

GLEN CAMP MOVES INDOORS!

When members of Glen Community Church, Diocese of Down and Dromore, realised that their annual camping weekend would have to be cancelled because of lockdown - they brought their camp indoors!

The team at the Glen planned a full programme of activities for their Bank Holiday weekend (May 8-10), and families took part from either a den built indoors or a tent pitched in their back garden.

The challenges and devotions all came under the banner 'Keep Connected.' The Rev Adrian Dorrian led devotions, Julie Currie, Diocesan Children's Officer, presented crafts, Ashley from the Glen taught 'The Lord's Prayer' in Makaton, and the memory verse was taught by Sharon from the Kids' Team.

"Days before we began the weekend of activities, the families who pre-registered received a free goodie bag filled with all the resources for them to complete the crafts as well as some treats and other resources for exploring family faith," said Stephen Doherty, leader of the Glen Church.

"It was so good, in these uncertain times, to be able to help families of all ages focus on God and stay connected with the church and each other."



Glen Church leader Stephen Doherty camping out.

'BIG ISSUE' ONLINE

The 'Big Issue Ireland' magazine has launched a digital edition and appealing for public help to ensure its continuation.

The online 'Big Issue' can be read at www.irelandsbigissuemagazine.com, with readers encouraged to make a donation.



The Rev Kathleen Young (later Brown), left, and the Rev Irene Templeton on the occasion of their ordination as priests in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on June 24 1990.

'I FELT IT WAS RIGHT TO TEST THE CALL'

By Karen Bushby

June 24 is a milestone anniversary in the history of the Church of Ireland and the ordination of women priests in the Anglican Church.

On that day in 1990, the Rev Kathleen Young and the Rev Irene Templeton were the first women to be ordained Anglican priests anywhere in Europe.

As she looks ahead to this 30th anniversary, Kathleen, who is now retired and worships in St Nicholas Parish Church, Carrickfergus, Diocese of Connor, reflects on her priesthood.

Kathleen was brought up in St Columba's Parish, Diocese of Down and Dromore. She trained in physiotherapy and worked abroad before she and her husband Brian moved back to Northern Ireland. Brian died in 1982.

Encouraged by the Rev Desmond McCreary, her rector in Knockbreda Parish, Kathleen went to Queen's University to study for a Bachelor of Divinity (BD). "For me it was a purely academic and therapeutic exercise," she recalls. "You don't have so much time to worry about your grief if you have an essay to get in."

At the age of 42, Kathleen had

no expectations of ordination. But in 1985, the Church of Ireland passed legislation allowing the ordination of women to the diaconate.

"I didn't know where I stood on women's ministry myself so I had to sort my own head on that," recalls Kathleen. "My ministry stands on the fact that it was women who went from the tomb to say that Jesus was alive. My commission is the same - to go and spread the news that Jesus is alive."

As she was considering her future, the first woman accepted for ordination, Dean Katharine Poulton, now rector of Julianstown, Diocese of Meath and Kildare, began training in Dublin.

"Coming to the end of the summer term in my penultimate year at Queen's, I was reading Ezekiel 3. "It said go to your own people, I am sending you to your own people, not people of a strange tongue or language," says Kathleen.

"That was the moment I felt God was calling me to be ordained. I felt it was right to test the call. I spoke to my rector and the process began."

Following an interview with Bishop Robin Eames, she was sent for selection in Dublin. "I was of a generation that did not

do interviews. You just got jobs," she says. "When I came to do the selection interview it was a daunting thing!"

Kathleen was successful and joined Katharine in training for ordination as a permanent deacon, believing it might be 10 years before she would be priested.

She and Katharine shared accommodation in the Theological College with their male colleagues. "It was the best thing to happen as we were in the middle of everything that went on," recalls Kathleen.

Kathleen was 46 when she started at Theological College in 1986. The following year, Katharine was the first woman to be ordained deacon in the Church of Ireland, and in 1988, Kathleen was also ordained into a permanent deaconate for the curacy of Carrickfergus.

Irene followed a year later. "Irene was the person who fought for the ordination of women. She was up front and she worked for it. It is because of her that we were ordained," says Kathleen. Sadly, Irene died just a few years later.



My ministry stands on the fact that it was women who went from the tomb to say that Jesus was alive



There were murmurs that the legislation to ordain women to the priesthood was closer than originally thought. By chance, Kathleen was at the 1990 General Synod on the day the motion to ordain women priests passed its third reading.

"The House of Bishops voted, something they normally did not do," Kathleen recalls. "It was not a unanimous vote. The atmosphere was quiet and serious, and there was no cheering when the result was announced.

"I was conscious that there were friends of mine present who found it very difficult to accept the concept



The Rev Kathleen Brown pictured following her retirement in 2007.

of women priests and I did not have any feeling of celebration. For some, their world had collapsed."

Just a few weeks later, Kathleen and Irene were ordained priests by Bishop Samuel Poyntz in a service at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

"The cathedral was packed with people from all over the world and the service passed in a bit of a blur," remembers Kathleen. "There were some very special moments.

"I also remember the interviews. The media was there from all over the world, and answering questions was not something I was good at. Fortunately, one of my cleric friends had told me to write down what I wanted to say. It was like being a film star!"

That evening, away from the glare of the media, Kathleen celebrated her first Holy Communion with parishioners in Carrickfergus. "That, to me, was wonderful. It was very, very special for it was a service for friends and family. The privilege of that celebration of Communion is something I will never forget."

It was the first time a woman in the Anglican Church in Europe had celebrated Communion.

"People had to change their way of thinking. I had to give people time - even the clergy - to get used to the idea." Kathleen says. "The people of St Nicholas Parish were very welcoming and supportive and gave me a chance."

After two years as curate, Kathleen was instituted rector of St Paul's and St Barnabas in Belfast in October 1990, where she remained until her retirement in 2007.

"Again, people gave me a chance. Those were 15 very happy years for me, even though we were in the

midst of the Troubles. It was a time of seeing God working and his love expressed in a community which is deprived and has suffered. It was good to be part of a community which has a wonderful, generous heart, but which had experienced atrocities," she said.

The first woman in the Chapter of Belfast Cathedral, Kathleen married the late Alfie Brown in 1998. She was awarded an MBE June 2007 for services to the community.

Kathleen remains a member of St Nicholas Parish, Carrickfergus, where she also helped out for a number of year after her retirement.

TRIBUTES FROM THOSE WHO ALSO LEAD THE WAY

It is a privilege to be in ministry, and thanks to the impetus of women who have gone before me, a great privilege to be a bishop who is female, and a wife and mother.

Without the commitment, vision and vocation of women like Irene, Kathleen, Katharine and many others, we would not be celebrating 30 years of women priests. I am profoundly grateful for their leadership and I remain indebted to their perseverance. It is a solemn yet joyful vocation and it has been a delight to respond to God's call.

The Most Rev Pat Storey, Bishop of Meath and Kildare - first female bishop in the Church of Ireland.

Congratulations to Kathleen on the 30th anniversary of her ordination to the priesthood. We overlapped in college as we prepared for ordination.

This year I celebrate the 33rd anniversary of my ordination as a deacon and 29th as a priest. The years have flown by, in ministry with and to diverse and wonderful people. It is hard to imagine the Church of Ireland without women clergy who, like the men, bring a variety of gifts to all they do.

Dean Katharine Poulton - first woman ordained deacon in the Church of Ireland.