

## Focus on Connor Diocese



# Karen Bushby, Diocesan Communications Officer for Connor, contributes this month's Diocesan Focus article

Lives have been touched across Connor Diocese as new ministries continue to develop and existing ministries flourish.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in north Belfast, where the Connor Centre of Mission in Shankill Road is reaching into the community and resourcing churches in the area.

Connect Base has earned the Royal seal of approval following a visit by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for Belfast, Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle CBE (see *Gazette*, 17th November).

Mrs Jay-O'Boyle described the Centre of Mission as "a tremendous initiative" and proposes to reference the project in her next report to Her Majesty the Queen.

### YOUTH MINISTRY

It has been a busy year for our young people. In March, Connor Youth Forum led an event in Jordanstown, undertaking responsibility for everything from audio-visuals to biblical sessions. Two Forum members also spoke eloquently at Diocesan Council.

The Big Connor Contest was held in Glenavy in February. While the Shield went to St Paul's, Lisburn, this was a day when everyone was a winner.

Summer brought the fun of Summer Madness, when the Connor young people were joined in Glenarm by 27 Americans and their leaders from Christ in Youth from Arkansas, USA. Christ in Youth stayed for Streetreach

in Glenavy and Crumlin. The young people ran activities including a litter pick, car wash, lads' and dads' night and a barbecue.

Then it was off to Castlewellan Castle for the annual youth weekend from 8th-10th September, with sessions led by Christian drama group *Play it by Ear*. The year will end with a Christmas Cracker in Ballymena on 2nd December.

### CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

The story of St Patrick was brought to life in a spectacular way by Connor Children's Council, led by Children's Project Officer Jill Hamilton and Church Army Evangelist Karen Webb, when they transformed St Anne's Cathedral for five days in March. Hundreds of families flocked to *Patrick's Mysterious Adventure* to learn more about Ireland's patron saint in a fun and educational way.

Jill also organised Connor's third annual Equipped Training morning in Randalstown. Workshops were led by *Play it by Ear*, Karen Webb and Youth Officer Christina Baillie.

### NOTES FROM THE BISHOP'S DIARY

Last November, the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Revd Alan Abernethy, hosted a Clergy Quiet Morning with guest speaker the Very Revd Dr Pete Wilcox, former Dean of Liverpool and now Bishop of Sheffield.

There was excellent support for the Bishop of Connor's annual Lent seminars which



The Connor Big Sing in Lisburn Cathedral (Photo: Matthew Cairns)

took place in Jordanstown, Bushmills and Lisburn Cathedral. The topic was Stewards of Creation.

Connor Synod took place in Carrickfergus in October. At this, Bishop Alan spoke about his recent health scare. He said he would be taking a sabbatical next year during which he proposed to write a book.

### DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATION

Diocesan administration underwent major changes at the start of 2017. Connor and Down & Dromore now have their own administrative structure and staff, working directly to their Bishop.

Bishop Alan said this allowed each diocese to develop its own priorities and respond to changing circumstances. It enabled clear lines of responsibility and management, integrated mission, ministry and support for parishes; ensured better

stewardship; and created a clear identity for each diocese.

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Connor MU celebrated the 130th anniversary of the MU in Ireland by welcoming All-Ireland President Phyllis Grothier who was on a pilgrimage to visit all 12 dioceses.

The MU held its Festival Service in St Anne's Cathedral in April with speaker Lady Christine Eames. In June, Valerie Ash was one of five Diocesan Presidents to attend a Garden Party hosted by the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

The first Connor Big Sing took place in Lisburn Cathedral on 17th September, with 80 people doing workshops in contemporary Christian praise and 240 attending evening worship incorporating several new songs. This event will return in September 2018.

St Anne's Cathedral said

farewell to Dean John Mann at Choral Evensong on 6th September. Dean Mann has moved to the Diocese of Salisbury. His successor, Archdeacon Stephen Forde, rector of Larne and Inver with Glynn and Raloo, will be installed as Dean of Belfast on 4th February 2018.

On 19th September St Colman's Parish, Dunmurry, held a service of rededication and thanksgiving following a fire which devastated the church in January 2016.

### MISSION AT HOME AND ABROAD

An appeal by Bishop Hilary of Yei to the people of Connor to help alleviate suffering caused by civil war in South Sudan prompted a significant response, with around £11,000 donated through CMS Ireland within weeks.

Greenisland parish has been helping people at home and abroad with a cut-price shop in its car park! Money raised by African Children Ministries is sent to Kenya where it has been used for projects including a feeding programme and installing solar lights in mud huts.

In February, members of Lisburn Cathedral's Mettle youth group met Derrick from the Abaana New Life choir. Derrick's life has been transformed thanks to Abaana and to sponsorship provided by Mettle. He was in Ireland with the choir on its first international tour.

A team from Christ Church, Lisburn, visited St Apollo School in the Diocese of Luwero, Uganda, where they made school desks, organised activities and helped complete a latrine for adolescent girls. This visit was part of a long-term partnership with the Diocese and the school.

Another team to visit Uganda this year was a 16-strong group from Holy Trinity, Woodburn, who went in partnership with Fields of Life.

*Diocesan Focus articles are scheduled for the last issue of the Gazette each month. Next: Limerick and Killaloe, Friday 22nd December.*



Bishop Alan is pictured at his Lent Talk in Jordanstown with members of the reorganised Connor administration team: (from left) Elaine Wright, Rosemary Patterson, Audra Irvine and Helen Conville. (Photo: Karen Bushby)



Working hard at the carwash during Streetreach in Crumlin and Glenavy (Photo: Karen Bushby)