

The music at both services was provided by the Cathedral Choir, conducted by the Master of Music, Jack Wilson, with Stephen Hamill on the organ.

To achieve certain priorities it has identified for the future, Belfast Cathedral has established 'BC120,' a campaign which will seek new sources of funding and new partners to offer their expertise and their commitment to Belfast Cathedral, helping to sustain its daily operation and to fund the new projects and developments.

SAMS Mission Director on the move to Glenavy Parish

The Rev Stephen McElhinney, Mission Director of SAMS (South American Mission Society) since 2018, has been appointed vicar of Glenavy Parish.

Stephen grew up in Co Armagh, graduating in Optometry from Aston University. He was ordained in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, in June 2005 and served with the staff team of Kill O' the Grange Parish, Dublin, before moving

in May 2008 to Drumglass, Dungannon. He was introduced as Priest-in-Charge of Derryvolgie Parish, Connor Diocese, in 2011 and was later instituted as rector.

Stephen said: "I am very much looking forward to getting to know the parishioners and people of Glenavy, Crumlin, and the Tunney. Together, we will prayerfully discover God's plans for the next chapter of the church's witness

in this area."

He will be instituted in St Aidan's Parish Church, Glenavy, on November 12 at 7pm.

Stephen is married to Cathy and they have three children.



Grant boost for All Saints', Antrim

The unique heritage of Antrim's 'unofficial cathedral' is secured, thanks to a grant of £34,985 for urgent tower repairs at All Saints', Antrim, from the National Churches Trust.

All Saints' is one of the oldest churches still in use in Northern Ireland. Dating back to 1596, the Trust, in announcing the grant in June, described the church as a 'striking and rare example of Elizabethan architecture.'

The church tower, however, is crumbling and slivers of falling stone pose significant safety concerns to the congregation and community. If the stonework continues to deteriorate and action is not taken, these slivers could become bigger. Failed rainwater goods - drainpipes and gutters - mean that the church tower has extensive water damage posing a severe risk to the heritage inside.

The grant to the Grade A Listed church is part of a £1 million funding pay-out from the National Churches Trust. It means the church can make urgent repairs to the south elevation of the tower to not only make the building safe again, but it will make the building watertight and weatherproof.

These important repairs will also reduce the heating bill, helping make the church a more welcoming space - this includes linking with Antrim and Newtownabbey Council's walking tours and offering a tour around the church and graveyard, giving more people the chance to view All Saints' history and heritage, including the beautiful stained glass windows that include a rare panel of early painted stained glass.

Claire Walker, Chief Executive of the National Churches Trust, said: "The National Churches Trust is excited to be able to support All Saints' Church to enable them to carry out urgent tower repairs to their building. This will safeguard the unique heritage of this ancient and historic church and keep it open and in use

for the benefit of local people.

"Whether seeking quiet reflection, access to community services or a place to worship, the National Churches Trust helps hundreds of churches each year and with the support of local people, keeps them thriving today and tomorrow."

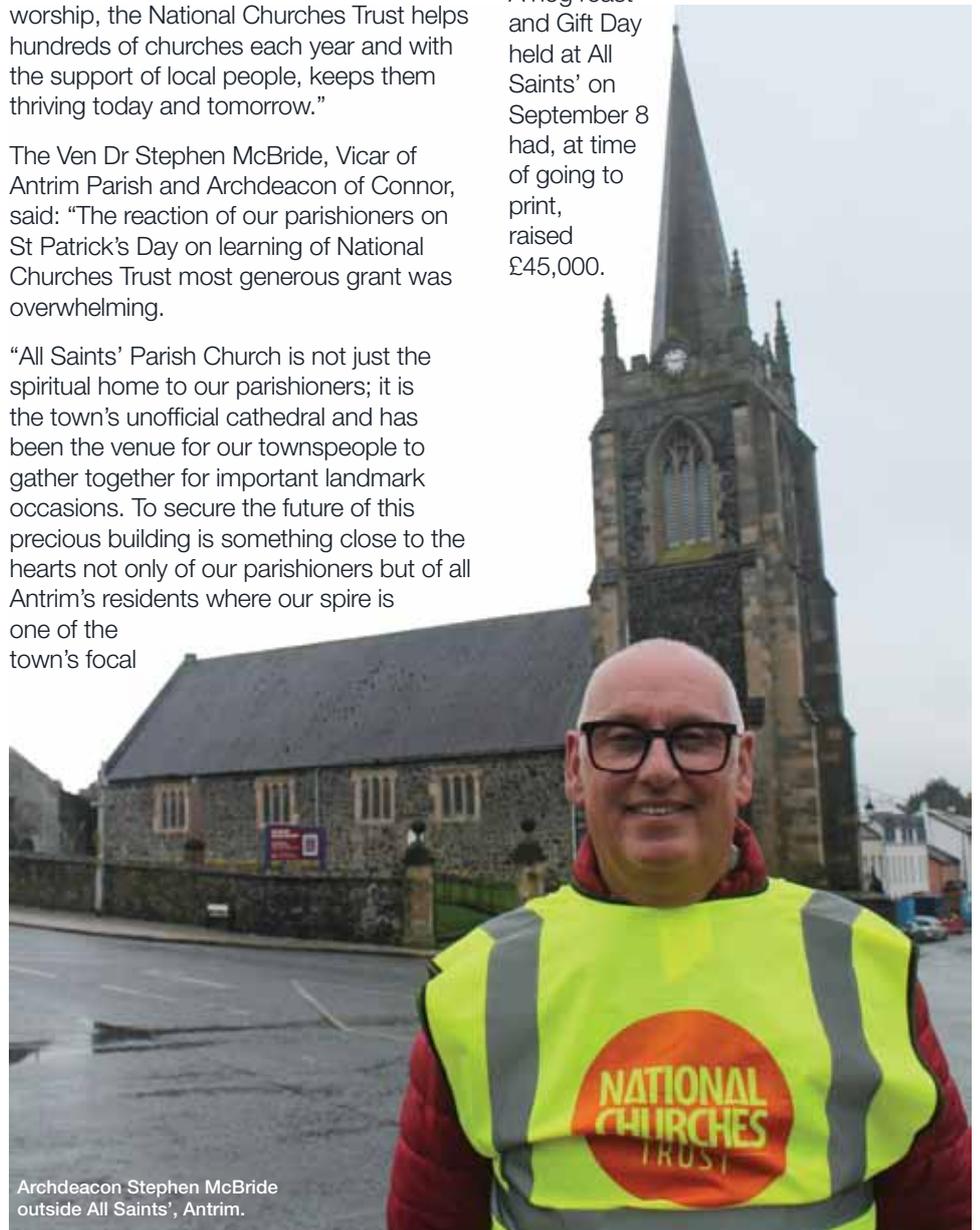
The Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Vicar of Antrim Parish and Archdeacon of Connor, said: "The reaction of our parishioners on St Patrick's Day on learning of National Churches Trust most generous grant was overwhelming.

"All Saints' Parish Church is not just the spiritual home to our parishioners; it is the town's unofficial cathedral and has been the venue for our townspeople to gather together for important landmark occasions. To secure the future of this precious building is something close to the hearts not only of our parishioners but of all Antrim's residents where our spire is one of the town's focal

architectural landmarks."

The grant will allow the south transept roof to be re-tiled and the stonework replaced and repointed. Gutters and drainpipes will be resealed to protect against further water damage and leaks.

A hog roast and Gift Day held at All Saints' on September 8 had, at time of going to print, raised £45,000.



Archdeacon Stephen McBride outside All Saints', Antrim.

‘Know the value that we place on you’



Connor clergy, Peter Jones, Andrew Irvine, Nathan Ervine, Dr Andrew Campbell and Aaron McAllister at Connor Synod in Christ Church, Lisburn.

Connor Diocesan Synod 2024 was held in Christ Church, Lisburn, on June 13, and was preceded by a Service of Holy Communion, led by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison.

In his Presidential Address, the Bishop said the meeting served as a reminder that those present were part of something bigger.

“We are part of a diocese, which in turn is part of a national church, which is part of a fellowship of Christians which reaches right around the world.

“Whilst our principal focus in our Christian lives is rightly the community where we live, it is important that we recognise our place in the wider work that God is doing in his world; important too that we take time to consider how we work together and encourage one another in the joys and the challenges of serving Christ in his world today.”

He said ‘Growing Healthy Churches’ - the Connor Diocesan strapline he introduced last year - was not so much a programme of activity but an ethos to undergird all that is done.

The Bishop spoke of the work of the diocesan staff to help parishes, both in growing ministry and in working through the requirements of compliance with the various aspects of administrative good practice and legal requirements.

He spoke about the relocation of diocesan offices to a temporary home in the Titanic Quarter; the challenges of changing patterns of life and ministry today; and



Bishop George delivers his Presidential Address.

changes planned following the retirement of the Rev Canon Kevin Graham MBE DL as Diocesan Director of Ordinands.

Concluding his address, Bishop George said: “Whatever your role in ministry in Connor Diocese, from the smallest parish to the largest cathedral, whether you wear a collar or exercise your ministry with a sweeping brush, it’s my prayer that you will know the value that we place on what you do and pray too that you will know the equipping of God’s Spirit as we serve him together in this diocese.”

Standing Orders were suspended for a presentation by Hilary McClay, Education Advisor to the Church of Ireland Bishops’ Appeal, who outlined different projects that had been supported around the world.

“We really are able to show the kindness of Jesus where it is really needed to those



Service of Holy Communion before Synod.



Rosemary and Jim Patterson and George Briggs at the Holy Communion Service.



Synod members from Agherton, Diana Hall and Dr Frank Dobbs.



The ladies of Christ Church, Lisburn, serving up refreshments during Connor Synod.



Enjoying Synod lunch at Christ Church, Lisburn.



Dressed appropriately for a damp Synod day!



Dean Sam Wright, Lisburn Cathedral, on some of the developments at the Cathedral.



Dean Stephen Forde, Belfast Cathedral, proposes the Report of Diocesan Council.



Sarah Simpson, Ahoghill and Portglenone, seconds the Report of Diocesan Council



Archdeacon Paul Dundas, rector of Christ Church, Lisburn, and Chair of Connor Council for Mission.

Bishop George Davison and Finance and Administration Manager Richard Cotter during the business of Synod.

who need to know that he cares and that his people care too," Mrs McClay said.

The Report of Connor Diocesan Council was proposed by the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, who said that the most positive sections of this year's report included those on Youth Ministry, submitted by Youth Officer, Christina Baillie; the Youth Council Report, submitted by the Rev Danielle McCullagh; the Connor Children's Ministry report, submitted by Children's Ministry Development Officer, Victoria Jackson; and The North Belfast Centre of Mission report submitted by Karen Webb as Lead Evangelist.

"Across these pages, we are given an account of dynamic ministry exercised across the whole of Connor Diocese. This is ministry that builds Christian lives today, to be the Christian disciples and Christian leaders both for today and for tomorrow," he stated.

Referencing diocesan administration, Dean Forde said: "It is the tremendous hard work of our diocesan staff, week after week, which enables us in the parishes to concentrate safely and effectively on ministries of growth and outreach."

The Dean spoke about the diocesan finance report and the parochial report, which he said described 'the immense amount of detailed work carried out to ensure that parish churches and parochial buildings are maintained and developed for the present and future needs of ministry.'

The Diocesan Council Report was seconded by Sarah Simpson, Ahoghill and Portglenone, who highlighted 'the important and significant work' which had been carried out by the Director of Ordinands alongside the Warden of Readers, the Rev Peter Jones.

"It is vital at this point in history we continue to support those who feel the call of God to ordained ministry as highlighted in the report, it is all our responsibility to encourage members of our congregations to explore how God may be calling them to service and ministry in his Church," she stated. "It is vital for the Church to continue to identify, encourage and raise up women and men to the roles of diocesan reader, and ordained ministry."

Miss Simpson drew Synod's attention to the Mothers' Union's 'Rise Up' campaign against domestic abuse and the prayer breakfasts held in various locations to highlight 16 days of activism against gender violence.

She also spoke about the report of Christ Church Cathedral, Lisburn, which celebrated its 400th anniversary, and Belfast Cathedral's 120th anniversary

Following the words of the proposer and seconder, Synod took a break for lunch, provided by the members of Christ Church Parish in the parish halls, where members were also able to visit the various stalls set up by different agencies.

The Diocesan Council Report was adopted by Synod, and two Notices of Motion, one relating to Fair Share and one relating to Diocesan Regulations, were both passed.

Standing Orders were suspended again for a well-received presentation by the Rev Dr Pat Mollan on the Churches Ministry of Healing - The Mount.

Before Bishop George closed Synod, the Archdeacon of Belfast, the Ven Barry Forde, thanked him for chairing the meeting and for his 'careful and prayerful stewardship and care for people and parishes in a very complex diocese.'



Johanne Martin, left, and Ashton Porter, parishioners of St Nicholas' and All Saints', Belfast, set up a fund raiser to support their friend Mohammed Idris after his business, the Bash Café, was burned during anti-immigration riots.

Support has shown me I am not alone

As anti-immigration protests brought violence to the streets of Belfast on August 3, café owner Mohammed Idris watched in horror as a video shared online showed his popular café consumed by flames.

He was on a phone call to his friend Johanne Martin, a parishioner of St Nicholas' and All Saints', Belfast, when the video emerged, and Johanne was witness to his grief as flames ignited by hatred swept through his business.

Earlier that day, Mohammed had been forced to leave the Bash Café in Donegall Road after protestors smashed his windows and doors. The burning of the ground floor café later that evening caused severe damage and while he plans to reopen, Mohammed says it will not be in the same location.

Johanne and fellow-parishioner Ashton Porter reacted quickly to help, setting up an online fundraiser, which, when it closed, had raised £30,466 in support of Mohammed's business.

Forced to flee his home in the Darfur region of Sudan in 2008, Mohammed spent time in cities in the UK, Dublin and Sligo, before settling in Belfast in 2012, when he was joined by his wife Darelsalam and their son, now 17. Since moving to Belfast, the family has grown, with three sons aged 9, 7 and 5 born here.

In Sudan, Mohammed was an engineer in an electric power station. In Belfast, with the support of a small business test trading

scheme, he set up Bash Technology, located in Great Victoria Street - Bash meaning engineer in Arabic.

There were very few Sudanese living in Belfast when Mohammed arrived, and he was a founder-member of the Association Darfur of NI which did a lot of community work, including education and training.

"I felt very welcome when I came, I got to know many local people through voluntary organisations. I felt Belfast is a good place and safe for the children. There were good opportunities - in parts of the UK, thousands of others have gone before - when I set up my internet café in Great Victoria Street, it was the only one in Belfast."

Mohammed moved the internet café to Donegall Road after it was the subject of an arson attack in August last year. The building also houses Bash Technology. "I found the numbers using the internet café were increasing, and people were hanging out to talk around the office, so I decided to set up another café where people could go and sit and chat," he said.

The Bash Café offered Asian and Arabic, Hindu and African food and Ethiopian coffee. Ashton, who at the time was living nearby and giving English classes at

Queen's University, was a regular customer. "The food was great, it was very popular," she said.

But on the night of August 3, protestors walking from the city towards the Mosque passed the café. "They attacked the Bash Café and shouted my name," said Mohammed, who was upstairs in Bash Technology at the time. "They were smashing the glass windows and doors. I called the police who asked me to close the door and not to speak to them or go downstairs.

"They were using beer kegs and chairs from a bar nearby to smash the windows. I was scared. If they had come upstairs, I would have had no way of defending myself."

Then there were calls on social media for more people to join the protests. "I had to close up and go home, there was no way I could stay at the business if the crowd was going to increase," Mohammed reflected.

"I was at home when I saw videos online of them burning the street, but I did not initially know that the café had been burned."

Seeing the horror unfold, Johanne and Ashton were separately trying to find a way to help Mohammed. Although they attend the same church, it was only now they realised they both knew him. Johanne, an Arabic speaker, had met Mohammed and his wife when they first moved here and needed some assistance, while Ashton knew him from the Bash Café. Discovering they were both connected to Mohammed, they checked to see if any online fundraiser had been set up for the businesses impacted by the protests, but could only find one for a café in Botanic.

Ashton said: "I was living in the neighbourhood. I could hear the sirens and saw a nearby grocery store in flames. I didn't know what else to do, but doing nothing wasn't an option."

Johanne recalls being on the phone with Mohammed when he realised his business was burning. "He was very upset," she said.

Mohammed adds: "If I had stayed in the premises, I would not have survived. Together, they were powerful, they could do anything."

Ashton set up a GoFundMe page for the Bash Café with Johanne as joint organiser. By the Wednesday of that week, it had raised £20,000.

"As administrators, we could see who posted and it was a real variety of people, including other refugees who may have



Sudanese-born Mohammed Idris outside his once thriving business, the Bash Café, now boarded up after being targeted during anti-immigration riots in Belfast in August. Mohammed hopes to reopen in a different location.

only been able to donate a fiver, but, like the widow's mite, it was a lot to them," Johanne said.

"I felt we needed to respond somehow. I think it has made a difference to Mohammed. As the money came in, he said he went from feeling hopeless to hopeful."

Ashton added: "He said this had given him hope that he didn't have, a great message of support from not just 10 people, but from the 1,500 who contributed even small amounts. It was incredible to see how many people responded - not just those who used the café."

Ashton said every response had been positive with local parishes in the area among those to send money. Mohammed was interviewed by the BBC and other networks, and this spread the word about the fundraiser.

"The money will cover things insurance will not," said Johanne. "Mohammed has been able to continue to pay his staff, for example."

Ashton recalls the days after the attacks. "The whole week was awful. I was very aware of an air of fear. I am an immigrant too, I moved here from Canada, but I do not have to walk around in fear."

Mohammed returned to his premises the morning after the fire. "I found a disaster. After they broke the windows and doors, I had been thinking we could cover these up and reopen on Monday if the staff were happy. After the fire, it was not possible to continue the business, especially if after six months or a year they come back and burn it again. My business is to bring in foreigners and make a safe place for them.

"I am determined to reopen. The support has shown me that I am not alone - there



The Bash Café the day after the protests in South Belfast.

are some people who hate immigrants, I still get abuse on a daily basis - but the majority do not. I have received many emails from all over Ireland, England, the USA, Canada, Egypt and other places saying they support me - literally hundreds of emails, texts and messages, and I have replied to them all.

"One was from a 15-year-old girl who said she was really sorry for what happened and offered to come and help. She said togetherness was what matters, not skin colour. This from a 15-year-old!

"We received donations from all religions and ethnicities. The Moslem community in London called me and told me I was not alone."

Prayerfully supporting their neighbours were parishioners in the Blackstaff Mission Area (Sandy Row, Donegall Road, Donegall Pass). The Rev Ross Mungavin said an offering was also taken up for the businesses affected.

MU hosts All Ireland Service in Antrim

The monthly All Ireland Mothers' Union Service of Holy Communion was held in All Saints', Antrim, on June 6.

Members from all over Connor Diocese were joined by the All Ireland President, June Butler; the Zonal Trustee for Ireland, Iris Suitor; and the Diocesan President of Down and Dromore, Mavis Thompson, for an uplifting service which also celebrated the 90th anniversary of Mothers' Union in All Saints'.

The celebrants were the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, and Archdeacon Stephen McBride, Vicar of All Saints', Connor Diocesan Chaplain and All Ireland Chaplain for Mothers' Union.

In his sermon, the Archdeacon spoke about the saying 'every mickle makes a muckle,' and encouraged members to continue providing the little things which make such a difference to those in need, such as items for neo natal units and hospital bags.

By doing this work, Mothers' Union is carrying out the commandment 'love thy neighbour' - very often without knowing who that neighbour might be or what their situation is.

Archdeacon Stephen also paid tribute to the branch leaders he had worked with since coming to the parish 25 years ago - Paddy Wallace, Helen McBride, Jennifer Campbell, Sheila Thompson, Sylvia Barton and Sylvia Smyth. All of these ladies contributed to the service in the readings and intercessions.

Theological Lecture at Queen's University



This year's Annual Theological Lecture at Queen's University Belfast was delivered in the Great Hall at Queen's on May 27 by Professor Stephen Williams.

Professor Williams is a theologian, author and lecturer who, after retiring from a teaching career, was appointed Honorary Professor of Theology at Queen's in 2017. The theme was 'Artificial Intelligence: Religious Friend or Foe?' Pictured are, from left: Bishop George Davison, Dr Peter Hamill (Board of Education), Professor Stephen Williams, the Rev Danielle McCullagh (Church of Ireland & Methodist Chaplain), and Professor Stuart Elborn (Deputy Vice-Chancellor). Photo: Colin Metcalfe Photography.



Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie and the Rev Danielle McCullagh, chair of Connor Youth, keep an eye on Bishop George as he sizzles the sausages!



Heather Carson, Church of Ireland Lower Shankill, and campers at the Summer Madness Connor Sub Camp.



Summer Madness smiles.



The hardworking team serving up the BBQ salads.

Cooking up a treat!

Summer Madness returned to Portglenone at the end of June with dozens of young people from parishes across Connor Diocese coming together at the Connor Sub Camp.

They were joined by Bishop George Davison and other clergy who donned their aprons to cook up a treat at the annual Bishop's Barbecue on Sunday June 30, with the sun putting in a welcome appearance for the evening.

Bishop George proved a dab hand at the task of sausage sizzling, assisted by sou chefs Archdeacon Paul Dundas, the Rt Rev Darren McCartney, the Rev Brian Harper,

the Rev Derek Harrington and the Rev Dr Andrew Campbell. An army of volunteers was inside the Connor Youth marquee, serving salads and drinks, and the smells wafting from the barbecue were mouth-watering.

Around 120 young campers and guests were served at the barbecue, which has become a popular fixture in the Connor Summer Madness Sub-Camp programme.

Streetreach on the North Coast

Streetreach 2024 partnered 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, for a four-day

programme which started on July 3.

Based at the White Park Bay Youth Hostel, the young people from parishes across Connor Diocese took part in morning devotions, worship, team discussion, and practical activities

including running a kids' club and outreach work in the area.

Evening activities included outreach in Ballybogey and Ballysally, and each day finished with a debrief held in a different participating church

We caught up with the Streetreach team on July 4, when the outreach team visited homes of families connected to the parishes through baptism or marriage, and also shared prayers on the streets of Ballysally.

The practical team was in Ballyrashane Glebe Hall, cleaning and setting up for an afternoon tea for elderly folk in the area and helping the Rev Canon Amanda Adams clear overgrown vegetation in the graveyard at the Church of St John the Baptist.

And in Kilmoyle Primary School, the members of the kids' club were running an afternoon of activities with games in the gym, arts and crafts in a classroom, and storytelling.

Well done to all the young people and their leaders for a fantastic few days.



The Rev Patrick Barton and Ste Fitzgerald, Church Army, with the outreach team ready for the road.



Adrian Anderson in front of the organ pipes in Holy Trinity, Portrush, where he plays on Sunday evenings and Wednesday mornings.

Half a century of playing the organ

Adrian Anderson is a familiar face in Holy Trinity Parish Church, Portrush, where he has been playing the organ at evening services for more than 20 years.

A former teacher in Coleraine FE College, Adrian has also been organist in Ballywillan Presbyterian Church for more than half a century.

Although he has only been the regular evening organist in Holy Trinity for two decades, Adrian, 84, says his connections to the church go back 60 years when Archdeacon Donald Perrin was rector. "The organist Billy Canning used to have to work on a Sunday as he ran tours in Ballycastle, so on a Sunday night he would have to disappear halfway through the service. After the third Collect, I slipped in and played the closing hymn and the Voluntary," says Adrian. "Because of the pillar near the organ, you can slip in and out and not be noticed!"

Adrian recalls that Archdeacon Perrin was always 'very encouraging and welcoming.' "It was really him who got me fired up with enthusiasm for the organ," he adds.

At this time, Adrian was studying Physics and Applied Maths at Queen's University. He travelled up and down to Belfast daily. "Sometimes I would have to hitch a lift, that was how it was then," he recalls.

"Music was always a hobby for me, like Debussy said, 'it is a marvellous hobby but a sad profession.'"

He studied the piano, and his father Victor played the organ in Portstewart



Adrian plays the Holy Trinity Church organ.

Presbyterian Church. "I would have helped him out. The piano really is my main interest, but I was asked to play the organ more and more. Eventually I studied under Brian Thompson, a part-time lecturer in the University of Ulster in Coleraine. It is a complex instrument. It takes a very speedy revenge on anything that is not right."

He found himself playing all the evening services in Portstewart Presbyterian from 1963-1969. He also played at weddings, even receiving a 50th anniversary congratulations card from a Danish bride at whose wedding he had played and who now lives in Copenhagen.

As well as playing on Sunday mornings in Ballywillan Presbyterian, he is in Holy Trinity every Sunday evening and at the Wednesday morning Communion Service.

"A lot of churches have incorporated modern praise bands, but there will always be a need for great hymns of the faith," Adrian says. "The organ adds gravitas and dignity which you cannot get from a group of instrumentalists."

The organs in both Ballywillan and Holy Trinity are a little different. Seated at the organ in Holy Trinity, he says: "This is one of the finest organs, but it needs major open-heart surgery. It is an excellent organ in an excellent acoustic - the most important stop on an organ is the building - too many carpets and curtains all affect the sound, absorbing it like a mattress factory.

"The Ballywillan organ [a Wells Kennedy pipe organ] is in lovely condition. Both are fine organs, but very different."

Adrian is also known as the organiser of a series of summer recitals in Ballywillan Presbyterian Church for more than 30 years. International organists who visited Ballywillan include Thomas Trotter, Carlo Curley, Catherine Ennis, Desmond Hunter and Gerard Brooks, along with pianists including Barry Douglas, John Barstow and Michael McHale and numerous choirs and singers.

He is very proud of his contribution to a setting of 'How Great Thou Art,' by the internationally-renowned musician Dan Miller. This came about when Adrian heard a CD of Dan Miller playing the hymn, which was improvised and had not been published. Adrian asked Brian Thompson (his organ tutor) to transcribe the music and he sent it to Dan Miller, who came back to confirm that it was exactly what he had played.

This transcription has since been published, and there at the top, thanks are recorded to both Adrian and Brian for their 'transcription assistance and encouragement.' The music can be heard on You Tube, just search 'Dan Miller, How Great Thou Art.'

Despite having played the organ for 50 years, Adrian says he has no plans to retire! "I would be in church anyway," he says. "As long as I can make my way to the church and know which way to face, I will keep going. It is good mental exercise and I enjoy it."

He continues to enjoy living in Portstewart where he likes to get out on his bicycle or walk on the coast where he is able to 'look out to infinity.'



The Rev Dennis Christie, Niall Campbell and Stephen McCallion had a warm welcome in Ibba Diocese.

People of Ibba will be 'forever in our hearts'

A small team from the Grouped Parishes of Ahoghill and Portglenone visited the Diocese of Ibba in South Sudan over the summer in a new mission partnership for the parishes.

The rector, the Rev Dennis Christie, was accompanied by parishioners Stephen McCallion and Niall Campbell. The main purpose of the trip was to build the relationship between the communities in Ahoghill and Portglenone and Ibba and to help establish a long-term mission partnership between both.

The team was welcomed at Ibba Airstrip on July 31 by the Choir of Ibba Downey Secondary School, and there was more singing from the Mothers' Union when they reached Diocesan Headquarters where they met Bishop Wilson Kamani, his staff team, and CMS Ireland mission partners, the Rev Andrew Quill and his wife Joanne.

STRUGGLES

Reflecting at the end of that first day, Dennis said: "Alongside our wonderful welcome, we can't help but notice our hosts have much greater struggles and challenges in their everyday lives than we, and yet there is a genuine peace and contentment that is so very clear to us."

The visitors were up early every morning for the 7am service, a time of worship together with the local ministry team. These services, often in Ibba Cathedral, were mostly held in Zande, the local language, with translators on hand to help interpret for Dennis as he preached each morning.

After meeting the Commissioner of Ibba, the team toured the diocesan facilities' including the diocesan offices, the BLC Theological College, the Vocational Training Centre (VTC), and Ibba Medical Centre. The team presented the Bishop with some



Stephen at work giving training in welding at the VTC.

laptops donated at home for use in their IT training and administration offices.

On August 2, Dennis and Niall visited St Mary's Primary School in nearby Naakuri to meet students and the school leadership team. After a tour, Dennis spoke to the children about the love and presence of the Lord and passed on a football and some skipping ropes, to the great delight of the children.

Niall said: "Football is massive in South Sudan, and even Bishop Wilson is a big fan of Chelsea. We have been enjoying a few kickabouts with the local young people of the parish during our downtime. Even though we come from different countries and cultures, football is a thing that unites us all. Seeing the children with a football and the smiles and laughter on their faces, gave us a real lift."

Dennis and Niall also visited a teak plantation which the Bishop is promoting to help raise funds for the diocese.

Stephen spent much of his time working at the VTC alongside a group of very keen local students, ready to learn new skills such as welding and carpentry. Stephen, an experienced welder and joiner,

taught the students, making use of the equipment purchased in Northern Ireland and brought across by the team. They worked on a project to cut and fabricate three beds from steel, and the students have continued to use their new skills. "I have been welding for 30+ years and even I am still learning, but these students have done superbly well, even in the short time we had with them. I am excited to see how they will continue to use and grow their skills going forward for the good of the people of Ibba," Stephen said.

The team handed over some welding and joinery equipment for the ongoing use of the VTC, which Stephen said will be valuable for training purposes and for carrying out repairs locally instead of the costly business of sending items away for repair.

CARING

Stephen was greatly impacted by his time at the VTC. "People in Ibba and the surrounding areas haven't got much, but they are friendly, helpful and caring. That reminds me of how we should live our lives as Christians. More like Jesus. I know I will leave Ibba having grown much deeper in my faith and feeling blessed with God's love," he said.

The team met with a local Mothers' Union group, visited a health clinic, and carried out interviews for CMSI with the principal of St Mary's Primary and with Bishop Kamani.

"We handed over some football equipment, including a full men's football kit donated by Ballymena Utd FC, for the Bishop to present to the winning team at the next Ibba Day football tournament," Dennis said.

"We were able to hand over the many Days for Girls kits prepared by our church family in Ahoghill and Portglenone. These kits are designed to help eliminate the stigma and limitations associated with menstruation so that women and girls in the most underdeveloped parts of the world have improved health, education and livelihoods."

Dennis said the team had received a 'terrific and truly humbling' send-off at a farewell gathering. "We left Ibba with both joy and grief, and yet knowing we have truly strengthened our fellowship in Christ," he said.

Reflecting on the trip, Niall said: "I have seen kindness, laughter, love and all round care from the people of Ibba. They have welcomed us with open arms and it's something I know that 'the Three Amigos,' Dennis, Stephen and myself, will take home with us forever in our hearts."

Launching into the new season in youth and children's ministry

Youth and children's ministry leaders gathered in St Patrick's Parish Centre, Ballymena, on September 7 for 'Launch,' Connor Diocese's annual kick-off event for those working in these areas of ministry.

Organised by Connor Children's Ministry Development Officer Victoria Jackson and Connor Youth Council, the event featured talks, workshops and resources.

After a welcome from Victoria, the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, opened with a short devotion. Sarah Colgan and Rachel Sheppard from Scripture Union Northern Ireland gave a talk, before the group split into sessions for children and youth leaders.

The children's session was led by Rachel Sheppard and Fran Taylor, while the youth session was led by Sarah Colgan, the Rev Ross Mungavin and Paul Galucci from Big House.



At 'Launch' 2024 are, from left: The Rev Andy Moore, curate, St Patrick's, Ballymena; Rachel Sheppard, SUNI; Johnny Diamond, Connor Youth; Sarah Colgan, SUNI; Bishop George Davison; Victoria Jackson, Connor Children's Ministry Development Officer; the Rev Ross Mungavin; Frances Taylor, Whitehead and Islandmagee; and Paul Galucci, Big House.

Journey to Rathlin - a day to remember

Journey to Rathlin, organised by All Aboard Connor, was a great day out to celebrate the end of the Sunday School year.

A group of 40, including families and Sunday School groups from across Connor Diocese, boarded the Spirit of Rathlin ferry and set out on an adventure to remember!

On arrival on the island, the group had a picnic lunch at the Manor House Hotel before heading to St Thomas' Parish Church for a special family service.

Victoria Jackson, Children's Ministry Development Officer, said: "We filled the little church and the sound of our singing filling the space is something I will remember! Children from groups attending took part in the service and we had a really special time together worshipping and opening the Bible."

Following the service, there was some free time to explore the island before catching the ferry back.

"The buzz was brilliant, with everyone getting to know those from other parishes and enjoying the day out together," Victoria said. "Thank you to those who came along and a special thank you to Ste from Church Army for leading us on guitar on



Taking in the beautiful scenery on Rathlin.



Worship in St Thomas' Parish Church, Rathlin Island.

the day. Journey to Rathlin may need to become an annual event in the Connor children's ministry calendar, next time maybe we could book out the whole ferry!"



Light Party fun for all!

Connor Diocese will host a Creation Light Party for all the family in Mossley Parish on November 2.

Diocesan Children's Ministry Development Officer Victoria Jackson said: "At a time of year filled with creepy costumes and dark decorations, we want to do something a little different!

"Come dressed up as something from God's amazing creation (hint for those who don't like to dress up...He created YOU!)"

There will also be prizes for the best costumes and much, much more!

The event runs in the Church of the Holy Spirit, Mossley, from 4-6pm, with crafts for all the family to enjoy, followed by a sing-a-long, storytelling and s'mores around the 'campfire.' The event will finish with food and a Light Parade which everyone is invited to join!

Sign up for the Creation Light Party on the Connor website www.connor.anglican.org.

Thanksgiving in Mid Belfast Rural deanery

Services of Celebration and Thanksgiving have been held in three churches in Mid Belfast Rural Deanery, with the parishes becoming part of a new union in the Rural Deanery.

A final service of worship took place in Immanuel Parish Church, Ardoyne, on June 23, in St Columba's, Whiterock, on August 4, and in St Andrew's, Glencairn, on September 19.

Immanuel Church has been a place of worship since the early 1940s. The final service was attended by parishioners, including Ina Harvey and Meta Lucas who began their journey of faith in the original church (now the church hall), along with their families, friends, former clergy and representatives of neighbouring churches and the local community.

Also in attendance were the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison; the Archdeacon of Belfast, the Ven Barry Forde; and the Rural Dean, the Rev Canon Tracey McRoberts MBE.

St Columba's, Whiterock, closed for worship after 62 years. Bishop George Davison and Archdeacon Forde led the worship alongside Canon Tracey, the Rev Adrian Bell and Sister Karen Webb, Church Army. A number of former staff members were also in attendance.



At the Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving in St Columba's, Whiterock, on August 4 are, from left: Sister Karen Webb, Archdeacon Barry Forde, Bishop George Davison, the Rev Canon Tracey McRoberts MBE, the Rev Adrian Bell and Ste Fitzgerald.

St Andrew's, Glencairn, has served the local community for almost 53 years. Canon Tracey welcomed the congregation for the final time on September 19. The Rev Adrian Bell led the opening prayers, and the Bishop of Connor and the Rev Alan Conly of the Methodist Church both spoke at the service.

Readings and prayers were read by congregation members, and former staff members were present.



At Immanuel Parish Church, Ardoyne, on June 23 are, from left: The Rev Canon Jim Campbell, the Rev Canon Tracey McRoberts MBE, the Rev Don Gamble, the Rev Adrian Bell, Bishop George Davison, Bishop Trevor Williams and Archdeacon Barry Forde.



Ministry leaders at St Andrew's, Glencairn, over the past years at the Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving.

The changes in the Mid Belfast area follow a review of parochial structures in the city as part of the diocesan aim to create 'Growing Healthy Churches.'

Bishop George said: "As the shape of the city has changed significantly over recent generations, some of our structures need to evolve too so that they fit the current needs of the Church and help to enable it to serve the people of Belfast in the years ahead."

Encouragement for Diocesan Readers



The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, far right, and the Rev Peter Jones, Warden of Readers, far left, with Diocesan Readers at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Mossley, on June 24.

A meeting of Diocesan Readers was held in the Church of the Holy Spirit, Mossley, on June 24, when 17 Readers from across the diocese

met with the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, and the Rev Peter Jones, Warden of Readers. The evening began with a Service of the Word which

was based on the theme 'Knowing Jesus and Making Jesus Known.' The service was followed by supper in Mossley Parish Centre, allowing Readers to catch up with one another.

Bishop George expressed his sincere thanks to all the Diocesan Readers for their ministry throughout the diocese and he highlighted the important role that Readers have in the ongoing mission and ministry of the Church.

The Warden of Readers spoke about current training for Diocesan Readers and interviewed Keith Gardiner and William McCandless, two recently-commissioned Diocesan Readers, about their journey and their experience of the training course.

Peter said: "It was really encouraging to be able to gather together and we look forward to more meetings."



The Rev James Boyd, rector of St Columba's, Derryvolgie, in the room the parish has funded at Harmony Hill Primary School.

Safe space helping children to grow

In common with most clergy, the Rev James Boyd, rector of St Columba's, Derryvolgie, works closely with his local primary school. The parish, however, has set up a project which has taken its link with Harmony Hill Primary School to a new level.

"Coming out of Covid, we recognised that there were huge mental health issues among schoolchildren and the increase in support needed for the children was phenomenal, yet with pressures on school budgets, not all these needs were being met," James said.

Around this time, the Church of Ireland Board of Education announced that funding was available to support projects in a local school if the parish could match the funding.

James said: "Harmony Hill Primary had no space for children to de-stress and no sensory room or special area which could be used for counselling.

"With the support of the parish, the Church of Ireland and the school governors, I proposed we take a room that was no longer used, partition off one-third as a sensory space and the other two-thirds as a comfy space to be used by counsellors who would be funded by the school. This would also be a space for one-to-one interactions, where children could come just to chat - this project is not so much about counselling, but about early intervention so children do not go on to need counselling."

James now meets with children on a one-to-one basis in this new safe space. "I just meet them to chat, I have no formal



Hilary Johnston, principal of Harmony Hill Primary School.

training," James said. He meets each child once a week for several weeks, helping those children to cope without the need for counselling, for example in the move from primary to secondary school.

"Once this was under way, we wondered if as a parish there was something else we could do," James said. "We applied to the Children and Orphans' Fund and received £13,000 to run play therapy."

The project now employs qualified therapists from Mustard Seed Play Therapy to deliver at least 200 sessions in the school.

"The space provides the opportunity for the children to step out of that place of anxiety, that place of disruption and come into a harbour space which is quiet and still," James said. "And having someone who listens allows a child to open up and really develop and grow."

He added that the impact on staff and other pupils was 'phenomenal.' Using the pyramid model, this early intervention means the number of children climbing the pyramid [towards the need for counselling] is less and less," James added.

"This was an amazing opportunity to get involved in more than just assemblies or the Board of Governors, but to get in and make partnerships with your local school. You meet families, you meet needs and you are doing what it is that God has called us to do in a community. We are there as light and hope, a lighthouse, a harbour, a safe space, and the church has invested into that in a very subtle way. It is a wonderful opportunity to build the Kingdom of God in this place."

Hilary Johnston, principal of Harmony Hill Primary School, said the school enjoyed a very positive shared partnership with the church.

"Shared values are very important and the church helps to nurture that and demonstrate it practically through their financial support, through prayer and their care for us as a staff team, investing in families who need extra support and care through mentoring, and in many ways, if we need them, they are there. It's wonderful to have that," Hilary said.

Ruth Bailie, a teacher at Harmony Hill, said that the room with its sensory space is 'a huge asset.'

"We are based in the community... To have that really close link with the church where they can support us in this way both financially and pastorally has had a huge benefit," Ruth said. "In everything we do in Harmony Hill there's a real sense of team and a real sense that we want to move forward together."

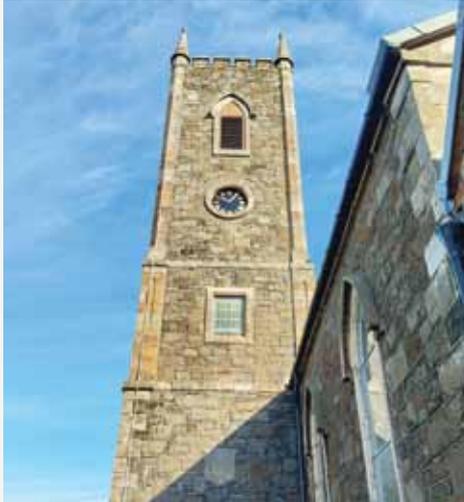
Dr Peter Hamill, Secretary of the Church of Ireland Board of Education, said this project was led by the school and driven by the school, but was supported by the church. "I think it's fantastic... it really shows Christianity in action," Peter said.

Eglantine Gift Day

A Gift Day at All Saints', Eglantine, on June 2, raised £82,000 towards the rebuilding and refurbishment of the church's 100-year-old pipe organ.

The parish is hoping to raise a total of £100,000. The rector, the Rev Jason Kernohan, said work has already started with a view to having the reinstallation ready for All Saints' 150th anniversary celebrations in 2025.

Restoration project in Agherton Parish



The restored tower of Agherton Parish Church, Portstewart.

Agherton Parish Church, Portstewart, has completed a significant restoration project thanks to a grant from the Landfill Communities Fund.

The project, in collaboration with Ulster Wildlife and the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, focused on crucial repairs to the church's iconic tower and north-facing windows.

The grant has been instrumental in enabling the church to address key areas of concern, including the installation of secondary glazing on the windows and doing essential stone repairs on the tower windows - vital to prevent water ingress and heat loss, improving the energy efficiency of the building and ensuring its long-term preservation.

Overseen by the rector of Agherton, the Rev Malcolm Ferry, and the Select Vestry, the project was carried out by Gibson Construction and completed in August.

The restoration work was deemed necessary to prevent further deterioration of the tower above the east wing of the church. Without these repairs, the area below the tower was at risk of damage.

Agherton Parish Church was originally sited in the outskirts of Portstewart before being meticulously relocated brick by brick to its current site at the top of the main street in 1826.

Despite its sound structure, the church tower had shown signs of wear, with failing stonework and cracks in the windows. The restoration addresses these issues.

To mark the completion of this project, a Service of Dedication will be held at the church on Advent Sunday, December 1.

Blessings in Albania



The Rev Jeremy Mould, seated second from left, with the Templepatrick Parish and A2B teams in Albania.

A team of seven, including four young people, travelled to Elbasan, Albania, in July to run a Holiday Bible Club at the request of A2B Albania.

The team consisted of the Rev Jeremy Mould, Emma, Anna, Carole, and Denise from Templepatrick, Hannah from Central Presbyterian and Nicole from Mossley Parish.

A2B Albania runs two children's day care centres, an elderly day care centre, a House of Opportunity for three young men, and a Family Link project, supporting and feeding impoverished families.

Albania is 80 per cent nominal Muslim and the church is small. Jeremy said: "The leader of A2B Albania, Alketa Hasani, is the pastor of a church in Elbasan with a congregation of about 30 and yet manages to run so many life-changing projects. We found this very inspirational and encouraging.

"Our team ran a six-day Bible Holiday Club for 40+ children aged 5-16. These are mainly Roma children from financially very poor backgrounds."

As part of the six-week summer programme, each child gets breakfast and a large lunch every day.

MOUNTAINS

The team visited the House of Opportunity and two churches where they took part in the services. They met some of the Family Link families in Elbasan and travelled into the mountains to see how A2B supports them. One of the team, who is a trained acupuncture practitioner, also had acupuncture sessions with most of the A2B staff and volunteers which was most appreciated!

At the weekend the team went swimming in Lake Ochrid in Macedonia and in a small lake near Elbasan. They also enjoyed an Albanian evening of folk dancing with the A2B team.

"Even though it was 40-41 degrees, we rapidly adapted and managed to do all that we hoped," said Jeremy. "We were fortunate to have accommodation in a lovely small air-conditioned hotel in the old Byzantine city walls."

The Bible Holiday Club ran from 9.30am until 12.30pm and the theme was the 'I am' sayings of Jesus. Team members then prepared crafts for the next day, had lunch and a feedback session with the A2B staff and volunteers and got back to the hotel for about 3.30pm.

After a siesta, there was Team Time which involved planning the next day along with a short devotion time, before heading out in the evening to visit or for dinner in a local restaurant with Alketa and some of the volunteers and young men from House of Opportunity.

BLESSING

"The Lord answered all our prayers and we were told the trip was a great blessing to all at A2B," Jeremy said. "We were very blessed to have experienced a small part of the work and witness of the church in Albania and are looking forward to returning.

"We were very touched that the children performed an Irish dance and had drawn Northern Ireland flags everywhere to welcome us. As I said to the A2B staff and volunteer team at our end-of-week dinner, some of us didn't even know where exactly Albania was, but from now on we knew it was in our heart and we would pray for them from now on."

Anyone interested in joining next year's mission trips to Albania or India should contact Jeremy at jermould@gmail.com or on 07896 839488.

'I would rather be giving than getting'

Congratulations to Andrew Kennedy, a parishioner in Broughshane, who was awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) in the King's Birthday Honours in June.

Andrew, a retired Civil Servant, has given many years' service to the governing bodies of local schools, not least Ballykeel Primary School where he has been a governor for more than three decades. His honour was awarded for voluntary service to education and to the community in Ballymena.

Andrew, 78, attended St Colmanell's, Ahoghill, in the early 1980s and later St Patrick's, Ballymena. He joined St Patrick's, Broughshane, eight years ago when he and his wife Jean moved to the village. The couple have three grown-up children - Joanne, Michael and Jonny.

When growing up, Andrew was a member of the BB and later ran the youth club in St Patrick's, Ballymena. Jean was in the choir and the Mothers' Union and the children sang in the choir, while the boys were in the Church Lads' Brigade.

Andrew was on the Select Vestry in Ballymena, and served four years on the Select Vestry in Broughshane, serving for two sessions as People's Churchwarden and two as Rector's Churchwarden.

"I was involved in a lot of church things because I couldn't say no to anything even though I was working full-time in the Civil Service," he says.

He retired from the Civil Service in 2006 after 40 years and recalls how he first became involved in the Board of Governors of Ballykeel Primary School. "Following a

retirement, our rector, the Rev Fred Rusk, asked me to go on the board for four or five months until it was reconstituted. I thought, four months, that would be no problem. Now, more than 30 years later, I am still there!

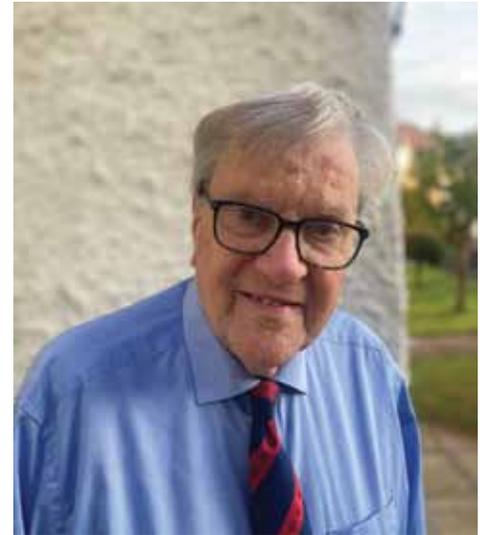
"In those days, the primary school nominated someone for the Board of the secondary school, so I was a governor in Ballee High School [now closed] for about 15 years."

A number of years ago, Andrew was asked to join the Board of Governors of a small primary school that was facing closure. "We had a bit of a fight with the Education Board, but it was too late to save it," he says. "I love a battle, but in this case we didn't win."

Around this time, Andrew also joined the North Eastern Education and Library Board and he remained on the Board until it became part of the Education Authority in 2015.

He found his services were again required to support Kirkinriola Primary, a small country school dealing with falling numbers and an uncertain future. "We had a bit of a fight again, but this time we managed to keep the school open and numbers are well up again," he said.

In addition, Andrew was on the Board of Ballymena Primary School for five years and was on the governing body of Northern Regional College for five years.



Andrew Kennedy BEM.

Andrew says he does all this 'not for any sort of self-aggrandisement or pushing myself forward, but because I enjoy it.'

"I can always find time to do it and slot it in," he says. "It also keeps the brain active. The schools have had issues to be dealt with, it is not just a case of going to meetings and agreeing budgets. Ballykeel Primary is in the middle of the Ballykeel Estate, for example, and the school was falling down around them. It was a big challenge to get a new school, but that has been up since the 1990s.

"I would encourage people to get involved with their local schools to get the Church of Ireland opinion across."

Andrew says he gets emotional when he reflects on his Honour. "It is the fact that someone has thought enough of me to put me forward for it," he says. "I would rather be giving gifts than getting gifts."

Andrew and Jean were at Hillsborough Castle on September 24 and they will travel to London for a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace next year.

Handel's 'Messiah' is coming to a church near you

A staged production of Handel's 'Messiah' featuring professional Northern Irish musicians is touring later this year, with performances in a number of Connor churches.

These include St John's, Malone (November 8); St Patrick's, Whitehead (November 9) St Patrick's, Coleraine (November 16) and Lisburn Cathedral (November 23).

In this unusual production of Handel's 'Messiah,' the church as a setting is key. The 12 professional singers play characters from everyday life who find themselves in this sacred

place. They do not know each other and they have their own reasons for being there but each is in search of something - consolation, affirmation, forgiveness, direction. Some of them carry the concept of a Messiah in their hearts; some lack that and may feel an absence; some are not religious at all.

As they sing through this traditional work, they engage with each other and themselves, ultimately experiencing the transformation from need and despair to understanding and hope.

This production was created in the UK in 2011 by the Merry Opera Company.

It has been brought back by request almost every year since. Audiences report that it gives Handel's 'Messiah' 'new meaning,' 'new invigoration.'

For this year's tour, half the professional cast and the organist are Northern Irish musicians. The Merry Opera Company is grateful to Ulster Touring Opera and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council for financial support.

Tickets are available through www.merryopera.com or by phone on 03336 664466. A proportion of the proceeds will go to the host church.

Interfaith visits are 'richly rewarding'



The Rev Andy Heber, seated centre, and members of Carnmoney Parish received a warm welcome and enjoyed great hospitality when they visited the Mosque in Belfast.

Over the course of eight weeks, a group from Carnmoney Parish Church visited several different faith groups and denominations. This was in response to the parish's 'Issue Facing Christianity' course which ran the previous year focused on the question: 'Do all faiths lead to God?'

Between 20 and 24 people attended each week - many of whom had not attended Carnmoney's midweek courses before.

Parishioner Helen Eccles reflected on the project, saying that visiting and learning about other faiths and religious observances in very diverse buildings had been a richly rewarding experience - 'from entering a Mosque and respectfully adhering to Sharia law on outer footwear removal and head coverings for women, to being warmly welcomed and sharing a supper of spiced chicken, sweets and

Punjabi tea in a Gurdwara or Sikh Temple.'

In the Temple, more than 100 meals are served every Sunday to any callers regardless of their circumstances. Helen added: "The Sikh philosophy is to share with all people everything you have. One fascinating fact we heard was that men do not have their hair cut from birth to death, it is all concealed in the turban."

At the Hindu Temple, Helen said the visitors were 'dazzled by the glorious-coloured robes on the ancient statues of the Goddesses.' They saw different offerings



Offerings at the Hindu Temple.

from the worshippers of fruit, food and flowers spread at their feet. "The meanings of this faith was again carefully explained," she added.

"We were sad on our visit to the Synagogue to hear how few Jewish families are left now to attend the services, and so the lack of finance meant the further deterioration of the building and the ever-constant worry of the disappearance of this once-thriving community."

At the Synagogue, the group was shown the Memorial Room and parishioners recognised many well-known Jewish names from times past, owners of Belfast's large stores long closed.

Helen said the visit to the Buddhist Temple had been 'peaceful and refreshing.' "We learned the benefit of living in the moment, and letting anxiety go. We took part in Sesshin (sitting meditation), starting and finishing with the sonorous sound of a bell. "While treating our visit with respect and conforming to the guidance we were given and also unaccustomed to sitting on the floor, some of our group felt able to ask some positive and searching questions," Helen said.

The group's other visits were to the local Methodist, Presbyterian and St Bernard's Roman Catholic churches. "Many of us would have links with some of these churches and found many similarities with our own Church of Ireland," she said.

"Summing up our experience, in all the places we visited we were treated with the utmost courtesy and had respect for each other. We learned that tolerance in all faiths is key, and no matter what race or creed, we all try to live our lives as perfect and God-centred as we can."

At the end of the eight weeks, the vicar of Carnmoney, the Rev Andy Heber said: "We found the course valuable and enlightening both in understanding other faiths and denominations and what they believe and find important, but also in helping us to firm up much more what we ourselves as Christians believe and what is important to us."

Armoy, Drumtullagh & All Saints' support Fields of Life

The Parishes of St Patrick's, Armoy, Drumtullagh & All Saints' presented £7,500 to Helen D'Arcy from Fields of Life to fund the drilling of a well in East Africa. This was raised by parishioners running events and saving 20p and £1 coins in plastic water bottles. For several years the parishes have sponsored three children through Fields of Life, supporting their education, but they wanted to do more. Fields of Life say support from parishes like Armoy, Drumtullagh & All Saints' will not only bring life-saving water to hundreds of people but will also create meaningful, sustainable change and give hope and health for the long-term. At the cheque presentation are, back row from left: Canon Chris Easton, Leonard Quigg (Drumtullagh). Front row from left: Melanie Dougherty (All Saints'), Helen D'Arcy (Fields of Life) and Beth Dowey (St Patrick's, Armoy).





Deans who attended the Irish Deans' Conference pictured in the Belfast Cathedral Board Room where the meetings were held.

St Anne's hosts Irish Deans' Conference

Belfast Cathedral hosted the 2024 Irish Deans' Conference on Monday and Tuesday, September 9 and 10.

Special guest was the Very Rev Dr Sarah Rowland Jones, Dean of St Davids Cathedral, Wales, who gave a talk following the Conference Dinner on the Monday night.

The deans were welcomed by the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, and the conference began with a Service of Holy Communion in the Cathedral's

Chapel of Unity before lunch was served on Monday.

The opening session that afternoon included talks by Trevor Douglas, Belfast Cathedral General Manager, and Andrew Bass of the Benefact Trust on the topic 'Growing Cathedrals.' There was also a tour of Belfast Cathedral and some free time for the guests to enjoy before

attending Choral Evensong with the Choir of Belfast Cathedral.

The Conference Dinner was held in the Ramada Hotel, and afterwards the Dean of St Davids spoke on the subject 'From the Foreign Office to St Davids - a Personal Odyssey to a Place of Pilgrimage.'

Tuesday morning began with Morning Prayers in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit in St Anne's, followed by a presentation by Connor Diocesan Communications Officer Karen Bushby on the topic 'Communicating Cathedrals.'

The deans then heard from the Rev Karen Campbell, Good Relations Officer with the Irish Council of Churches, who spoke on 'From Grand Rapids to Grand Designs, High Liturgy and Multi Culturalism for a Cathedral context.'

Before lunch on the Tuesday, there was a visit to the Belfast Whiskey Museum in nearby Hill Street, and for those deans who wished to take up the opportunity, there was an optional visit to Titanic Museum on the Tuesday afternoon.

Joining Dean Forde and Dr Sarah Rowland Jones for the conference were Dean Nigel Crossey, Kilmore; Dean Nigel Dunne, Cork; Dean Dermot Dunne, Christ Church, Dublin; Dean Liz Fitzgerald, Raphoe; Dean Shane Forster, Armagh; Dean Kenny Hall, Clogher; Dean Isobel Jackson, Kildare; Dean Diane Matchett, Tuam; Dean Paul Mooney, Ferns; Dean Bruce Hayes, Waterford and Dean Niall Sloan, Limerick.

Ordination of Priests

Two new priests were ordained for Connor Diocese at a service held in St James' Parish Church, Ballycastle, on St Peter's Day, Sunday June 29.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, ordained the Rev Shona Bell for the Parish of Ramoan and Culfeightrin (Ballycastle) and the Rev Cameron Mack for Belfast Cathedral. The preacher was the Ven Barry Forde, Archdeacon of Belfast.

Shona is originally from Scotland and moved to Northern Ireland in 1998 to work for the Corrymeela Community. She is married with one son and served as a deacon in Holy Trinity, Portrush.

Cameron is married to Megan and has worked as a carer, as a civil servant in Cardiff, and in HR administration. He spent his deacon year in Belfast Cathedral.



At the Service of Ordination in Ballycastle on June 29 are the Rev Shona Bell; Bishop George Davison; and the Rev Cameron Mack.



News in pictures: Clockwise, from top left: Connor Big Sing Service at Lisburn Cathedral on September 22 --- Connor Big Sing --- Workshop on the afternoon of Connor Big Sing. All Big Sing pictures by Norman Briggs --- Captain the Cruising Kitty and owner Holly Hennessy with Dean Stephen Forde at Belfast Cathedral's Pets' Service on September 22 --- Clergy from Antrim Rural Deanery which raised £2,307 for Operation Smile at its midweek services during Lent --- Archdeacon Paul Dundas with Kathleen Chapman on her 105th birthday on June 25 --- D Day Commemorations in Magheragall on June 6 --- The annual Down and Dromore and Connor Organ Scholarship Service held this year in Belfast Cathedral.