NOW HE WHO SUPPLIES SEED TO THE SOWER AND BREAD FOR FOOD WILL ALSO SUPPLY AND INCREASE YOUR STORE OF SEED AND WILL ENLARGE THE HARVEST OF YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

2 CORINTHIANS 9:10

THANKS FOR HARVEST, HEALING AND HOPE

IN THE LAST DAYS, GOD SAYS, I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL PEOPLE. YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS WILL PROPHESY. YOUR YOUNG WILL SEE VISIONS. YOUR ELDERS WILL DREAM DREAMS.”

ACTS 2:17 COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE
Caption Competition

Irene Hewitt’s wit wins the day!

Noel is saying “its lockdown not lock up”.

Does this look good? I’ve just run round the corner.

Rev Peter Ferguson runs marathon round his parish.

Noel at sound desk for drive through church.

Archdeacon Huss begins his bike visits.

Diocese of Raphoe signs up to recycling charter.

Bishop Andrew and Dean Raymond at the Derry Deanery.

Knock and the door shall be opened. Dean “not this door, not this Covid 19”.
The thread running through this particular edition is one of thanksgiving and gratitude for God’s blessings. As I write it is harvest time when we give thanks for our farmers and the fruits of the earth at our harvest festival church services.

In this issue we also gratefully unpack and celebrate the various meanings hidden in the title “n:vision” which is laden with themes such as envisioning (plans unfolding across the diocese), insight (creative projects at parish level), hindsight (reflection on recent church achievements at home and abroad), foresight (acknowledgement of inspired leadership and future initiatives) and physical eyesight (the gift of sight and the need for guide dogs as we consider the daily challenges experienced by the blind). In this issue we dip into the lives of representatives of two essential services - a farmer and an optometrist.

At this time we are grateful that some of our churches are open again for public worship. We are carefully emerging into a world of social distancing where space and gaps between people can and should be interpreted in a positive light. Recently, as I watched a programme on Japanese gardens I was introduced to the term “ma” which is a traditional Japanese concept expressed in art and in cultural practices such as ikebana (flower arranging). Ma means negative space or empty space which at first sight appears to separate but which in reality connects and is full of potential and promise. Ma is connective space, the creative silence between the notes that make the music. It is the space within the pot which is the essence of the pot.

Reflecting upon all this I am grateful that, for God, space is never a void. It is the interpersonal meeting-place where Jesus Christ as the One Mediator is the in-between God who transforms the negative space of social distancing and holds us all together in communion with him.

As we draw closer to the November season of grateful remembrance, we can envisage the War dead and all our deceased parishioners who, together with our Lord, populate that precious in-between space that links us all together as Church. This has been strikingly visualised in recent years at some November church commemorative services with the appearance of life-size Perspex cut-out WW1 soldier figures occupying pew spaces as a reminder of the faith handed down from all those parishioners who sat there many years ago and whose legacy is still with us.

Finally, I want to register thanks to our Bishop, Andrew, who sanctioned the return of n:vision in print format to all parishes around the diocese.

Rev Canon Katie McAteer, the Editor
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59 AND FINALLY...
Harvest Thanksgiving is a time of rejoicing. How right and good it is that every year we thank God for his miracle of seed time and harvest. More than ever we need to be reminded of God’s gift of life in food and in the abundance which sustains all our lives. It is so easy to forget his loving providence or to take it for granted.

Today, in the midst of our abundance, we must remember those millions of our fellow human beings who go hungry in our world, through no fault of their own, through human error or political manipulation, through bad harvests or fearful natural disasters. In fact, when you think about it, it seems almost a crime to be living in such an affluent country as ours where no one need go hungry. Perhaps when we think of those in real need it will help us to put what we think of as our problems and concerns into a better perspective. They are so small and so unimportant in the face of poverty starvation and death.

We humans are an acquisitive lot. We are rarely satisfied, and generally speaking, the more we have the more we want. That’s why we ought to remember that Harvest Thanksgiving is the festival of the things we need and that is not the same as the things we would like to possess.

Jesus taught his followers to pray “Give us today our daily bread.” Bread for today and leave tomorrow for God. Remember how in the wilderness the children of Israel were given the Manna? They were told to collect just enough for the day, one day at a time, when they collected more the sweet flakes went sour and rotten. In our Lord’s parable, the greedy man who filled his granary, then built a new one to take the surplus, so as to make sure all was well and that he had plenty in store, died that very night. It is possible to possess everything and have nothing. The point of all this is not to suggest that we should be reckless and irresponsible, rather it is to help us make the distinction between what we really need and the greediness which is truly unhealthy. I have met plenty of happy givers in life. I have yet to meet a happy taker. “Give us today our daily bread.” - if there happens to be some jam to go with it so much the better! However, let us remember as we celebrate the gifts of harvest that it is for what we really need that we are asked to pray.

In conclusion a slightly different outlook. A boy aged 16 living in a simple country village several hundred years ago wrote these lines:

Wide fields of graine along a valley spread,  
The show’rs of raine mature the swelling vine;  
I see the Lord is multiplying Breade,  
I see him turning water into wine;

A perceptive reminder that God’s miracles of love do not end with the Harvest Home. For continually he works even more wonderful miracles in our hearts and minds helping us to become the kind of people we would like to be, turning our thoughts to the needs of others, giving us the inspiration to do all we can to help, leading us to a fuller and more Christian-like concern with the world of suffering, despair, poverty and sorrow.

“Lord, what we do is little enough, but take it, and as you took the bread and the fishes long ago feed the multitude”. Help us, in our time of rejoicing, to be thankful for your bounty to us, to praise you for your goodness, to be more content with what we have and to be mindful of the needs of others.

Canon John Merrick
When my children were younger we had a little saying in our house that was aimed at helping them learn manners. They knew the phrase very well: 'Please and thank you, they are the magic words.'

We know that good manners are not only important for small children but for adults as well. So I want to begin these few words by sharing good manners. The first thing I want to say is thank you.

I want to thank you for supporting your parishes, both prayerfully and practically over this very strange period of time. Thank you for ensuring that the mission and ministry of your parish continues and thank you for your generosity in a time of financial uncertainty. I want to thank the clergy for their diligence and innovation in ensuring continued pastoral care in a very challenging context and for providing opportunities for worship both online and now, increasingly, back in church. Thank you for rising to the challenge and adapting to the changes brought by the Covid-19 restrictions. As we continue to live through these testing times I also want to say please.

Please continue to do all you can to support your parish.
Please continue to pray, in fact pray like you have never prayed before!
Please continue to take every opportunity to serve God and His people.
Please continue to be generous in supporting those in need.

Over the last couple of months as lockdown restrictions have eased I have been able to visit parishes and share in Sunday worship again. Our services feel both familiar and different. Familiar, as we gather in the buildings we love and share in praise and prayer. Different, as we live with the continued restrictions that are so necessary in keeping ourselves safe. It is clear that the guidelines and restrictions will be with us for a considerable time yet. My experience of being back in church has been overwhelmingly positive. I have felt a great sense of gratitude to those who have worked so hard to ensure a safe reopening and have experienced authentic worship, albeit in a different way than normal. In John’s gospel Jesus says “God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.’ The unwelcome journey imposed upon us by coronavirus has reminded us that we can worship God at home, online and in church and we can worship authentically in spirit and in truth. As our parish churches reopen can I say please support your local parish and thank you to clergy and Select Vestries for making sure all the appropriate guidelines have been followed.

At the beginning of lockdown when all seemed so uncertain and fearful I was reminded of the words of Jesus to Peter that still bring encouragement and hope to His followers, Matthew 16:18 ‘I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.’ It is in the confidence that we are God’s church that we continue to serve and worship Him in these uncertain times.

+Andrew Derry & Raphoe
Andrea O’Hagan has Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) and lives in Derry-Londonderry with her two children. She also has a loyal companion in guide dog Becky whom she calls her ‘best friend’.

Janice is in a My Guide Partnership with Andrea. Before lockdown they would meet up once a week for a few hours for a walk and a chat. Janice said; “I met Andrea and Becky, Andrea’s dog, about six months ago. Andrea and I go out for a walk and this gives Becky the opportunity of a free run and some exercise in the local parks.”

While a guide dog offers Andrea independence and freedom to get out and about, it still involves a lot of work, so time with Janice is precious for her and Becky. “Becky is able to run about and I’m not worrying the whole time about her because sometimes you don’t hear dogs coming. You don’t hear cyclists coming about, or people out just walking. So, it’s nice to have a person with you who can see everything around and can let you know in time and you’re not getting anxious. I enjoy the walk the way I should do and I know Becky is getting enjoyment out of it too.”

Unfortunately COVID-19 has truncated Andrea and Janice’s partnership, and the ability to meet up in person with each other. However, the pair still keep in regular contact with each other; showing the strength and value of the partnership. Andrea says, “I know that it’s a bit curtailed at the moment but I feel that My Guide is a great way to encourage people to get out and about, increase confidence and to fight off depression, loneliness and isolation. My Guide will be even more important as we come out of lockdown. I am also volunteering with My Guide, supporting the team with volunteer catch ups and keeping-in-touch calls over the next few months.”

While Guide Dogs is known for the life-changing dogs themselves, My Guide offers even more opportunities for people with a visual impairment, of which there are an estimated 51,000 living in Northern Ireland. (https://www.rnib.org.uk/nb-online/eye-health-statistics)

Andrea has noticed some of the issues of living with vision impairment in the current climate and asks the public to be mindful of this; “My dog Becky isn’t trained to social distance. She can’t sniff out the hand sanitiser or know how long the queue in front of me is. In one way I’ve been lucky that my kids have been off school to support me in guiding and the new regulations but it can still be incredibly stressful for me - but Becky has adapted so well.”

Research conducted by the charity in the first week of June found that just 22% of the general public would feel ‘completely comfortable’ offering to help someone with sight loss while social distancing measures were in place. Reasons for a lack of comfort amongst this group included being concerned about making physical contact (37%).

Andrea, who is also volunteering for the charity in another capacity notes: “It’s great to have the My Guide service, which we hope to resume as soon as it is safe to do so. It’s not only vital for guide dog owners like myself, but also for other people with vision impairment who use, for example, a cane. It builds confidence and boosts self-esteem and morale, and it’s something to look forward to each week.”

Not every My Guide Partnership includes a guide dog. And though for many this would be a bonus, volunteer Janice had some initial reservations; “I wasn’t really a dog lover but now I am – Becky is very gentle and is a big part of Andrea’s life and it’s just wonderful that Andrea now has the trust in me to guide her, and I am more confident that I am doing it the right way. While the training was excellent, and inspirational, I just didn’t realise how difficult it would be for a blind person to put their trust in someone to be guided. It was amazing and I was glad I could do it. I really do love doing it. The partnership has grown and developed so quickly and I look forward to every wee trip – we just laugh and laugh and laugh.”
There are currently 102 guide dog partnerships in Northern Ireland and 57 My Guide partnerships. Becky is a reddish yellow Labrador and is Andrea’s third guide dog.

The charity Guide Dogs exists to provide life-changing services to the 360,000 people who are registered blind or partially sighted, and the two million people in the UK living with sight loss. We believe no-one with sight loss should be left out of life and we want everyone who experiences sight loss to be able to live the life they choose and feel confident, independent and supported in the world.

We’re a UK-wide charity, founded in 1934, and we are best known for our world-famous guide dogs. But our work now encompasses so much more. In recent years, we have expanded our services beyond our dogs to help thousands of people, of all ages and with different needs, to reach their potential and lead fulfilling lives. Find out more at guidedogs.org.uk. To help us continue our life-changing work, we rely on donations - every pound raised makes a difference.
Taking on the temporary and (as I then thought!) short-term role of Priest-in-Charge of Clondehorkey and Mevagh just prior to Easter, 2018 opened up a most interesting and enriching experience. Donegal, of course, has always had a special resonance for me, and in this article I want to celebrate what, for me, is a special place.

From a geographical point of view, growing up in the south west corner of County Fermanagh, the nearest sizable urban centre was the South Donegal town of Ballyshannon. At an early age I was introduced to the works of the local Bard, William Allingham, and thanks to his evocative and beautiful poetic descriptions of local places, I was inspired to dabble in verse. However, not only was South Donegal very much part of our hinterland, but family links with the area go back centuries. My Great, Great, Great Grandfather, William Irwin grew up close to Donegal Town at the end of the 18th century and moved to the Townland of Slattinagh in South West Fermanagh on his marriage to Elizabeth Fowler circa 1818. Incidentally, the Fowlers not only grew flax on their 15 acre holding but were also spinners and weavers and eked out a living by making hats from the linen. That same 15 acre farm and the house where William and Elizabeth set up home are still in the possession of the Irwin family two hundred years later. The area of Donegal south of Barnesmore Gap was familiar to me from an early age, but North Donegal I really only began to explore after meeting my wife Deirdre in the early 1980’s. Deirdre grew up in Strabane and her parents had a caravan at Portsalon on the Fanad peninsula.

And so, after many Summer holidays I became familiar, not only with Fanad but with the whole North and West Donegal area, with frequent trips to places like Dunfanaghy, Glenveagh, Gweedore and the Rosses etc. However, Portsalon and Fanad will always have a special resonance:

MEMORIES OF FANAD

O for a Summer’s day to walk Portsalon’s pleasant strand
and feel on my feet the cool embrace of the soft and gentle sand.
To hear the twitter and screech of birds, high in the sky above
and scan around Lough Swilly’s shore a land I dearly love.

To sit on the pier at evening time and hear the seagulls wait
and watch the rays of the setting sun catch the folds of a flowing sail.
To ponder the days when boats came here, laden with goods galore,
and the pulley, now seized with years of rust, raised cargo from the shore.

To wonder along the country lanes, scented by sweet woodbine,
and see in the fulsome hedgerows the fuchsia lanterns shine.
And in among the heather-clad hills, and the blaze of gorse on the braes
the babbling brooks their music make, relentless as the days.

O what a thrill of a Summer morn to walk to Rosnakill,
and see the sheep a grazing on many a rolling hill.
Then up the road to Tamney, or down to Kerrykeel,
and take the way by Mulroy Bay; for beauty it’s ideal!

(March, 2020)

Over the years of annual retreats at Portsalon, no holiday was considered complete without a trip to Ards Forest Park, Ballymore. This to us was a fascinating place, with huge scope for rambles through an area of stunning and varied scenery. This poem explains why Ards Forest enticed us back again and again:

ARDS FOREST

Through the darksome tunnel there’s a wonderland of green,
and from each rolling path a feast of nature to be seen.
The trees, like stately sentinels, soar upwards to the sky,
with a tapestry of branches delightful to the eye.

Throughout this sylvan idyll I wonder as I please.
Along these sheltered pathways I find myself at ease.
For in these cozy corridors I’m saved from wind and rain
thanks to thickset shrubbery that obly takes the strain.

And if I take the carriageway I spy a strip of sand
which beckons every tourist to the pleasures of the strand.
Along the way the eye is drawn to pathways right and left.
Each a vital fibre in a sylvan warp and weft.

This forest is enchanting, for like a giant maze,
it makes the traveller choose from a multitude of ways
of seeing nature’s bounty and its treasures on display.
And so, we taste the pleasures and come back another day!

(April, 2020)
Here I wander at day break to greet the rising sun.
Here I wander at twilight when the day is nearly done.
For this is a charming and lovely place
that evokes the sense of a warm embrace.
Hues of brown and yellow and green
in nature’s bounty can here be seen.
The path leads through a kaleidoscope;
a chameleon on a plunging slope.
And down below, on the valley floor
a gushing stream makes its way to the shore.
Meandering in and out of sight,
its music prevails by day and night.
And so, I come here in light or shade
for my heart is warmed by its serenade.

(March, 2020)

A JOURNEY BEYOND THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Crossing over the Mountain Top, just north of Letterkenny,
a panorama opens up as lovely and fair as any.
So magical the scene below; the eye darts about with a flourish.
And looming over this verdant space is the stately bulk of Muckish.

Up and down o’er a medley of hills, the road leads to Kilmacrennan,
where Saint Columba went to school by the pleasant banks of the Leannan.
You climb the hill to Termon and to Bearnas’ lonely pass
where the silence is only broken by sheep after tufts of grass.

And yet in days of yore was heard, loud noise within this gap.
For along this way came rolling stock; part of the railway map.
As you leave this sleep defile you pass through a lofty bridge,
built long ago so that trains might go by the top of a narrow ridge.

Out on the open road again, Muckish once more comes in sight.
So clear you can see the detail of its scree and its pale rock shining bright.
You wind your way to Creeslough, of beautiful sites there’s none better.
Immortalised by Percy French in his song, The Emigrant’s Letter.

From here you savour some stunning views of the Ards and an arm of the ocean,
that runs right down from the Castle of Doe, and moves in and out in quick motion.
Up hill and down dale on this tourist trail you finally see Ballymore,
set high on a hill with its Church and its School and views right down to the shore.

(March, 2020)

The reader will have noticed that these poems were composed during the most severe part of the lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic when so many people were cocooned in their homes and gardens. Let us hope and pray that in the not too distant future we shall be able once again to wander freely through such beautiful places as my beloved Donegal.
As a child in I remember being awe-struck by Rosa Parkes, who dared to make a stand and sit on a bus seat reserved for white people only. I was glued to images and clips of Martin Luther King, delivering great orations and the infamous words that stuck in my mind were, “I have a dream”.

I was too young to understand the intricacies, but I knew something was amiss and he was trying to put it right. He did indeed have a dream, a clear vision and 50 years later we who walk with Christian footsteps are still following in pursuit of this same vision.

Later I became aware of his letter to fellow clergy in 1963 in which he wrote, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Where have we gone awry? I look around my garden and I enjoy dahlias, lupins, clematis, acers, lilies... I love a square of dark chocolate... I investigate a family link, to discover connections with the sugar trade and I am uncomfortable with that. Today the poorest people in Africa, Asia, Latin America and small island states bear the brunt of the climate crisis and once again I feel sad, uncomfortable and an accompanying sense of outrage. I remind myself that whilst experiences of life have a time and a context, there is never an excuse for ‘man’s inhumanity to man’.

Mothers’ Union has worked for over 140 years towards the vision of a world where God’s love is shown through loving, respectful and flourishing relationships. We have been created equal in God’s sight and Mothers’ Union calls for an end to injustice and systematic racism. We pray that as God’s people we can unite in prayer and action to help find a compassionate and lasting solution to racism, wherever it is found. We stand in solidarity with all who face discrimination of any form.

Recently Thembsie Mchunu, Mothers’ Union Zonal Trustee in South Africa spoke of her perspective on the Black Lives Matter movement:

“For me, going down on my knees and praying is the only weapon, because God is my strength and even for my brothers and sisters in the USA. God promised that two or three praying together, He would hear the prayers. God said, “Love the Lord God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it, “Love your neighbour as yourself.”
“As human beings who are made with God’s image, we need to portray that love towards each other. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.”

Nelson Mandela said, “No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

How can we achieve a future in the name of Christ that actively combats racism and discrimination? Our Christian faith encourages us daily to question, rethink and renew our minds. May we first listen, pray, read, learn, and inwardly digest to enhance our own understanding. In so doing we become better placed to reflect and act together to portray God’s love in action in our communities.

Mothers’ Union will continue to highlight injustice wherever it may be. Together, we will continue to work towards a vision to bring about equity and fairness in society whilst reminding ourselves that on that journey Christ’s amazing love “demands my soul, my life, my all.” (Isaac Watts)

“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

Teresa of Ávila
Things have not gone well in Latin America. It is a region which is under-resourced in health care provision and it has struggled to cope with the surge in demand due to the covid pandemic.

At one time on the black market, canisters of oxygen were trading for $1,000 USD in the Amazonian region of Perú. This was one of the extreme measures people were taking in order just to breathe. With 80 per cent of the region’s scarce intensive care beds being taken up looking after the covid patients, South America is about to head into the height of the winter flu season, which will bring an extra unwelcome dimension to the unfolding catastrophe. If things weren’t bad enough, some high ranking officials have been accused of the misuse of emergency covid pandemic funds. It seems that corruption is still around every corner. Society and the economy appear to have well and truly ‘gone south’.

However, in this gloomy picture there is light. Along with the rest of the church around the world, South American pastors and congregations have been learning to adjust and find new ways of doing church. In a region noted for placing a high value on interpersonal relationships, these new ‘at a distance’ relationships appear to be functioning well in the various church settings. Zoom and WhatsApp have taken on a new relevance with many people as they actively participate in church life through the week. Various digital platforms have enabled Sunday worship and allowed mid week gatherings to continue. Even new Alpha courses have started up online in places like Buenos Aires, where 50 participants had signed up.

Many Latin American countries were applauded for their quick reaction to the threat of Covid-19, with swift lockdowns and the closing of borders to limit the spread of the virus. However, the general lack of social security has meant that many citizens have had to look for work otherwise they might starve. This has caused a new surge in cases observed during the start of July. Even Brazil Premier, Mr. Bolsonaro, has succumbed to the virus which for weeks he famously dismissed as a trifling cold.

Contrast this with Paraguayan Premier, Mario Abdo Benítez, who at the beginning of the crisis encouraged the nation to turn to prayer. The recent Paraguayan statistics are remarkable. Nineteen people have died, out of around 2,100 cases, in a population of 7 million (about 2 people per million inhabitants). Neighbouring Bolivia had more than 31,000 cases and over 1,000 casualties among its over 11 million inhabitants. The Paraguayan President Benítez was a past pupil at St Andrew’s College, where South American Mission Society (SAMS) Ireland has had a long association. Many SAMS sponsored volunteer teachers have travelled from Ireland to work at this school over the years.

South America needs to continue to be a focus of mission more than ever. It may have a reputation for being at the ends of the earth, but the region should not be far from our hearts and minds. SAMS continues to have many strategic Gospel partnerships with church leaders and practitioners of social change. Your prayers and ongoing support are greatly valued. For further information and interviews please visit the SAMS Ireland webpage (www.samsireland.com) or the SAMS Ireland Facebook page (www.facebook.com/samsireland).

*Rev Stephen McElhinney*
Mission Director, SAMS Ireland
A couple from Londonderry have been praised for making a donation to charity following their recovery from coronavirus and cancer. Ivan Gillespie made a donation to Christian Aid Ireland following his and his wife’s recovery from the two feared illnesses.

Lily Gillespie is making a good recovery after testing positive for coronavirus in April and Ivan has had the all-clear following surgery and treatment for a neck tumour. The couple, pictured celebrating their golden wedding anniversary in September 2018, are the proud parents of 4 children and 9 grandchildren. The pair are members of All Saints Clooney Church of Ireland in the waterside area of the city.

Ivan explained why he made the donation: “We have supported Christian Aid all our lives. Lily and I are very blessed to have our children and grandchildren, and to have recovered from cancer and coronavirus. I fear for the people in poor countries who don’t have good hospitals, welfare benefits or furlough schemes.”

Sadly, Lily has dementia and lives in a care home but Ivan has been visiting her three times a week and during the lockdown they have been able to chat through a window.

Christian Aid Ireland Chief Executive Rosamond Bennett praised the couple for their generosity: “Ivan and Lily have made a donation to help the world’s poorest people at a time when they could be forgiven for thinking only of themselves. They are typical of thousands of other Christian Aid supporters - giving generously to improve the lives of people living in poverty, despite enduring difficulties in their own lives.”

Lisa Fagan, Christian Aid
Dear Chaplain, Rev McBeth,

Thank you once again for organising the Church of Ireland Derry Diocese Hospice Appeal. On behalf of the entire Foyle Hospice community, we wish to offer our sincere thanks and heartfelt appreciation for the kindness and generosity of the Derry Dioceses, as well as the wider Church of Ireland family.

As you will know, 2020 has been an incredibly trying year, with great change, uncertainty and upheaval. Against the backdrop of these tumultuous times, we at Foyle Hospice have been firmly focused on protecting our services, as well as safeguarding the patients and families in our care.

Your efforts in raising £6,155 through your annual collection will help us to ensure that our Inpatient Unit will remain open, working, and in a position to deliver continuous care to those in need. Beyond that, you are helping us to safeguard the work of our community nursing team, so that they are ready and able to help those across the North West in need of at-home care. You are also assisting us in protecting our Healing Hearts counselling programme, meaning that we can continue to offer bereavement support services to children and young people dealing with trauma and loss. For the last 35 years, foyle Hospice has stood as a shelter in the storm for individuals across the North West with life limiting illnesses. With less than a third of our funding coming from statutory bodies, we are heavily reliant on the support of our local community to ensure continuity in care. For that reason, it is quite difficult to overstate the impact of your generosity - the collective kindness you have demonstrated is enabling the work of foyle Hospice to continue, unabated, in the midst of the most confronting public health crisis in living memory.

Thank you for continued support and generosity. By working together, we are ensuring that our Hospice is able to provide care and support to those in our community who need it most.

Foyle Hospice thanks Derry Diocese...
Mahajanga Calling...

The diocesan project, which was first announced in mid-March, was intended to raise funds for the Church in one of the poorest parts of the world - Mahajanga, in north-west Madagascar - where a son of our diocese, Rt Rev Hall Speers, serves as Bishop. However, the initiative ground to a halt as churches were closed and parish gatherings suspended in the attempt to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

The pandemic's impact on parish incomes has been dramatic. People are still returning only gradually to in-Church worship. The Board of Mission and Unity are aware that relaunching ‘Mahajanga Calling’ is asking a lot of parishioners in the current economic climate. But they hope that people will be moved to support fellow Christians whose need is much greater than ours.

The Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster, is lending his wholehearted support to the relaunch. “It was around Christmas, 2018, that Bishop Hall Speers heard ‘the call’ to go and serve Christ in Mahajanga,” Bishop Andrew said. “It was a tough call. Hall had retired from active ministry. Mahajanga is six thousand miles away. Life there is difficult. Its people are poor. The diocese is remote. It has about a dozen clergy for an area seven times as big as Wales. There were so many reasons to say ‘No’. But Hall and his wife, Sarah, said ‘Yes’.

Now, I’m asking the people of Derry and Raphoe to say ‘Yes’ to Mahajanga, too. Yes, it’s a big ask. The coronavirus has hit homes and families here severely. Yes, it will be a struggle. People’s jobs and salaries and savings have been affected by the virus. Yes, we have our own challenges, as parish incomes have also fallen. But, as Christians, we are people of faith, not fear. Jesus said, ‘You are the light of the world.’ (Matt. 5:14). By saying ‘Yes’ to Mahajanga’s call, we will be faithful to his commandment to love one another. And we will be living up to our diocesan vision: ‘Transforming Community, Radiating Christ.’

I don’t for one second underestimate the enormous challenges facing people in our diocese at this extraordinarily difficult time. But nor do I underestimate their commitment to Christ. So let’s rise to the challenge. Let us each say ‘Yes’ to Mahajanga.”

Bishop Speers has suggested that the first thing people in Derry and Raphoe can do for his parishioners is pray for them. But the Board of Mission and Unity in Derry and Raphoe says there are practical ways people can help, too, such as raising funds to provide ‘rice, rectories and resources’ to support parishes, priests and parishioners in Mahajanga. The board’s chairman, Rev Canon Paul Hoey, has invited parishes here to decide whether and how to support the ‘Mahajanga Calling’ initiative. “The Covid-19 restrictions mean we can’t respond the way we originally might have,” Canon Hoey said, “but perhaps there’s an opportunity now to be even more imaginative.

Bishop Speers has identified three priorities for his diocese: rice to sustain local parishes; rectories to accommodate clergy; resources to train the next generation of leaders - ordained and lay. These all cost money, although in Mahajanga a little money can go a long way.”

“We want individual parishes to work out how best they should respond to the call from Mahajanga,” Canon Hoey says. “Whatever they do, it must be compliant with the coronavirus guidelines. Any contribution - however small - will be gratefully received and will make a difference. The sooner we get it, the sooner we can help. Please send donations to the Diocesan Office, marked ‘Mahajanga Calling’. We thank +Andrew for his support and encouragement, and we urge people to pray for Bishop Speers and his wife, Sarah, and for the clergy and parishioners of Mahajanga.”
Open your eyes in prayer...

“‘Seek my face.’ Your face, Lord, will I seek.” Psalm 27:10

Work as Prayer. I am not quite sure what this means but it is something to which I aspire. I pray before I start work and pray that the prayer continues in the work. Not by trying to carry a mantra in my head or to pray inwardly with words but to trust that the prayer continues. I find peace in the process and an ability to set aside worries and distractions. In January and February of this year I had operations to remove cataracts from both my eyes. Then I had an eye examination with new glasses, prescribed in early March, with delivery later in the month. I knew there would be a big change in how my eyes would work and that I would have to find different ways of working.

This had been a difficult period. The deterioration in my eyesight had been both frightening and disabling but there was a three-year NHS waiting list for the operation. However, the option of private treatment was one I could ill afford and did not like. So, I decided to pray about it, and the voice in my head asked, “what are your savings for?” This was a relief. I decided to go ahead with the operations and resolved to try to stop feeding my resentment and anger. The first step in finding a new way of working was to select an icon model from which to work. The model I chose was a Russian icon of the twelfth century. It is one of a group of icons known as the Saviour Acheiropoietos; the Icon Made Without Hands.

The Icon presents us with the face of Christ, surrounded by a halo containing a cross. The focus on the face of Christ lets us contemplate His beauty. Christ looks slightly to the right as if allowing us to look directly at His face. His face is lit from within by His inner light, as if allowing us to look directly at His face. Christ looks slightly to the right with delivery later in the month. I knew there would be a big change in how my eyes would work and that I would have to find different ways of working.

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The Icon presents us with the face of Christ, surrounded by a halo containing a cross. The focus on the face of Christ lets us contemplate His beauty. Christ looks slightly to the right as if allowing us to look directly at His face. His face is lit from within by His inner light, not by the created natural light. The solemn ‘iconicity’ of His face clearly indicates that in painting Christ’s features, either the artist had the best Byzantine examples in front of him or had trained directly with Byzantine masters. Our Lord’s face has the typical asymmetry of early icons reminding us that He is both God and Man, Lover and Judge. Gold is the predominate colour in this icon. It is used in the background, with white gold in the cross, golden lines on the hair and bright yellow ochres on the face of Our Lord. Gold in icons can be taken to refer to the uncreated light of God, the light surrounding Christ during the transfiguration. Gold is used not just for its beauty but also because it does not tarnish, nor change with time. When praying for someone we can visualise the person for whom we are praying, seeing them surrounded by a bright light and holding them in that light. I started working on the gold on the icon before having the cataracts removed but was not able to get a satisfactory finish on the gold. I tried correcting, re-gilding and adding extra layers of gold leaf but felt I was not going to be able to do any better. Remembering advice given by my tutor and master Eva Vlavianos that “when working on an icon only our best work will do” this was the best I could do, so I decided to continue working on the icon.

After the cataract operations my sight had changed. I had been very short sighted with my point of focus about one and a half inches from my eyes, this was a great gift for close work. I had been advised that this would happen so I knew I would need to use magnifiers. While waiting for these to arrive I started to paint the basic layers using earth colours, ochres and umbers. Once the magnifiers arrived, I could see that these layers were too thick and not precise enough. Fortunately, icon painting can be very forgiving, so using a scalpel I was able to remove these layers of paint and start again on a near pristine surface.

As lockdown was starting Canon Katie phoned me, to check on how I was and asked about my icon work. I told her about this icon. It seemed like a good idea to use it as the centre for my prayers for the CCCMSP community and for family and friends, as well as an opportunity to join in the collective Our Father proposed by our rector Robert. The work on the icon had progressed to the point when the hair had been completed, and all the main features of the face had been laid when a friend asked to see what I was working on. I sent her a scan of the unfinished icon. She commented that the work looked good, but that Christ looked very severe. This was extremely helpful. So I sent scans to other friends asking them about the expression on Our Lord’s Face and the consensus was that it was a bit severe. I realised that part of this problem was due to the asymmetry of the features of the face particularly the eyebrows and the eyes. I tried to pay close attention to them. However, the left eye was giving me trouble. No matter what I did I could not get it right until I realised that I had stopped looking at the model and was painting from my head and my experience. Returning to the original model solved my problem.

My own left eye had been giving me trouble. It is not functioning well during close work. Canon Katie pointed out that it was interesting that both Our Lord’s left eye and my left eye were giving me trouble. An insight I had missed. The icon is now finished and sits on a shelf with soft natural light which minimises the irregularities in the gold. I have started a new copy of the same icon hoping that I can resolve the problem with the gilding. If not, I can use a mixture of yellow and white pigments to create a similar effect.

Dick Sinclair
The Irish Civil War has left bitter memories in many parts of Ireland that resonate to this day. Nevertheless, and considering that many TDs carried guns with them to the first sitting of the new Dail in 1932, there was a smooth and democratic transition of power after the 1932 unexpected outcome to the Irish General Election.

The Fianna Fail leader, Eamonn DeValera quickly set about delivering on his election promises and decided to withhold the land annuities payable to Britain that had been agreed in the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The result was the beginning of what is officially coined ‘The Anglo-Irish Trade War, 1932-1938) - but what was known better as ‘the Economic War’.

My family, based in their ancestral home near Frenchpark in County Roscommon, were part of what were then referred to as ‘strong farmers’. These were farming families who held medium to large holdings of land and who could provide for themselves; in modern terms, they were self-sufficient. Historically speaking, in many cases they were families who were not affected by the Great Famine to the same degree that many of their countrymen suffered. Most ‘strong’ farmers were Cumann na nGaedheal (later Fine Gael) supporters. Although they had fared out reasonably well in the half century before the 1930s, that was to change drastically.

Ireland’s main export in the mid-1930s was its cattle - the beef industry was, and is today, one of the Irish economy’s greatest assets. In the middle of the ‘Economic War’, which in itself was an economic crisis for the Irish Free State, the price of cattle dropped drastically, leaving many ‘strong farmers’ struggling to make ends meet. This had a chain reaction affecting smaller farming families also, as in many cases they rented land from larger farmers.

In recent weeks, I have been researching more carefully the fate of the so-called ‘strong farmers’ of 1930s Ireland during the Economic War, and their disgraceful treatment at the hands of the government at the time. Over the course of my research, I dug out some old tapes of my Grandfather telling his memories of how our family suffered during the time. As well as the economic struggles, there was also regional intimidation in rural areas - particularly of families who were known to be strong ‘pro-treaty’ supporters. In areas such as where my family come from, animosity from the time is still felt today - but rarely discussed and mentioned at all. In fact, I have become convinced that many people who hold prejudices against neighbours and others in the community, have long since forgotten why they do - or from where those prejudices originate. Perhaps now is the time, a decade before we come to the centenary of those times, for Ireland as a whole Island to have these conversations on local and regional levels.

During my research, I came across this Father Browne photo from the mid-1930s. It was taken when Browne was passing through the area and famously took one of the only surviving photos of the front gates to Frenchpark House. This photo is of a man close to our family home at Keanspark, about two miles from Frenchpark. It turns out that in the course of one of his taped interviews about the 1930s my Grandfather described the exact horse and cart pictured here.

An exciting development for me, as we have photos of every family member going back to the 1850s - except my great-grandfather, who died at a young age in the 1940s. If Grandad’s description of the horse and cart is anything to go by - then this picture would appear to be a photo of his father, Martin Hanily, and the only one in existence. And it is also a record of the very middle of the period which caused him so much hurt and misfortune. For my part, I am glad that my great-grandfather had his photo taken by such a luminary photographer - but I would still like more and more people to become aware of what exactly people like he went through during the Economic War of 1932-38.

Rev Sean Hanily
In his poem, 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', William Butler Yeats would have us believe that 'peace comes dropping slow'.

For me, peace is found not in passive waiting, but through a patient stillness. It requires each of us to be more fisherman than dozing vacationer. There is a purpose in being a peacemaker that requires us to hold onto a clear vision of what we want to grasp. There is a need for a hopeful expectancy. In my ministry I attempt to embody God’s peace. Undoubtedly, I can identify with Yeats’ image of the busyness of life falling away in the stillness of Innisfree. There is peace of a kind to be sure. However, in daily living, whether it be family, church or simply ‘out there’ in the world, peace often requires us to be much more active. It needs to be held before us as a goal to strive towards and encouraged to stay with us until it can be more firmly grasped.

Peace requires transformation and the story of God’s greatest transformation is found in the narratives of Easter Day. The Resurrection is at the heart of our faith; it shapes our discipleship and if we are to seek a vision, a picture of peace, that picture must have the empty tomb as its core. The Resurrection gives us a vision of God’s great transformation: death to life. This resurrection life is peace; not found in an absence but in the new presence of the risen Jesus. Lives lived in the light and power of the Resurrection embody a completeness (peace) where nothing is broken, disrupted or lacking; albeit imperfectly for now. The writer to the Hebrews, in the doxology of Chapter 13, calls upon the God of peace to bless us. The source of our blessing is the One who needs nothing, but is the One who fulfils us as his children. ‘May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us that which is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21

Envisioning peace begins with the God of peace. As we stare at the brokenness of our world our hearts long to see lives healed, nations restored and a world in which wars end: our gaze is not a helpless one. As we look for a vision to bring peace to our world, we look to the source of that peace for He is the one who will ‘equip us with everything good for doing his will.’ This equipping has the sense of restoration; like the fisherman restoring his nets or the surgeon resetting a broken bone. God desires his creation to be whole and we find not only the picture of that wholeness in his word but we also find that it is the ‘God of peace’ who will complete what is lacking in us so that we can hold unto the picture and as a fisherman seeking to land the fish on the end of his line, God will enable us to have the strength we need and the wisdom to grasp what it is that we seek.

As passive observers we may not find peace dropping slow, but we will enjoy the fruit of our patience and perseverance when the catch has been landed and peace is at hand.

ARCHDEACON ROBERT MILLER
The world came to a standstill February/March 2020. Everyone has a covid-19 story to tell and this is mine.

The English language seemed to change overnight, old words with new meanings and new words appearing on every news report. Words such as lockdown, shielding, social distancing, furlough, R number, zoom conferencing, bounce back loans, small business grants, protect the NHS and so on. All non-essential shops and businesses had to close their doors, pull their shutters down and go home. Stay at home, shop once a week for all food and essentials and allowed one hour of exercise a day.

I own and run two optical practices. Mooney and Scott in Londonderry and Mark Scott Opticians in Portstewart. Optical practices fell into the bracket of essential care, and as such we were tasked initially with running our practices remotely. To adhere to this, we directed all phone calls via an answering machine to my mobile. The staff were all furloughed, so my wife and I answered the phone to patients who required emergency eye care, repairs or replacements of glasses and contact lenses.

The first phase of coming out of lockdown began on Monday 29th June. In this phase, we could see patients face-to-face for emergency eye tests and for patients who were having problems or who felt the need for a change in their prescription.

From 1st August routine eye tests were allowed. However, a visit to your local ophthalmic practice will be by appointment only. Numbers of patients in practices will be limited. You will experience sanitiser stations, covid screens, staff in PPE, face masks/visors and plastic gowns. This is the new normal.

On the flipside, I embraced lockdown. I had my wife and 3 kids at home for fourteen weeks, the world slowed down and people had time to talk to each other. I live in Portstewart and locals who walked past the front of the house had time to stop and talk. It seemed a more caring and compassionate period than the usual busy times in which we live. The highlight of everyday was dinner in the evening and sitting around the table with no one in a hurry to head out. The world needed rebooted and hopefully in the future it will be a better place, with people having time to talk to each other and help each other. There were many tragedies during lockdown with young and elderly people in hospital where they were not allowed visitors. Residential homes on lockdown and routine treatment for cancer and other diseases put on hold.

I am now enjoying being back testing eyes again. I am hopeful the future for optics, although it may be different, will be a positive one.
When reading the various reports on poverty in Ireland and how Covid-19 has exacerbated financial challenges for those already struggling, I am reminded not just of the latest startling statistics on poverty, but also of the voices and stories behind those figures.

As Head of Charitable Services at Protestant Aid, I regularly talk with distraught family members, who attempt to relate their particular situations while endeavouring, but usually failing, to fight back tears - tears that seem to flow with more vigour when met with a word of kindness or reassurance. The core emotion being expressed is often one of frustration. Frustration at not being in a position to pay a utility bill, make a mortgage repayment, pay rent or even fund a food shop. The next emotion expressed is usually fear... what does the future hold for me and my family?

The pandemic has been for some, nothing more than an inconvenience - the inability to dine in a favourite restaurant or a missed foreign holiday. For others, it is yet another obstacle on an already bumpy path of deprivation, hitting those on low incomes with vindictive indifference. Poverty Focus 2020 published last May, advises that 'when recovery comes, it is likely that many low income workers, and employees with precarious employment conditions, will be the last to experience it', with those who are unemployed due to illness or disability having one of the highest poverty rates - almost one person in every two (48%) of this group are struggling below the poverty line. In January of this year, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) expected global income to grow 3 per cent. Compare that to their current forecast of a 3 per cent fall, significantly worse than during the Great Recession of 2008-09. Behind this dire statistic is a more depressing scenario: if past pandemics are any guide, the toll on poorer and vulnerable segments of society will be the greatest.

Basic deprivation rates (the ability to afford rudimentary goods and services) have soared during the pandemic, again hitting those who are most financially susceptible, including pensioners, of whom over 11% live in poverty. Children are also vulnerable at this time and it is difficult to comprehend why almost 200,000 of them appear to be collateral damage in an economy that was, until recently at least, thriving.

The ‘working poor’ is an increasingly used phrase and not without reason. Many of the General Grant Applications we receive on a daily basis are not from those who are on benefits, but from those who have full-time jobs, yet continually struggle to make ends meet. Poor and declining health is also an issue, as well as unexpected expenses, all of which can throw a family’s finances into disarray. The subversive nature of COVID-19 meant that some families were hurled into deprivation with some velocity and it was this which prompted our Emergency Response Initiative. Situations of need were identified by Rectors and some interim help (in the form of vouchers) was provided discreetly and quickly. This initiative was instigated as a complimentary addendum to our General Grant Programme and over 100 families have benefitted to date - the funds allocated for this were in addition to our General Grant budget so none of our current programmes suffered as a result of this additional expenditure. We continue to be grateful to so many Rectors around the country who help identify situations of need within their congregations and are happy that they choose Protestant Aid to be their partners in ministry.

Protestant Aid has been in operation since 1836 but we haven’t allowed the cobwebs or dust to gather as we continue to seek and implement progressive ways of assisting those in financial distress. The passing of time has not dimmed our determination or vision to bring help where it is most needed. Of course, that vision is not unique to us but is shared by our many generous and loyal donors who don’t wait for a pandemic to demonstrate their compassion or their desire to lessen the hurts and suffering of individuals and families.

And that care and compassion is the light of hope... for us all.

Geoff Scargill - Head of Charitable Services (Protestant Aid)
I expect many of us are very similar! We have had to adapt to new norms in these days. ‘Social distancing’ is possibly one of the most challenging changes we have had to make.

Not being able to physically touch a family member or friend with a handshake or hug can make us feel distanced from them even when they are only two metres away. Social distancing is difficult because it is preventing us from doing what is natural, to enjoy friendship with others. A handshake or hug is more than a physical expression of what one feels - it is a manifestation of the feelings of love and acceptance you have for another person. Having spoken to church members in recent months I am aware that many have been finding it hard to know and experience God’s presence. The remote and ‘socially distanced’ church services and lack of midweek fellowship has left many of us feeling empty and dry in our Christian faith.

Recently I read an article by Iva Beranek from the Church’s Ministry of Healing which I found helpful. She reflected on the tree sap you see occasionally running down a tree. Sap is a sticky substance that can be unpleasant to look at and uncomfortable to feel. Yet sap contains important nutrients, water and hormones that pass through the tree to the branches to help generate energy while new buds are forming during springtime and acts as food for the tree during its growth period. We could describe the days we are living in as being like sap, unpleasant and uncomfortable. As I reflect on the letters of the word ‘sap’ they could express how some people are feeling at this time - Sad, Anxious & Pointless.

**Sad because you cannot do what you once could do.**

**Anxious due to the continually unsettling news about Covid-19.**

**Pointless because there seems little or no hope in the future.**

However, there is good news! For, like the tree sap, these challenging days can actually help us to grow. As I reflect on the letters of the word ‘sap’ they could teach us how we can know God’s closeness at this time as we feed on his Strength, Assurance and Praise.

**Strength** was one of God’s traits the psalmist rejoiced about, ‘The Lord is my Rock and my Fortress and my Deliverer. My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.’ Psalm 18v2

**Assurance** is a message we see throughout the Bible, 365 times God’s people are told, ‘Do not fear.’ ‘Be strong and courageous.’ God tells Joshua as he leads the people into the new experience of the holy land, ‘Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.’ Joshua 1v9

**Praise** is a choice. You choose who and what you fill your thoughts with. Again we learn from the psalmist, ‘I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress.’ Psalm 59v16

Rather than these being days of disappointment we can help turn them into days of devotion as we focus on God’s strength, assurance and praise.

*Rev Paul Lyons, Chair of Derry and Raphoe Ministry of Healing*
On 26th June Madagascar celebrated 60 years of Independence, or as some of the official statements put it, the 60th anniversary of regaining Independence. Once more Covid-19 took centre stage with all public events cancelled.

One event that was not cancelled was the annual Independence Thanksgiving Service organised by the Council of Churches here in Mahajanga. That took place in the Roman Catholic cathedral as it is the biggest building in the city. It was packed with politicians, gendarmes, police and army as well as choirs and ordinary church folk. As head of the Anglican church in these parts I receive a very warm welcome but nevertheless feel very self-conscious and embarrassed being up front, the only non-Malagasy person present yet literally enthroned in front of the high altar with my Lutheran and FJKM counterparts on either side.

For my immediate circle these events were totally eclipsed by events at the Archdeacon’s home. Mrs Archdeacon and her new baby were in separate wards in the hospital. Both mother and daughter needed a family member present as nursing as you know it is not available. Meanwhile back at the cathedral a collection was taken at the morning services to help as the families are also responsible for bringing in food. After the Sunday service family and carers were all at the hospital. They returned home to find that the house had been broken into and the morning offering stolen!

On Sunday, I woke up to the news that the Chairman of the Council of Churches in Madagascar and head of the Lutheran church, Dr David Rakotonirina, had died of Covid-19. It came as a personal shock as only last month we had shared worship together on Independence Day and established a really good rapport which I looked forward to building on. In the afternoon we had a very moving Memorial Service with many hundreds attending. Particularly poignant for me was a moment when I was invited to sit in the chair beside the altar with the chair beside me empty where he and I had sat together so happily so recently. While one reads and feels one understands something of the frightening Covid-19 statistics, it is only with personal experience that the grief of it all hits.

At church everyone was ungrudgingly wearing their face masks. These have now become an area of great creativity. My latest acquisition, a gift handed to me before the 6.30 am Eucharist, is a splendid affair with the diocesan coat of arms on one side and the Anglican Communion compass rose on the other. Some of the ladies had MU caches bouche with the MU emblem in the centre, some made of blue fabric with little MUs all over it. Several had Biblical texts, the assistant priest’s says, “May God bless you”.

Yesterday Evening Prayer was interrupted with the local news that we were in lockdown and all churches, mosques and schools shut until further notice. We are supposed to do what we have to do in the morning and be off the streets by 13.00 hours. Mahajanga is situated on a river estuary and there is no bridge across it. River crossings are now banned.

I was expecting that I would have a lonely morning. But no, it has been business as usual, apart from not going to church and the mosques being silent. The workmen have been hard at work refurbishing the MU rooms and I have had callers as usual!

Saturday, 25th July, I was surprised to receive an invitation to the regional governor’s residence for the signing in of our new governor in the presence of the President of Madagascar the next day, Sunday! It was impressed upon me that my simple ways were not acceptable on this occasion: I was not to turn up on foot nor arrive in a tuc-tuc. At 1pm I took my place in the very spacious hallway of the Residence. Our chairs were very correctly socially distanced so that we were 1 metre apart.

Suddenly the President and his wife, incredibly elegant in a full length outfit, swept in surrounded by a horde of photographers and reporters.
An announcement was made reminding us of social distancing etc. This had nil impact on the press who remained shoulder to shoulder or took up positions between our chairs. In my case a television crew almost pushed me off my chair! One thing that was music to my ears was his comment that from now on all regional authorities would have a devolved budget specifically for repairs and maintenance of roads and buildings.

The 13th August 2020 was to be the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the diocese with a great clergy and wives Conference with outside speakers, the dedication and opening of the newly refurbished MU centre and a Thanksgiving Service in the Cathedral on the Sunday.

In the event the great day was sadly quiet with even the Cathedral closed under our current Lockdown and nobody allowed to enter or leave the city. In the afternoon the former bishop’s wife called with a little cake for me to celebrate with. As it happened the assistant priest at the cathedral called in so we had a slice each and a glass of water. So much for the great celebration! The decision was taken to press ahead with building rectories/vicarages. How has the diocese got this far with no houses and a major part of the churches’ income spent on renting rooms for the clergy?

We discovered that there was an underspend on the grant from the Overseas Bishoprics Fund which pays my handsome stipend (£100 per month) which could legitimately be used on the repair of bishop’s house. Years of repairing Lincolnshire churches taught me to start with the roof. Once more I had failed to recognise how much one starts from basics. I discovered that the young men hammering away with odd lengths of (very recycled) pieces of wood were making the ladder in order to get to the roof.

This is the first time in my life I have not joined the workmen on roof inspection tours. You can guess why.

My visa has long since expired but nobody seems concerned since the Préfet has my dossier and knows me. I am nevertheless an illegal immigrant currently. In Britain this would make me a criminal! I am deeply grateful for all the good will that surrounds me and an increasing circle of Malagasy friends.

Meanwhile we are out of lockdown. Cases of coronavirus continue but the local spike has not been as bad as anticipated. Rules for churches: the local authorities judge how many socially distanced people can be in the building and this must not be exceeded. Face masks must be worn by all at all times except at the moment of receiving communion. Before entering the church all must wash their hands with soap and water. Then feet/shoes must be wiped with disinfectant at the door step. The church must be disinfected every three days. The celebrant and assistants must use hand gel sanitiser frequently during the service. Unlike the UK we can sing to our hearts’ content. I was intrigued by the painter bringing a bag of raffia to work daily. Incidentally raffia is the one word that the Malagasy language has contributed to English. This morning I watched as he took bundles of raffia and carefully tied them, folded and tied again. Then the straggling ends were chopped off and so his paint brush was ready for use.

May you remain safe and optimistic in the midst of the current changes. Again, thank you for many encouraging messages, financial aid and, above all, prayers as we all face the unknown.

+Hall
1. Please tell us a little about yourself, your family and your journey to Glendermott and New Buildings.

I am from Lisburn, went to school at Wallace High, am an only child and was a parishioner of St John’s Church Moira for several years, where I began to discern a call to ministry. I was sent to selection and that call was confirmed. I trained in CITI and then was Deacon in St Donard’s East Belfast. Few twists and turns on the way, but that is mostly that.

2. How has the coronavirus affected your Deacon intern year?

Things have been very unusual. I haven’t been able to go to Dublin for classes and have had to be on zoom. I have had very little to do in terms of parish life, mostly telephone calls and a few pre-recorded sermons.

3. Please tell us a little about a person (living or dead) who has had an influence on your life.

There are so many! The one that sticks out is an RAF chaplain called Hamilton Pollock. His ministry, and the ministry of many of the forces chaplains, have inspired me in how I approach ministry.

4. What are you passionate about in ministry?

Mission. I hold a passionate belief that mission is the normal response of the Christian. We have something great and we want to share it. Workplaces, schools, friendship groups, all places where normal life takes place are also the places where we do mission. Everyone is involved in mission and everyone is called to share Jesus with the world. Encouraging those around me to get stuck into normal everyday mission is my passion.

5. How do you chill out?

Being in the wild. Mountains, the sea, reading, spending time with friends and coffee.

6. What book are you reading at the moment and why would you recommend it?

I re-read The Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis and it was a really refreshing insight into the human condition and the spiritual realm of which we can be forgetful. It was a convicting and encouraging read and I recommend it to anyone.

7. Do you have a favourite charity and why?

CMSI because they support local churches to do mission and try to make mission as indigenous as possible.

8. If you had a time machine what era would you like to visit and why?

This is a toss-up between the cliché 1st Century and the 1940s/1950s. I have idyllic ideas about both.
1. Please tell our readers what a Deacon Intern year entails.
As a Deacon I am there to learn from Dean Arthur, to experience things in ministry that I have never done before and to improve upon skills that I already know. I will be working in the parish 3 days a week plus Sundays, two days I will spend working on my dissertation and then have a day off. There is one week a month that we spend in college but with Coronavirus this will only be a few nights.

2. How has the coronavirus affected the past 6 months at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute (CITI)?
Coronavirus has changed things significantly at CITI over the past 6 months. On a Wednesday afternoon we were brought in and told we would no longer be going into Trinity. On the middle of the next morning Leo Varadkar held a press conference explaining that all schools, colleges and universities were to close. Our Director had a meeting with us all to tell us that with immediate effect college was closing and that they would be in touch with us to outline how we would complete the rest of the college year. It turned out that all our remaining lectures moved to online teaching, some of which were delivered ‘live’ and others were pre-recorded and uploaded for us to watch at a convenient time. Looking into the forthcoming year things again are going to be a ‘new’ normal. There are new procedures and practices in place to keep us all safe. We won’t be down for a full week as in previous years but a few days instead when 1st and 2nd Years have gone home. We will be social distancing and masks are to be worn, which will take a while to get used to I’m sure.

3. Please tell us a little about a person (living or dead) who has had an influence on your life.
I think my Nanny, even though she only lived until I was 8, had a huge influence on my life. She loved church, the Salvation Army and cared for everyone around her. She loved people and helping those who needed it. I think I pick up my love and care for people from her and my mum. Recently I was given my Nanny’s Bible which is very special to have. My ordination is one of those moments I would have loved to share with her but I know that she is watching over me.

4. What are you passionate about in ministry?
In ministry I am passionate about those on the margins of the church and hospital chaplaincy. These two areas are closely linked because I may meet a person in the hospital who has been on the fringes of the church and be there for them in their time of need. Those precious moments that I spend with them could be the turning point for them. I may never know that because they could be gone by the next time I do my rounds.

5. How do you chill out?
I enjoy the great outdoors, whether it is pottering in the garden, going for a walk or a run. I also enjoy cooking, baking and chilling with Netflix.

6. What book are you reading at the moment and why would you recommend it?
The book I am reading at the moment is called Boundaries: When to say ‘YES, When to say ‘NO, to take control of your life, by John Townsend and Henry Cloud. This book is great if you are the type of person, like me, who says ‘yes’ most of the time. So, this is a great book to learn healthy boundaries and something I want to put into practice as I start in ministry.

7. Do you have a vision of how the local Church must change in light of the pandemic?
I think that we need to continue to find new ways of connecting with people. Online platforms are a useful tool but we need to be aware that not everyone has access to this technology. It will never replace face to face ministry. Connections are made by speaking and interacting with people, which is very difficult to do through a screen.
1. What challenges and changes do you think your appointment will bring to your ministry?
In some ways I’m very aware of the ‘weight of history’ but I am not a person who seeks the limelight so I hope the novelty of my position will not detract from my attendance and worship at Diocesan and Cathedral services. I have enjoyed the old and some new jokes about being a Canon, (including being told that I was the second female – Roaring Meg was the first!). I was very amused that a senior clergyman referred to my ‘canonisation!’ Dear friends sent me a few definitions of ‘canon’ and added their own “a loose cannon: a person who can bring newness, dust off cobwebs and shake things up”. But amidst all this history and humour I hold to part of the ordination service: “Your ministry will be one of joy as well as responsibility, of happiness as well as of diligence” (BCP 2004)

2. How do you chill out?
I love walking and gardening.

3. What book are you reading at the moment and would you recommend it?
I have just started to read The Divine Heart of Darkness by Catherine Bird. This is a book about finding God in the shadows. Catherine wants the reader to be tuned into the attendance and echo of God in the storm, find God in the shadows and come to see darkness as a place of sacredness, not scaredness. Of course, I think we all associate despair and difficulties with darkness - looking anxiously for the dawn after a sleepless night - things will be better in the light. Catherine says, “we think that light is the source of life - yet it is in darkness that all living things have their naissance, in the womb, in the earth, in the seed, in the tomb, the absence of light is necessary for life to take hold.” Hmm, interesting. Entrance into darkness is not an entrance into disintegration and disappearance, but an entrance into a place of recreation into new life. This book is about discovering, or rediscovering, the presence and activity of God which is already present in all things and all places, and about questioning our use and understanding of metaphors versus descriptions, that demonise the dark and glamorise the light.

4. What is the best advice you’ve been given?
At my post-ordination training, when discussing pastoral visiting, I was told, “When you go to visit someone don’t for one minute think you are taking God to visit too, and when you leave don’t think God leaves. God was there before you and will still be there when you’re not!”

5. Do you have a favourite charity?
I try to support a number of charities and they change from time to time. I have recently been introduced to Lost Stock. Due to Coronavirus, leading brands cancelled orders for over $2 billion worth of clothes that had already been produced. This leaves millions of workers in countries like Bangladesh unpaid, and at risk of starvation. And so, Lost Stock was created. You get at least three items of clothing chosen for you, with a massive 50% discount off RRP, that supports these workers and prevents clothes going to landfill. Each order supports a worker and their family for a week. The goal is to help 250,000 workers and their families. To date Lost Stock has supported 115,022 families.

6. What is your favourite colour?
Derry Crimson of course!
1. **What challenges and changes do you think your appointment will bring to your ministry?**

For me, this is my second time around as a Canon, so I am aware of some of the changes that this appointment brings. It is a real privilege to be a part of the Chapter of such an ancient Cathedral that ministers to such a wide range of people. The challenge is to find the time to give to this important role in Diocesan ministry and to be part of a larger team ministry. I hope it does not change me too much and my sense of humour fits into Cathedral life!

2. **How do you chill out?**

Recently I have taken up walking which I find is not only healthy for the body but also for the mind. Nothing is as nice as walking on a beach with the sound of the waves to clear the mind.

3. **What book are you reading at the moment and why would you recommend it?**

At present, I am reading a book I bought a few years ago and never got round to reading. It is called Kingdom Come by Malcolm Duncan. He challenges his readers to think about the challenges that face the local Church today and how we should meet those challenges without losing the central message of the Gospel.

4. **What is the best advice you've been given?**

I once asked an Archbishop for permission to do a particular thing. Before I asked, he said, “Robert if you ask, I may have to say 'no' and sometimes it is better to seek forgiveness than ask for permission.” So, much to his disapproval, I didn’t ask and he never found out, so I didn’t have to ask for forgiveness.

5. **Do you have a favourite colour, meal, piece of music?**

My wife tells me I would have purple on every wall. I eat anything as long as it is not fish, pasta, contains garlic or mustard. I go back a few years and I loved the song, Imagine by John Lennon.
Diocesan Manoeuvres!

Sean McClafferty

Congratulations on your commissioning as a Diocesan Reader...

1. Sean, please tell our readers something about your faith journey to your Commissioning as Diocesan Reader.
Since childhood, I was brought up believing in God & knowing the existence of God. There has never been a time in my life that I have doubted God. I suppose it was during my teen years that I began to explore my faith in a deeper way & began to experience God at work in my life. When I was 17, I felt a real call of God in my life & became a Christian. I have always known a call of God in my life, but God knows when we are ready to serve him. Having served as a Parish Reader for some 2 years, as well as being chaplain of Foyle Gideons, I knew that God was calling me to serve him as a Diocesan Reader and I willingly responded. I thoroughly enjoyed the 2 year training course at The Church of Ireland Theological Institute and look forward to serving God in whatever capacity He calls me to in the future.

2. Please tell us a little about a person (living or dead) who has had an influence on your life.
My Mother has been a major influence in my life. Sadly she passed away in 2018. She had a simple faith, and yet every day of her life she showed me by the way she lived, what a Christian should be, how a Christian should live & what a real Christian is. She was kind & selfless, giving to those most in need... putting others' needs before her own. She was the person that I would hope to be.

3. What book are you reading at the moment and why would you recommend it?
I always seem to have 2 or 3 books on the go at any one time. The book I’m reading at the moment is “Handbook of Christian Ministry” by John Pritchard, former Bishop of Oxford. It is in essence a guidebook for ordained & lay Christians. The book explores the many situations we find ourselves in as Christians that can be difficult to handle. It offers an easy to navigate source of advice on how to respond to the needs of others. I think it’s an excellent resource and would highly recommend it.

4. What’s the best advice you’ve received?
The best advice I have received has come from my rector... “Always be prepared”

5. Do you have a favourite charity and why?
I have been proud to be involved with St John Ambulance (NI) for a number of years. The charity has always been at the heart of the community and has continued to provide a front line support in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

6. How do you chill out?
My wife, Jennifer, would say that I rarely “chill out”... I always seem to have so much to do, plus I have a rather demanding 4 year old daughter, Zara, who keeps me on my toes. If I do find time to “chill out”, I love nothing more than taking long walks on any Donegal Beach. Being a fairly solitary person, a long walk is always a good way to clear the head and think.

7. Who would you like to be locked inside a church with and why?
This is a great question!!!! There are actually 2 people I would like to be locked in a church with... The first is Job... I would love to ask him about his rock solid faith despite having to endure such suffering & yet he never gave in. The other is Bishop Andrew... both being sort of new boys, I would love to hear his vision & plans for the diocese going forward & maybe share a few ideas.
Welcome back friends. It is so good to be back with you all again. I hope you have had an amazing summer break?! I wonder what you have been up to.

I hope that you have all been staying safe over these past few weeks. I know that the rules put in place by our Governments have been easing and with that have come some changes to how we are expected to live and behave in the company of others. I have been finding some of these changes harder than others to follow.

As we all prepare to return to school, it is important to remember all that we have been told about staying safe, but also to remember not to worry, because all of the safety measures will be put in place by the adults looking after us. I am looking forward to getting back and seeing all my friends and teachers. I am sure you will be excited about this as well. Good luck!

Staycation

As things began to change I had to think about what I could do with my time. I heard about this interesting concept of a ‘staycation’. At first I wondered what this was all about and then I realised it is when you chose to stay in your own country for a holiday, rather than travelling further away. So, I thought I will do that.

I decided to spend some time with my family. During the past few weeks and months I have had time to think about what is truly important to me: my family, my friends, kindness, love, helpfulness, my relationship with God. I have found that all the material things that I own are not as important. I can live without them.

I spent some time at a caravan near the beach. I had an amazing time; I now feel relaxed and ready for the year ahead.

As I spent some of my time away I began to ponder about lots of different things. I began to imagine about what may be possible in the future... what is my dream...?
Over 2000 years ago Jesus called four fishermen to leave their nets and to come and follow him. Now fishermen are very dedicated to their work, so it is surprising that they dropped their work, their whole livelihood, to follow a man they knew very little about. Soon these four men multiplied to twelve and they became known as the disciples. Their faith took time to build up - it didn't happen straight away - but they stuck with Jesus and walked his path with him.

I have a dream that we have faith to follow Jesus no matter what.

For a long time, these twelve men didn't believe Jesus was who he said he was. They watched, listened, stayed close to him and then they realised Jesus really was the Son of God.

I have a dream that we all accept everyone for who they are. We don't judge. We are kind and helpful to all. 

If we look at the life of Jesus he didn't choose the most important people to be with. They didn't need to be rich and famous. He spent his time with people who would have been classed as the poor, the sick, the lonely, the outcasts.

I have a dream that we all see clearly who Jesus really is.

Jesus came into the lives of people and in a way he turned lives upside down. He was asking them to believe in something that they had no experience of. These twelve men knew he was worth it. They gave up things that were important to them to follow Jesus.

I have a dream that we would take Jesus with us, wherever we go, and spread God's word.

The twelve Disciples realised that following Jesus wasn't always easy, sometimes it was like being in a rough storm, but they knew that Jesus would walk with them no matter what storms in life came their way.

I have a dream that we all know that Jesus is worth it and we have faith in him and all that he teaches us.

From the very start Jesus was very clear, 'Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' As Jesus left earth he said, 'Go into all the world, preaching the Gospel'. Jesus wants us to keep our faith alive, while we share it and spread it to others.
Let's Get Creative...

Let's colour!

Why not try to make a ‘Dream Catcher’ as a reminder to hold onto all of those great dreams you have.

Jesus had a dream and he worked hard with his disciples to spread God’s word. I have my dreams. What dream do you have? Share it below.

My dream is...

My dream is important. I can help my dream come true by...

Materials needed:
- A hoop or circle about 15cm
- Wool or twine
- Beads/feathers
- Suede lacing or ribbon
- Glue

Shape the loop
- Dip the loop in glue and wrap the lacing/twine and ribbon around this.

Weave the web
- Start at the top, with a knot and place connections on the loop about one inch apart
- Continue to weave through different connections

Decorate the Dream Catcher
- Tie the end of the lacing/twine when the web has been completed
- Add colourful beads and feathers to decorate

Perhaps you have some other ideas you could include...
It is great that I have been able to stay connected with so many people. In Fahan and Buncrana they have a dream; I have been finding out all about what that means for them. The Parish wants to “cherish and connect with all of God’s children”. They are working very hard to make this dream become a reality. When they cherish and connect it provides them with the opportunity to tell all about Jesus, and that’s exactly what they have been doing over lockdown during their Friday Family Fun time! Let’s take a look...

Over lockdown they have seen their dream coming true! These pictures and crafts have come from people all over the world – from Ireland to Australia! They have connected online with people from places as far away as Hong Kong, Canada, America and Lanzarote, and places closer to home like England, Scotland and of course all over Ireland too!

Now as Fahan and Buncrana prepare to return to church they are going to keep connected with people all over the world on a Saturday morning at 10am with their PRAISE time (Prayer, Reading, Activities, Inspiration on Saturdays for EVERYONE). It will be Facebook live at 10am on a Saturday (The Facebook page is fahanandbuncranachurchofireland) or you can watch it on that site later too. I can’t wait to join in!
Over the summer months I am usually very busy helping parishes across the diocese run Holiday Bible Clubs. These clubs attract children from across local communities and allow churches a fantastic opportunity to share the word of God with children and their families.

Holiday Bible Clubs are a lot of work but, being entirely honest, are one of the highlights of my job. It gives me the chance to work with great teams of leaders and volunteers, as well as getting to know more children. And I always manage to learn a new dance move or action song!

With lockdown this year I was wondering how we could do Holiday Bible Club without actually meeting together and while still being under some restrictions. Many churches have had great online activity, so I made the decision to take Holiday Bible Club online. For five days at the start of July families from across the diocese were invited to take part in Derry and Raphoe Meet Joe! Each day a video was posted to our Facebook page and our diocesan website. I introduced the videos and crafts, Revd. Jonathan McFarland from Sion Mills and Urney led us in singing. We had games with Glenn McBride from Omagh. Revd. Judi McGaffin from Fahan and Buncrana finished each day with prayer. The key element was our story time. On Day One Dean Arthur Barret, from the Raphoe group of parishes, introduced us to Joseph and his brothers, setting the scene for the rest of our story.

On Day Two Revd. Chris MacBruithin from Castlerock and his friend Kevin told us what happened when Joseph went to visit his brothers and when they sold him to Potiphar. Revd. Carmen Hayes from Garvagh told us about Joseph being in prison and meeting the baker and cup bearer. Archdeacon David Huss from the Donegal group of parishes told us about Joseph meeting Pharaoh and interpreting his dreams with God’s help. Our week finished with Revd. Gary Millar from KIT group of parishes telling us about Joseph reuniting with his brothers. I would like to thank all those who took part in the videos for Derry and Raphoe Meet Joe and I hope the children enjoyed taking part in this unique club. It was not the summer any of us had envisioned but we made the best of it!

It is hard to envision what children’s work in the diocese will look like over the next few weeks and months. We are blessed with amazing volunteers and leaders who have already shown their commitment to the growing faith of the children of our diocese and I am sure this will continue. Sunday Schools are meeting through Zoom calls, virtual Sunday Schools and even getting exciting parcels in the post as we continue learning more about God’s word.

Our diocesan weekly children’s activity sheets will be sent out and will follow the lectionary. These activity sheets have something to read, something to watch, something to do, a focus for prayer and an activity to share what we have learnt with others. As we continue to get used to our new normal, my prayer for children’s ministry in the diocese is that we will continue to show each other God’s love as we learn together in a different and unusual way. If I can help in any way, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

**Kirsty McCartney**  
Derry & Raphoe Children’s Ministry Officer
I have spent my life as part of the farming community in the County Tyrone village of Donemana. From my earliest memories, farming has played a central role in my life, and is now my livelihood, as I continue to work the family farm.

I have been farming since I was a wee boy and have been milking cows since around the age of eight years old. Our focus is mainly dairy farming, but we also rear calves into beef cattle. We grow silage mainly for winter feeding of our stock.

The past few months have proved to be a challenge for us all. In some ways it was good for us farmers as there were less people on the roads so no one could complain about “farmers and their tractors”. It also highlighted that farming couldn’t take the blame as the main source of ammonia emissions, as when the world began to slow down and come to a halt, farming continued, but emissions fell. However, there also proved to be uncertainty about how it would affect us. As a dairy farm our main concern was the work of the local creamery and if this would be sustained during the pandemic. If it was affected by Covid-19 and had to close, even temporarily, there would be no one available to lift or to process the milk. This would mean that farmers would be at a loss.

Thankfully, we have been able to function as normal as possible. Visitors could no longer visit the farm, there were no farm inspections as they were suspended for a time and even now are being completed over the phone. Markets were closed, so farmers lost a social element of meeting with each other, as well as the opportunity to trade cattle and sheep. As many other forms of employment came to an abrupt halt as we entered into a period of lockdown, farmers had no choice but to continue to work the land and stock as they would normally do.

On the farm we are continually working hard to improve and raise standards, which in turn has a positive effect on the health and well-being of the livestock. A happy cow makes more milk, and in return we then have a happy farmer! Our farm has just installed a new milking parlour to upgrade from the existing 1979 model. It is now very technologically advanced with ‘feed to yield’ – cows are fed according to their performance. This makes for good cost efficiency.

The countryside is beautiful and I really enjoy being outdoors, experiencing the wildlife and working the land. I don’t think that we all truly appreciate and take care of the wonderful world that has been created and given to us. We need to take time and aim to look after the environment instead of acting in a way that causes damage or leads to pollution.

As a farmer, certain conditions can support and encourage positive growth in our daily work. We need plenty of grass, the right amount of rain (but not as much as we get some days!) and plenty of heat. So, the weather we get in this country can prove to be a challenge and some days it means fighting against the elements to care for the land and livestock.

Donagaheady Parish Church, Donemana, has played an important part in my life, and the life of my entire family. We were brought up in the faith of the Church and in the extended community of the entire rural church family. It is important to be thankful for God’s creation and all that is provided to add to and support farming in general. Sometimes the elements that we have to face can prove to be a challenge, but it is important to work hard, keep going and hold onto faith that all will work out in a positive way. Farmers are caretakers of the land that God has created, and I feel blessed that I have been given this important role to fulfil.

Andrew Dunn
News for the pews...

Facebook details are included for parishes that use Facebook. PLEASE NOTE - you do not have to be on Facebook to access a parish page. Just type the parish Facebook name or address, e.g. @ccmsp into your search engine on smart phone or laptop/tablet etc and click on the parish page.

Raphoe, Raymochy & Clonleigh

The Very Rev Arthur Barrett, Rector and Dean of Raphoe
Facebook: St Eunan’s Cathedral @cathedralraphoe

Facebook Live and Facebook services
It’s hard to believe that we have now been out of church for almost six months. During that time we have continued to provide worship Sunday-by-Sunday via the Raphoe Cathedral Facebook page.

At first these were challenging new technologies (for an ol’ fella like me!), but we soon got used to them. But it is never the same as sharing in worship with people in church. At the moment the Select Vestries of all three churches have decided not to return to in-church worship, but this may change in the not-too-distant future. However, Raphoe Cathedral is now closed for the duration of the renovations, and Raymochy Parish Church is currently ‘out of action’ while a new central heating system and new amplification system is installed, and it is re-painted.

Baptisms
We welcome into God’s Church, through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism: Amber-Leigh Stewart, daughter of Gordon and Sabrina Stewart, in Raphoe Cathedral on Sunday 19th July; Noah Hammond Clarke Corrigan, son of Stephen and Natalie Corrigan, in Raphoe Cathedral on Sunday 23rd August; Harry Ben Meehan and Hannah Marie Meehan, twin children of Keith and Kirsty Meehan, in Clonleigh Parish Church on Saturday 5th September.

Raphoe Cathedral Renovation Project 2020
We were delighted to receive a significant grant of €80,000 from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, administered through Donegal County Council. This grant has enabled us to start our major renovation works. At the end of August the cathedral was encased in scaffolding, and the works to replace the whole roof, along with a long list of associated works to both the nave, choir and tower of the cathedral have now begun. We are so very grateful to so many people, both locally, and far afield, who have contributed so generously to this challenging project. We still have a financial gap to fill, and so donations can be made via the cathedral website - www.raphoecathedral.ie - or directly to the Dean.

Ordination
We are looking forward to the Ordination of Claire Henderson as Deacon in Raphoe Cathedral on Sunday 6th September. This will mark the start of Claire’s Internship year here in the Raphoe Group of Parishes. We welcome Claire, but know that her internship experience will be very different due to the current pandemic restrictions.

Convoy, Monellan & Donaghmore

Rector: Rev Canon William Long
Tel: 074 9101817
COVID-19 and the church

When preparing these notes I took a look back at earlier editions. It was quite sad to read the plans for Easter Vestries, a Parish Dance, the ‘On the Move’ Youth weekend, Messy Church, the BB display and many other events, all of which fell by the wayside as the COVID-19 crisis hit us in mid-to-late March.

Since then we have had a long period of online activities. It was good to see the expanding reach of our live-streamed services and the Parish Facebook page which, at the time of writing, has 998 followers across the world (who will be the 1000th?) Nonetheless we remain very aware of those in our own parish who are unable to join these online activities. We are also conscious that experiencing church through a screen is not the same as participating in person. It has been really good to return to church since July 5th, even with the restrictions that remain in place. The lockdown had an impact on parish finances and we need all parishioners to continue (or re-start) their financial support of the church. We are very grateful to all those who gave contributions during the lockdown or after the re-opening and we encourage all parishioners to consider switching to the very practical and convenient method of giving by Standing Order.

It remains to be seen how COVID will impact the church in the long term. For some people, an increased awareness of the frailty of life has created a renewed desire to connect with Jesus. For others, the crisis has seen the kingdom of God slip even further down their list of priorities! The lockdown has taught the Church to innovate in the way we deliver our message and ministry, and the Church of the future will need to be nimble in its organisation and compassionate in its outreach.

Initiatives such as our online Alpha course have been blessed, and the Mustard Seed continues to be much needed. We are also increasingly conscious of our worldwide fellowship, for example with the Creightons in Nigeria and Sarah in Australia. In the months ahead, we need to trust God and to be there for our community. We have a message of hope and transformation which needs to be shared! Let’s face the future with optimism and see what the Lord will do.
A God of New Beginnings

‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!’
2 Corinthians 5:17

September is almost like the beginning of a New Year in many houses. With the flurry of new uniforms, shining shoes and preparing lunches, we can almost see our young people growing and developing before us. The return to school marks a fresh start for many, and this year this is even more true as all of our young people return to ‘in-school’ learning. But this September also marks a new beginning for everyone as we begin to emerge from a period of lockdown. Many have been isolated from those they love. Too many have missed the companionship of friends and neighbours. All of us have been forced to consider the fragility of life, health and the order in which we place our priorities. As we begin to emerge from lockdown, as we begin to assess the challenges we have faced, and to contemplate the difficulties that lie ahead, we must think about new beginnings.

God offers us a new beginning in Christ. This fresh start is available to each and every one of us. Our past is not important to God. The mistakes we have made are irrelevant. He simply asks each of us to come before his throne of grace with repentant hearts. He longs for us to receive the freedom that is offered through his complete forgiveness. It is this complete forgiveness which gives us a new beginning, which allows us to dust off the darkness of the past and to replace that darkness with the light and love of Christ. When we choose to follow Christ, when we decide to subject ourselves to his will, we allow him to mould us into the new being that he had planned for us right at the very moment of our creation. When we give God this level of control, all possibilities open up for us, and amazing things happen. So, as we begin to emerge from lockdown and enter a ‘new normal’, as we begin a new school year, as we begin to live our lives in a new way, I encourage you to have a look at your relationship with God - is it as fresh as it should be? Where have we placed our spiritual lives in our order of priorities?

Lockdown, despite its challenges, has allowed us to see how precious life and health is. Our God is a God of new beginnings. He is calling us into a fresh start with him. He is ready to open the door to new possibilities for all who put their trust in him, and who choose to be subject to his will. Begin again today. Renew your relationship with God today. Refresh your life, your priorities, your choices today and subject yourself to God’s just and gentle rule, because for all who do, the possibilities are endless.

New beginnings in Inver Group:
We ask God’s blessing upon Mr William Cooke and Miss Louise Scott who are now engaged to be married. We have been blessed with a number of new additions to our church family over the last few months:

Mr Gary Torrens and Miss Suzi Page have had a son. Mr Stephen and Mrs Jennifer Furey have welcomed a daughter. Mr Ben and Mrs Sharon Graham have had a son. Mr Andrew and Mrs Frances Gilchrist have welcomed a son. Mr Pauric and Mrs Yvette Meehan have welcomed a son. Mr Kyle and Mrs Claire Armstrong have had a son. We have also had a number of baptisms over the last few weeks:

Miss Holly Matthews, daughter of Mr David and Mrs Sandra Matthews was baptised in Mountcharles on Sunday 26th July

Master Isaac Graham, son of Mr Ben and Mrs Sharon Graham was baptised in Inver on Sunday 26th July

Master Robert Temple, son of Mr Patrick and Mrs Katie Temple, was baptised in Mountcharles on Sunday 23rd August

May they grow in the faith into which they have been baptised.
Another month has gone past. Corona virus has not gone away. We have had a busy summer with two of our three churches open, greeting summer visitors who come to Donegal year after year, and enjoy joining us for worship. Our third church will open when the children return to school.

On many Sundays we have had full churches and full compliance with social distancing, hand sanitising and face coverings. In Carrickfinn, we had seats outside and speakers relaying the service. They had the added benefit (or distraction) of worshiping in the most beautiful scenic Donegal.

We live in a new era. But this is nothing new in the life of a Christian. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 we read: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (NIV) And indeed, the old has gone - the new era of obeying restrictions for the benefit of others, of serving our community and God’s creation by putting others first, is the message of government regulations. But this was also the message that Christ brought - to serve as he has served.

Let us embrace the challenges of a new world with positivity and commitment; the challenges of life with coronavirus, and the challenges of living a Christian life caring for one another and making sacrifices for one another. And we will all reap the reward.

There will be a service of Harvest Thanksgiving on Friday 2nd October, in St Andrew’s Carrickfinn at 8.00pm, Sunday 4th October in St Patrick’s Parish Church, Bunbeg at 9.30am. Harvest Thanksgiving in St. Crones Parish Church, Dungloe will be on Sunday 11th October at 11.00am.

We have much to be thankful for this year.

Since St Patrick’s Day we have certainly lived in a changed world with the lockdown due to the Coronavirus. Many restrictions were put in place. We were limited in the distance that we could travel. Churches were closed for over three months and they are gradually starting to reopen. During the lockdown we, as a group of believers, still worshiped God, using modern day and conventional technologies. I would like to thank the Rev Niall Johnson, Patrick Knowles and our various readers for recording the services by Zoom. This allowed people, both near and far, to listen to the service via Facebook. Copies of the service were emailed and some parishioners collected hard copies from the church. Some interesting comments about the recording of the service were:

1) ‘People like to have a printed copy of the service, as they could follow the sermon as it was delivered. They could go over it again, if they misunderstood what was said.’

2) Several people found this way of following the service very beneficial and it also meant that the service could be listened to at a time of their liking.

3) Even though many churches and different denominations used the same set of readings for that day, the sermons were on completely different subjects.

I would like to thank all those involved in drawing up the action plan in order that we could reopen our churches for public worship. To those who prepared the church and involved in all the administration. Their support, cooperation and help have been of great assistance to us all. Thankfully before we reopened Holy Trinity Parish Church, Dunfanaghy, we realised that we had a loud speaker, which we were able to connect to the PA system. It is great that we were able to do this. People who are wary of going into enclosed spaces, can still listen to the service in their car. We were delighted, on the first Sunday back, that our bishop was able to come along to the parish of Dunfanaghy and preach at the service. Later he went to St Finoan’s Church, Falcarragh, where we were able to broadcast the service live to people in the surrounding area. I would like to thank very much the Very Rev James Gillespie for allowing us to use these facilities during the lockdown. It gave parishioners an opportunity to hear the service live. For some, especially the elderly/house bound, they were able to hear the rector deliver the service live. As life begins to return back to some sort of normality, we will face many challenges and uncertainties. We have indeed coped well and with our hope and trust in God, we will be helped through these days.
Thanks
Many thanks to Select Vestries and parishioners in both Parishes for the splendid efforts shown in implementing and sustaining the Covid-19 procedures with respect to the use of our churches during the past two months. Your dedication, efficiency and helpfulness are much appreciated and a great reassurance to worshippers who can see that everything necessary is being done to create a safe environment within and around our buildings.

Dates for your Diary
Sunday, 4th October: 10.30a.m. - Harvest Festival at St. John’s, Ballymore

Sunday, 11th October: 9.15a.m. - Harvest Festival at St. Columba’s, Cashel
Sunday, 18th October: 12.00 noon - Harvest Festival at Holy Trinity, Carrigart

(N.B. There will be no Friday evening Harvest events this year because of the Covid - 19 restrictions)

Holy Trinity Kids Club
The Holy Trinity Kids Club had a successful and enjoyable series of meetings in the Hay Hall, Carrigart up until the lockdown in March of this year. However, because of the dangers and uncertainties pertaining at present it has been decided not to reopen until further notice.

From the Registers
Baptism

Burial
Tuesday, 18th August: Charles (Charlie) Neely, Upper Kilmacloo, Creeslough.

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Clondevaddock, Rossnakill, Portsalon & Leatbeg
Priest in Charge: Rev David Griscome
Tel: 074 9192811

Tullyaughnish, Kilmacrennan, Killygarvan & Glenalla
Rector: Rev Canon Harry Gilmore
Tel. 0749151013  Email: tkgparishes@hotmail.com
Covid-safe meet up in the park. We have also had quite a few joyful christenings starting at the end of July (see below) and are planning for our first Covid-safe wedding!

Although it took a little more planning than an evening in the park might have taken previously, it was worth the effort to see some happy faces. We are now considering our options for the autumn term. If we have learnt one thing this year, it is that no-one but God knows what the future holds, and that if The Hub is to meet in any way, we will have to be creative and flexible.

Covid-19 in Letterkenny and Church Hill
With the gradual lifting of lockdown in the Republic, church services restarted in both parishes in July - physically distanced, with hand sanitiser, face masks and prayer cards put in place at least three days before the Service. Older people and young families have on the whole wisely stayed away and we have continued to do weekly Prayers at Home on Facebook Live. We have even upgraded the Rectory’s broadcasting studio even more - so now guests can do the bible readings. We have an even better camera and new video editing kit which means we can put church notices online, and we also broadcast Weekly Prayers on YouTube simultaneously with Facebook Live.

Over the summer it’s also been good to be able to meet people face-to-face too - either in church or visiting in people’s homes (or gardens). But with the increasing infection rates and stricter rules, we have had to cancel the various events we had hoped to run - barbeques and walks to get people together - except for the youth group who managed a

The Hub in the Park
The Hub is our parishes’ youth group, which normally meets on alternate Friday evenings at a youth venue in Letterkenny. That stopped during lockdown and after a while we started meeting online, following guidelines issued by the Church of Ireland Youth Department. In our one-hour meetings we played a game (e.g. a quiz or Scavenger Hunt), listened to a talk or watched a video and said a prayer to close. We also took part in On the Move, which was online this year. Although it was great to see everyone’s faces, it was difficult to allow for social interaction among the young people in these online meetings and it was always sad to say goodbye at the end of the hour.

When restrictions were lifted, we realised some young people were still not meeting up with anyone outside their household and wanted to allow the group to meet face-to-face. The simplest of plans, to go to the park on 31st July 2020, had to be carefully thought through in this time of Covid-19. We carried out a risk assessment and did an online induction with the leaders, who completed a returning-to-work form. Then we sent an information sheet about the planned trip to the young people and their parents. All that remained was to pray for good weather, because there was no Plan B! Thankfully, although it rained most of the day, after a short shower at the beginning of the evening, the weather was good.

We walked in small groups around the park and then gathered on the grass and divided into two teams for football rounders. The earlier rain had left the grass rather muddy, as the Rector and one Youth Leader found out when they both slipped! All good fun! Each young person had brought their own snack, so sitting at social distance, we paused for a rest and some much-needed time to socialise. All too soon it was time to join parents in the car park.

Finally, we congratulate those who have been, or are about to be, baptised: Alanna, Sofia, Theo, Sophia, Oliver and Callum, and those planning to marry soon: Eric and Nicole. And we look forward to that day with anticipation when we can all be together to worship God, to think and pray together, to socialise and to celebrate His great goodness to us.
Taughboyne with Craigadooish, All Saints & Killea

Rev Canon David Crooks: Rector and Rural Dean
Tel: 074 914 0135  Mob: 00447871974658
Email: dcrooks@eircom.net

All the Annual General Vestry meetings which were postponed at Easter because of the plague, have now been held. At each meeting, the Rector gave a report on the activities in the parish during the past sixteen months, and the Treasurers presented their reports. The new Select Vestries were elected. As this is a triennial year, Parochial Nominators and Diocesan Synodsmen and their supplementals were also elected. Because of the pandemic much, if not most, of our parish life and activity has been suspended. It was only possible to resume public worship on 12th July. Our most sincere thanks to Rev Mervyn Peoples who at a special meeting, explained the protocol for re-opening, and to those who provided hand sanitisers and masks etc.

Many congratulations to Sean McClafferty who has completed the Diocesan Reader course. Sean will be commissioned in All Saints’ Church on Sunday 27th September at 11.00am. The Service will be the Holy Communion. The Celebrant and preacher will be the Bishop, the Rt Rev’d Andrew Forster. This will be the first visit of our new Bishop, who will be in Craigadooish that Sunday as well. We shall look forward to welcoming him. Congratulations Sean from all of us.

Harvest Thanksgiving will be in Craigadooish at 9.45 and in All Saints at 11.00 on Sunday 4th October, and in Killea on Sunday 11th October, which will also be Killea Gift Sunday. It has been agreed that in these strange circumstances, visiting preachers will not be invited, but you will receive excellent sermons from our new Diocesan Reader! The Rector will be in residence at St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin on Sunday 4th October.

The electrical work at Taughboyne has now been completed, and at the time of writing, is still to be done at Craigadooish. This means that we can now return to Taughboyne and are fully covered by insurance. Taughboyne and Craigadooish are the most grateful recipients of the sum of €5,000, bequeathed to us in the will of the late Mrs Rita Pearson. The family will be assured of our most grateful thanks, and indeed, our deepest sympathies to them, to Bertha, to Noel and Jennifer and all the family. Mrs, or Nurse Pearson as she was known, was a wonderful lady.

Fahan Upper and Lower

Rector: Rev Judi McGaffin
Tel: 07834561433
Facebook: Fahanandbuncranachurchofireland  “Cherishing and connecting with all God’s children”

The past few months have continued to be very strange and have been a difficult time for so many people here in our local community and across the world. Normal routines have been disrupted, and there has been cause for great concern at home and abroad. Families have been bereaved and have had to grieve in a very unusual way; people have been and remain ill; jobs have been lost; relationships disrupted; education, health services, economies and so many other parts of all of our lives have been negatively impacted. During the lockdown and more recently - here in Inishowen as in so many other places worldwide - we haven’t been able to meet together as a church family but it has been wonderful that so many people have joined with our local Church family from all over the world to worship! Indeed it has been amazing how we have become a real and vibrant part of a global community worshipping God! A testimony to prayer and the faithful love of God! I have no doubt that God has been with us individually and as a community over the past few months - giving us hope and courage and introducing us to new people, unlocking creativity and helping us keep together and expand as a Church family, while guiding us in new ways of worship and new ministries. One of these ministries is the ministry of art/craft/photography. You can see some of the creativity that we have been sent from all over the world and from all ages, in the CJ section of this edition of n:vision! This has given a whole new dimension to worship online!

As you read this we will, I hope, have already returned to in - church worship in our church buildings, to worship in a way that is different to what went before. AND we will also be continuing our online worship as there may well be people who are not able to return to in-church worship, including some of our new online community! The online worship will take place on a Sunday at 6pm (Evening Prayer), Wednesday at 7pm (Compline) and Saturday morning 10am P.R.A.I.S.E. time (Prayers, Readings, Activites, Inspiration on Saturdays for Everyone!). Do join us online on our facebook page - fahanandbuncranachurchofireland (either live or after the event) and there you can also see all the wonderful creativity that has been unlocked!

“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you”. Isaiah 54 v 10
The Covid 19 plague has caused the suspension of most of our parish activities, and until Sunday 12th July, even our church services. However, we are open again. Our very grateful thanks to the Rev’d Mervyn Peoples who at two special meetings, one in Moville and the other in Malin, explained to us the protocol for re-opening our churches and returning to public worship. Thank you also to those who provided hand sanitisers and other necessities. Again, our thanks to the Rev’d Mervyn Peoples and to Mrs Maureen Williams for conducting public worship. I am constantly being told how much they are appreciated. Our thanks again to Canon Stanley Johnson who is no longer able to be available. One of the Annual General Vestry meetings which were postponed at Easter, has now been held. All Church officers, Church Wardens, Glebes Wardens, and this triennial year, Parochial Nominators and Diocesan Synodsmen and Select Vestry have been elected. In Culdaff, Mrs Karen McDermott has resigned as Vestry Secretary, Mrs Caroline Carey as Treasurer and Mr Alan Norris as Rector’s Glebes Warden, due to other commitments. Canon Crooks at Culdaff AGM on 2nd September, expressed deepest appreciation for their services. At the time of writing, Culdaff, Cloncha and Donagh AGMs are still to be held. Harvest Thanksgiving Services this year will be held on those Sundays in October as on the rota which has been distributed. It was agreed that because of the extraordinary circumstances, special visiting preachers would not be invited. Mrs Williams and Rev’d Mervyn Peoples will no doubt provide excellent Harvest sermons!

Christ Church, Culmore, Muff and St. Peter

Rector: Venerable Robert Miller, Archdeacon of Derry
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Website: www.cccmsp.org
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Our Vision: Transforming Community, Radiating Christ.

Our Vision Verse for 2020 is:
John 13:35 “By this all people will know you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

It’s all in a name: n:vision! What vision encourages us all at the moment? I find myself asking that question more and more; not only as a Church leader but in my own life as well. What do I want the world to be like? Life has been knocked out of the rut we have been in, and so things that were running along smoothly are a bit bumpy. I have found myself turning over these things in my mind and praying that I will have a clear sense of what God is calling me to in this time. I’m an optimist so my glass tends to be half full, but I like to think that I’m also being realistic about the challenges we face. These challenges are not meant to be faced alone but with God alongside us. As the autumn begins I want us to consider how we can build up one another in our faith. What can we be like and what can we do to nurture one another? The world now has become very bumpy for some people and as a Church, as God’s people, we have a calling. I see this as a calling to embody God’s values in the times we live. Communication with one another is essential if we are to offer support. If you are aware of anyone needing care from the Clergy then please let us know. We have a number of ways to provide appropriate pastoral care. ‘n:vision’ allows us to look at and consider how our sisters and brothers are facing the same challenges. I will be keeping an eye open to read what God has been doing across our diocesan family to see if there are some ideas we could employ across CCCMSP. If you have any thoughts of ways we, together, can encourage one another I’d love to hear from you. Our Sunday broadcasts at 11:00am (now from Christ Church weekly) and our Wednesday Broadcasts at 7:00pm have become important touchstones in our week. It is a time to pause and join in prayer and worship. Please continue to pass the word to others so they can join with us. Let us also continue to pray for one another as we follow God’s call to be salt and light, bringing hope to the world around us. Our weekly pattern on Facebook is going to continue and will be reviewed on a regular basis. This rhythm of worship is part of our calling to embody Jesus in the world around us.

Yours in Christ, Robert+
St. Augustine’s, Londonderry
Rector: Rev Nigel Cairns
Facebook: St. Augustine’s Church, Londonderry

One thing we noticed about drive-through church back in May, was the unity it brought across many believers from differing church backgrounds. Around eight different congregations were represented regularly in Bishop Street carpark, and the support from the inner-city churches was particularly encouraging. Whilst we continue to have the audio from our morning service broadcasting to the carpark for the few cars that are left, it would seem that an important legacy for the ‘city side’ going forward, is the capacity and willingness to work together across our churches for God’s kingdom.

Notwithstanding the above, like all congregations, we are counting our blessings that we have been allowed back into our church buildings for worship. Carpark is good when the weather is good! St Augustine’s had already opened for private prayer at the very end of May, so we already had the protocols of how we would accommodate in-church worship well established.

I would again pay tribute to the team who continue to clean for, and steward, proceedings on a Sunday morning and I would thank the congregation for their forbearance and faithfulness to the ‘wee church on the walls.’ Hopefully by the time this edition is being read we will have successfully managed to reinstate our Tuesday morning Holy Communion Services, and we will have plans well in hand to reinstate Kidzklub and St. Augustine’s Youth (STAY).

An exciting opportunity came for us in the lead up to the city’s Good Relations Week. We were very pleased to welcome the Mayor of the city and to facilitate a photoshoot for the promotional materials. We were equally pleased to be able to open as a heritage venue every morning during Good Relations Week itself. The most pleasing aspect of all was the making of a virtual tour, with annotations telling about the stained-glass windows and the church furnishings, as well as an abridged history of the monastic site itself. A preview of the tour is available at https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=941FYxvgAfo

The General Vestry was held on 1st September 2020, and I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all who served in the various offices during the past year. I would also like to thank all those who were willing to stand for election for the ensuing year and look forward to working and serving alongside them.

Leckpatrick & Dunnalong
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The Pandemic Trundles On
We all now know that this pandemic is still with us and probably will be with us well into the New Year. So many things have changed and it will be a long time before we get back to what we have known as normal. There are some positives arising from the lockdown. I sense there is more of a community spirit as there were many genuine acts of kindness afforded to many people. People around the parishes are still talking about the provision of a hot meal each week for twelve weeks to our older parishioners and those shielding; the amount of food we delivered in partnership with the Brighter Ballymagorry Community Group and the Artigarvan Covid 19 Response 19 Group. Food was also distributed to families with autistic children. These were also looked on as a sort of pastoral visit as were telephone calls. It has been a very sad time in the parishes with 13 deaths since lockdown. It has been very difficult

Continued on page 44...
It has been great to return to in-church worship from the beginning of August, although numbers are low but increasing every week as people become more confident and fully aware of the protocols. Our service times have changed to 10am at Dunnalong and 11am at Leckpatrick for a thirty minute service. We will continue to live-stream from one of the churches on the Facebook page every Sunday.

I remember a few weeks ago listening to someone on television saying, ‘We are just going to have to learn to live with this virus’ and I thought ‘so very true’. In the meantime, keep alert, be careful, follow government guidelines and keep praying. There are better times ahead.

An Irish Blessing
May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand. Amen

Donagheady
Rector: Rev Dr Robin Stockitt
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Facebook: St James, Donagheady

We are delighted to get back to in-church worship every Sunday and also streaming on the Church Facebook page. The Easter Vestry happened in early September and we are pleased that everyone agreed to go back on the Select Vestry until next year.

A big thank you to Revd Ken McLaughlin and the Diocesan Readers who lead our services every Sunday in the absence of our Rector Robin, who has been on sick leave.

Robin will be back with us for the month of October. He will then be off for a further three months after more surgery.

Thanks to all our Wardens, Secretary, Treasurer and Church Service Covid team.

Camus-Juxta-Mourne (Strabane)
Rector: Rev John White
Facebook: Christ Church, Strabane @ChristChurchStrabane
Our Vision... ‘Preach the Word... be shaped by the Word’.

I wonder how many of us remember the simplicity of childhood. In the summer, which has come and gone unnoticed, what did we do? Waking up was a great idea, and waking your mum and dad up was even better. You got up, went outside and played all day. You knew when to come home - when the street lights came on. Yes, life was simple. What was there to worry about? Ice cream had no calories. Your imagination had no boundaries. Life had no salaries. You never thought of climbing the corporate ladder. You’d spend your time climbing trees. And if you skinned your knees with an unexpected and accidental fall, it was a sign of bravery, not a case for a lawsuit.

Whatever happened to the simplicity of childhood? It got complicated. Stuff happened. You forgot how simple life could be.

For a few short months this year life was so simple. Stay safe. Keep your distance. Save the NHS. The mantra the government kept repeating was a great way to live. We had a song so we would know how long to wash our hands.

Church had left the building. So simple. So straightforward. And all the while day followed day, again almost unnoticed,
so that we didn’t really know what day it was. Then... then... lockdown ended. Life got more complicated than ever. Churches seeking to open had to follow strict protocols. Was it one metre or two? How do I greet people in church? Who is that behind the mask? Will life ever be the same again? Probably not. How could it? For some, the death of a loved one due to Covid 19 means that 2020 will go down in the annals of history for the wrong reason.

For some, our dreams of what the future might hold have been dashed, or at least, postponed indefinitely. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ has great dreams for each one of us. In this life He offers us joy, while in the next life, perfection. What a great way to simplify life! Let Jesus apply forgiveness for your past. Give you strength to see you through today. And then, bring hope to show a clear path to the future.

That wonderful verse from the Letter to the Hebrews comes to mind: ‘Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily ensnares us’. [Hebrews 12:1]

Isn’t it wonderful to declutter? Isn’t it wonderful to receive forgiveness for our sin? Isn’t it wonderful just to slow down and take stock? If it’s been a while since we did that, now we know why life seems so crazy.

If these last few months have taught us anything, it is that all the things we thought we couldn’t do without, we did do without. And we survived! Life was so simple. Now we’re complicating it again. Have we learnt nothing?

God Bless

Urney and Sion Mills
Rector: Rev Jonathan McFarland
Facebook: Parish of Urney Christ Church and Church of the Good Shepherd @urneyparish

“The earth, O Lord is full of your steadfast love; teach me Your statutes” Psalm 119:64

This month has seen many of our young people return to school and university for the start of a new academic year. This is far from being a normal year. For some, they will be returning to their place of learning after five long months due to the Coronavirus.

Disease has also been coupled with disorder in our world this year. Disorder, destruction and death have spilled out onto the streets of many cities in America. Social unrest has also put a strain on governments and our systems of law and order.

In church, our worship has been disrupted like never before and people are asking ‘when will things ever get back to normal?’ You might imagine, in all this chaos, where is God and where is the Christian hope that is so precious to us? Psalm 119:64 reminds us that God is never shaken, He never loses control. His steadfast love remains with us.

When we lift our hearts and minds away from the troubles of this world and away from the burdens that we carry as individuals, we will be reminded of God’s compassion and mercy.

When we turn to God and have our hearts filled with His steadfast love we will understand that the goodness of God can be seen everywhere. The best evidence for seeing that God is good, is to look at a heart that is full of His love. Then the proofs of that love spring up everywhere.

May our prayer be that God will teach us more of His statutes, His law, His ways. Then we will see that His goodness is widespread and that it leads us to desire more of Him.

Yours in Christ
Jonathan

God Bless
I must thank all parishioners and all in our community for their support, encouragement, patience and understanding. We have been, and continue to be, brought closer to God and closer to each other. We have found how deep our bonds in Christ are. The pandemic is not over, but with confidence in that which is certain, we rejoice in the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Finally, it is fitting in our Diocesan magazine to pay tribute to Mr. Ivan Clarke who served our Diocese for decades on Diocesan Synod. Ivan passed to glory in May and will be greatly missed by us all. Ivan served as Parochial Nominator, Parish Secretary and Parish Reader with wise and godly leadership. He was a faithful servant to all Diocesan activities, events and services. We remember Ivan’s family and all who have lost loved ones in recent months.

Peter

Drumclamph & Clare, Langfield Upper & Lower

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Facebook: Drumclamph ClareandLangfield

Church services will continue in Drumclamph and Clare at 10am on alternate Sundays. The schedule follows this pattern: Drumclamph Sunday 4th October at 10am. Clare Sunday 11th October at 10am.

The Clare harvest will be on Sunday morning 27th September at 10am. The guest preacher is Mr. Peter Clampett.

The Drumclamph harvest will be on Sunday morning 4th October at 10am. The guest preacher is Mr. David Bell.

Church services will continue in Lower Langfield at 11:15am each Sunday until further notice. The Lower Langfield harvest will be on Sunday Morning 11th October at 11:15am. The guest preacher is Mrs. Kaye Nesbitt. Please note that the morning service will be held in Lower Langfield church hall on Sunday 27th September at 11:15 am, on account of a wedding service to be held in the church.

Harvest decorations in all churches are recommended to take place on the Wednesday before the harvest service. (It takes 3 days for the virus to die out on surfaces) Harvest decorations are
of the clergy. The rector is not permitted to visit anyone in hospital. The rector should be informed of anyone who is in hospital so that he can tell the hospital chaplains. The hospital chaplains are only allowed to visit parishioners if they have been asked by the rector. Thank you everyone for your patience and understanding in these difficult times.

Helper of men who turn to you, Light of men in the dark, Creator of all that grows from seed, Promoter of all spiritual growth, Have mercy, Lord, on me. And make me a temple fit for you. Do not look too closely at my sins, For if you are quick to notice my faults I shall not dare to appear before you. In your great mercy, In your boundless love, Wash away my sins. By the hands of Jesus Christ. Your only child, the chief healer of souls.

Edenderry & Clanabogan
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Perseverance
George Friedrich Handel was a failure. Bankrupted, in great physical pain, and the victim of plots to sabotage his career, the once-great composer scheduled a “farewell” appearance in London in April 1741. To the London elite, it looked like this “German nincompoop”, as he was once called, was through. That summer, however, he composed the Messiah, which not only brought him back into the spotlight, but is still deemed by some to be “an epitome of Christian faith”. Discouragement came early. His father wanted him to be a lawyer, not a musician. Even after he was able to take up a musical career, he preferred the out-of-fashion operas to the more popular music of the day - which often meant playing to empty halls. Never mind, he joked, an empty venue would mean great acoustics. He didn’t joke for long. In 1737 Handel’s opera company went bankrupt, and he suffered what seems to have been a mild stroke. But to make matters worse, his latest music fascination - the oratorio (a composition for orchestra and voices telling a sacred story without costumes, scenery or dramatic action) was his most controversial yet. His first oratorio (the first of its kind in English) Esther was met with outrage by the Church. A Bible story was being told by “common mummers”, and even worse, the words of God were being spoken in the theatre!

In 1739 advertisements for Israel in Egypt were torn down by devout Christians, who also disrupted its performances. All of this angered the devoutly Lutheran Handel. As his friend Sir John Hawkins commented, “Throughout his life he manifested a deep sense of religion. In conversation he would frequently declare the pleasure he felt in setting the Scriptures to music, and how contemplating the many sublime passages in the Psalms had contributed to his edification.” Deeply depressed and now threatened with debtor’s prison, Handel was visited by his friend Charles Jennens, who had written a libretto about the life of Christ with the text completely taken from the Bible. Would Handel compose the music for it? he asked. Handel answered that he would and estimated its completion in a year.

Handel began composing the Messiah in August 1741 and worked like a man obsessed. He rarely left his room and rarely touched his meals. But in 24 days he had composed 260 pages - an immense physical feat. When he finished writing what would become known as the Hallelujah Chorus, he said, “I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God himself.”

Though the performance of the piece again caused controversy (Jonathan Swift, author of Gulliver’s Travels and then the Dean of Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin, was outraged and initially refused to allow his musicians to participate), the premiere, a benefit performance on 13 April 1742, at Dublin’s Fishamble Street Musick Hall, was a sensation. Still it took nearly a year for Messiah to be invited to London and it was not very popular there at the start. By 1745 Handel was again playing to empty houses and close to poverty. Not until his oratorio Judas Maccabeus did Handel (and with him Messiah) reach the pinnacle of his career. Until his death, Handel conducted 30 performances of Messiah (none at Christmastime, for Handel deemed it a Lenten piece), only one of which was in a church, Bristol Cathedral. In that audience sat John Wesley. “I doubt if that congregation was ever so serious at a sermon as they were during this performance,” the founder of Methodism remarked.
As I write, we have now resumed ‘in-church’ worship in both St Columba’s and Mountfield. Although the services look very different to what any of us have been used to, we are very glad of the opportunity to once again meet for communal worship. As we enter the winter months, we pray for God’s guidance and blessing on our church communities and on all in the wider community amidst the ongoing uncertainty as to how long we will need to keep this going. I thank you all for your assistance in keeping within the regulations given to us by the House of Bishops and the state - the regulations are, ultimately, there for each person’s safety and protection. The building project at St Columba’s is now well underway, and we hope will soon be at the halfway point. Recently, Revd Sean and Canon Clarke had the opportunity to climb the scaffolding to the top of the spire. Needless to say, the views were excellent. But they were also very glad to see the great progress being made, and to see the stonework on the tower and spire looking so fresh and well during its restoration. Please keep the builders and all who are working onsite in your prayers as the continue to work - particularly coming into the season of bad and windy weather!

Parish organisations will not be meeting this term due to ongoing restrictions in place for our safety. Pastoral visiting is taking place on a need by need basis, and Revd Sean assures you that if you need his prayer or support he is there for you. Please get in contact if you need to make him aware of any pastoral situations where support is needed.

Today is the first day of Autumn and what a strange Summer it has been! Like thousands of other holiday makers our proposed overseas trip was cancelled by the tour operator, and even ‘plan B’, a mini-break in a hotel in Sligo, fell foul of current covid restrictions! Despite that we have so much to be thankful for. The past six months has given everyone the opportunity to reassess their priorities in life, and hopefully it has even prompted us to thank God for the innumerable blessings which He bestows upon us each day - truly His mercies are new every morning. We are now living in what has become known as the ‘new normal’ with hand-washing, mask-wearing, and social distancing being the order of the day. Life as we knew it prior to the start of the coronavirus pandemic is no more, but we have to make the most of it. Without doubt we are living in challenging and difficult times and it looks as if we are not out of the woods yet. We have no way of knowing what the future may bring but now is a time to continue to trust God for He has brought us safely through thus far and He will continue to see us through.

A story is told about Martin Luther, the great Reformation leader. Reportedly, Luther was once discouraged with the cares and trials of life. He had temporarily forgotten the greatness and faithfulness of God, and had become consumed with worry. One morning Luther came downstairs to breakfast. His wife greeted him, dressed in black mourning clothes.

“Oh,” said Luther, “who has died?”
“Don’t you know?” she replied, “God is dead.” “How can you say such a foolish and wicked thing?” he asked. “How can God die? He will live through all eternity. He never changes He can never die.”
“Then,” asked his wife, “why are you so discouraged, if God is still alive?”
“Then I saw,” said Luther, “what a wise woman my wife was. She was trying to make me see that God is truly the same, and that He loves us and will take care of us, and we do not need to be afraid. He is always the same wonderful God.”

Surely there is a lesson there to be learned by all of us today.
A Time of Uncertainty

Who could have predicted at the start of 2020, that before March had ended, we would be in a state of lockdown trying to avoid the catastrophe of a global pandemic? It has to be recognised that for each of us, ‘lockdown’ will have been a very different experience. Some of us, myself included, will have been able to draw some very positive experiences from the last 6 months. Lockdown has helped me develop a fresh and practical approach to ministry. I have been forced to embrace online and open-air services, perfect my technological skills, be inventive in my approach to pastoral care, and write those reflection booklets, that I had put on hold for the last 6 years.

For many people ‘lockdown’ presented them with an opportunity to spend more time with their immediate family. While, for others, life’s circumstances have meant that, for them, ‘lockdown’ has been a time when they have experienced an acute sense of isolation. As one writer put it so well: “We were all in the same boat, but we each had different cabins.”

Undoubtedly, we have spent the last six months sailing through uncharted territory, and as we resume ‘in-church worship’, the realisation that we are still sailing in uncharted territory has hit home. We are a bit like the Israelites who stepped out of bondage in Egypt, full of hope, with their sights set on the Promised Land, only to find themselves surrounded by uncertainty. The normality of life, including our church life, is surrounded by uncertainty. We are faced with many questions, such as, what will our Harvest and Christmas celebrations look like? When will our organisations re-open? How can we encourage our children/young people to engage in online Sunday School? And so, the list goes on, reminding us that we are living through a time of uncertainty.

Yet, as we turn to the word of God, we find the consistent message that, while this world may be uncertain, unstable and always changing, God never changes. James 1:17 tells us that: He does not change like shifting shadows. In Malachi 3:6 God says: I the Lord do not change. Indeed, the word of God is infiltrated with the consistent message that, God never changes.

God never changes, He is rock solid, and in His word God assures us that His promises stand for ever: Isaiah 40:8: The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Psalm 119:89: Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

God never changes, His word is firmly fixed in the heavens, which means that in those times when the future seems uncertain, we can know and rely upon the promises of our unchanging God whose Word endures forever.

Isaiah 40:28: Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.
Breaking News: The Select Vestry for Ballyscullion Parish voted unanimously on Tuesday 1st September to reopen St Tida’s Parish Church on Sunday 4th October, circumstances permitting.

As we look forward to returning to church worship we have been encouraged by the views and interaction with our continuing Facebook Virtual Worship service. We have a ‘full’ online service, including the confession, collect, full sermon, creed and prayers. Added to that we have many hymns recorded by our choir and parishioners and two hymns are played during the service. The readings are read by parishioners who record themselves at home and the IT man pulls it all together. Thank goodness for smart phones, Dropbox & Facebook!

Sadly Harvest Thanksgiving won’t be the same this year but again the wonder of technology will come into play. For me, particularly as a Padre in the Royal Army Chaplains Department and a chaplain in the Royal British Legion, a scaled back Remembrance Sunday will be hard to take but We Will Remember Them to the best of our ability under COVID restrictions.

Finally, Ballyscullion Parish thanks God for leading us through this coronavirus nightmare and our hope and trust in Jesus assures us that better times lie ahead. We also salute the work and dedication of the NHS and all in the health and caring community and may they be blessed by our Heavenly Father for all they do in these strange, difficult and trying times.

Rev Brian Hassan NSM in Charge
For decades at least, in the school grounds adjacent to St Paul’s Church and hall, stood this most beautiful shaped fir tree. Well that is until earlier this year, when a number of the larger branches were both cracked and broken simply by the weight of a fall of snow.

Thankfully, although a bit of an obstruction had occurred between the hall and the church and a terrible mess from the debris was created, nothing or no-one (apart from the tree itself) was damaged by this very unfortunate event!

As the tree was in fact in the grounds of the former high school, the Education Authority were contacted and promptly responded. That very same day they arrived to assess the extent of the problem and their own staff cleared up the immediate mess. That said it was agreed that a tree surgeon should come to thoroughly examine the tree and ascertain if it was healthy, or indeed safe! Sadly, for the tree the diagnosis and the prognosis were not good. The tree surgeon reported that the tree was not a healthy tree and that there was no alternative but to take it down! Then just a matter of a few weeks later the guys in the van arrived and within a few short hours the magnificent fir tree was no more. And it was heart breaking for many in the parish to see that huge, beautiful fir tree disappear from before their very eyes.

So, why am I telling you all of that? Well because I’ve been overwhelmed by the number of people in the community who have stopped me in the street to comment that they’d noted something very different when they passed our church buildings but they couldn’t for the life of them work out what the difference was.

Then when I explained about the tree, they got it - it was the light of course. They had not noticed or realised how much darkness there had been around the place until they had seen the ‘LIGHT’! Now isn’t that the truth folks. Yes it’s sad about the tree - heart-breaking and yet even in the darkest of circumstances, like the COVID-19 situation we are all living through, when the light of God is able to shine it can make a whole world of difference!

Which is extremely good news! Amen!
Kilrea, Tamlaght O’Crilly Upper & Lower

Rector: Rev Gary Millar
Facebook: The Parishes of Kilrea, Tamlaght O’Crilly Upper & Lower @kilreatamlaghtocrillyupperlower

Like many others, I grew up with a very distorted image of the Church partly due to the nursery rhyme: “Here’s the Church, and here’s the steeple, open the door and see all the people. Here’s the parson going upstairs, and here he is saying his prayers.” For many Christians the Church is the building or the event that is held on a Sunday morning with music, prayers and a sermon. COVID19 closed the building, stopped the events which happened on a Sunday and yet thankfully the Church has continued to meet. I have been so encouraged to see so many amazing incarnations of the Church over the past few months, through Facebook, YouTube, Zoom and other social media platforms.

We have learned to use Social Media to evangelise, to broadcast our weekly services and prayer meetings, encouraging families to worship together at home and discover new ways of serving one another. During lockdown we had 2 services every week, 2 prayer meetings, a youth and children’s zoom party and a quiz.

I am grateful to:

- Timothy who has spent many long hours directing his father, editing and putting our services together.
- Timmy for coordinating our New Beginnings services, preaching and being our weekly Zoom quiz master.
- Gillian for her ministry through the youth and children’s zoom parties.
- Melissa, Barkley, Timothy and Hannah for leading us in worship.
- Everyone who embraced technology to record readings and welcome messages.
- Everyone who helped with the children’s talks.

We send our love and prayers to Martha Wallace, Tamlaght O’Crilly who celebrated her 100th birthday and to May Cunningham and Willie Faulkner who are 101.

Aghadowey

Rector: Rev Louise Crawford-McCafferty
Tel: 07890745359
Facebook: St Guaire’s Church Aghadowey
Email: louiscrawfordmccafferty@yahoo.com

I write this on the 2nd of September 2020, a few days before we go back into our church building. It’s been a long 6 months and I am really looking forward to seeing some old and not so old faces again. As many of our churches and schools are returning to ‘normal’, I wonder how many times you have said to yourself and others, “When will we get back to normal?”, or “Will things ever be normal again?”

Well friends, Christians were never meant to be normal! We’ve always been holy troublemakers; we’ve always been creators of uncertainty; agents of dimension that’s incompatible with the status quo; we do not accept the world as it is, but we insist on the world becoming the way that God wants it to be. And the Kingdom of God is different from the patterns of this world.

So as we go back to in-church services please be abnormally nice and kind to your Churchwardens, and people serving as ushers on a Sunday morning. As St. Paul says to the Ephesians, “Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

As we look forward to a different Harvest Season, we believe in:

- Faithful gratitude that the God who has given good gifts has more good gifts to give.
- While God’s gifts are welcome, in fact they do disrupt.
- God’s gift of truth disrupts our systemic mendacity that denies our lethal social practices.
- God’s gift of generosity contradicts our parsimonious selfishness.
- God’s gift of mercy interrupts our hard-hearted indifference.
- God’s gift of justice exposes our systemic injustice.

God’s gifts amount to an inconvenient reality among us; they remind us that what we have come to regard as “normal” continues a deep abnormality in which we may have no complacency.

This Harvest let us ponder how the world may be when God is reckoned to be at the centre of it. As the hymn says, “All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above.” And we are on the receiving end! Amen
Let’s be intentional…

At the 2019 Annual Easter Vestry I explained what the bible (Acts 2v42-47) portrays as God’s purpose for his Church - to be a ‘WELL’ Church. This means the Church is to focus its time and talents on Worshipping, Evangelising, Loving & Learning. These ministries grow through prayer and service. Below is a short description (despite the pandemic) of what we have been doing:

Worshipping - in addition to our regular Sunday and midweek services we had two well attended evening praise services. We also enjoyed increased young people involvement in the monthly Family All Age Service.

Evangelising - The thirty people who attended the Alpha course in the autumn found it insightful and refreshing.

Loving our local community by providing monthly scones & traybakes for the Macosquin Primary School staff and a donation of £1,000 (proceeds from a parish Big Breakfast) to buy much needed technology and books for the school. Easter afternoon tea and a Harvest lunch were also enjoyed by senior church members.

Learning is a lifelong activity. We had an IJM (International Justice Mission) bible study and a Network Course (helping people to discover their gifts and place in the Church).

Praying is the strength of the Church. We started a monthly prayer meeting to provide an opportunity for us to bring our concerns to God, to ask for His kingdom to come and to listen for His voice.

Serving one another grows our faith and friendships. A special thank you to the churchwardens (Louise Kennedy and Russell Kennedy) for their devotion to duty and to our Glebewardens & Select Vestry who looked after our furnishing, fabrics and finance, to a very high standard.

Again this year we want to be intentional in striving to be a ‘WELL’ church by:

Worshipping Inviting and encouraging our family/friends to worship with us at 9am & 10.30am services. Let us be intentional in gathering the church flock back together.

Evangelising I’ve found many conversations I’m having these days seem to start or finish with the same topic, Covid-19! Whilst there are many concerns today let us be intentional in communicating to others that God is a rock & refuge, brings peace, is a source of new life & contentment and is our cause of hope for the future.

Loving Loving one another through these strange and bewildering times will mean sticking with people and being intentional, patient, having a listening ear and being kind.

Learning We’ll be intentional in focusing on God’s character guiding the formation of our character, as we study the Max Lucado book, ‘Just like Jesus’ on Wednesday nights 7-8pm in September. The dates and information will be on the Facebook page.

Prayer Pray for people’s health, especially mental health. Pray intentionally for people to fill their minds with the good news of God’s salvation, assurance and praise.

Service Serving is a form of leadership, an example to others, it brings glory to God and builds up his Church. Thank you to those who continue the Church’s ministry. We especially remember Mrs Maxine West, the rector’s church warden, Mr Ivan Doherty, the people’s, Mr Russell Kennedy, the rector’s glebewarden, Mr Garry Anderson, the people’s glebewarden and the Select Vestry, for committing to serve us this year.

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Rector: Rev Donard Collins
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“May we show Christ’s love + teach his Word.”
Since the middle of March all our lives have been changed. With regard to church activities and worship these have been most trying for many. The suspension of public worship left many of us finding Sunday to be the longest day of the week.

Thankfully on Sunday 12th July we, in Christ Church, were able to return to a limited form of worship. This has continued successfully to date at 11.00am on Sundays. Many of us miss the sacredness of the early 8.30am Holy Communion service. We hope and pray that this service along with Evening Prayer at 6.00pm will be resumed.

At present we appreciate the opportunity to participate in the 11.00am shortened service, enhanced by the input of our organists. I am also grateful to all those from the Select Vestry who have made this possible whilst still adhering to governmental and diocesan regulations.

We are mindful of parishioners who are shielding and cannot participate in church worship. Our thanks go to Martin for keeping our Facebook page up to date.

This edition of n:vision will be published at a time when we celebrate our Harvest Thanksgiving. Spring and summer brought mixed weather; rain, storm, floods and sunshine – we had them all.

Certain crops have suffered and have not been as plentiful as in previous years. But God has provided and we will all receive enough, more than enough to sustain us. “We are all in this together” and we will receive our share as God has promised.

Christ Church, Castlerock re-opened on 19th July, thanks to the hard work of our Covid Working Group. The joint services are broadcast live on Facebook (@CastlerockDunboe) and uploaded afterwards to Youtube, thanks to our nascent ‘techie’ team. It all causes me to reflect on what ‘Church’ is. It’s easy to say Church is the people and not the building. But we’re a family of people, and a family home is a precious thing, full of memories, the product of many years of settling in, changing and maturing. It was indeed joyous to be back in beautiful Christ Church for this reason, whether in person or online. Our online presence allows us to include in our common life, people who were unable to join us for worship for years before the pandemic. We can see that people on the periphery of parish life have engaged online too. It’s hard to slip in undetected in a friendly, local church. Livestreamed worship provides a safe place for seekers for whom the pandemic has perhaps caused the stirrings of faith. Even so, there’s much that still needs thought. Is online worship equal to physical presence? What about the Eucharist? Does it matter if we watch the service back later in the day instead of live at 10am? In a crisis, God has a way of testing us and bringing good out of bad things. Without in any way wishing to minimize the great suffering caused by Covid, we are already asking questions about what kind of church we are in Castlerock and Dunboe, and what we’re here for. In the Bible, in the wake of crises like the Babylonian invasion and exile, the Jewish faith develops, matures and becomes more centred on the scriptures. My prayer is that our churches in this parish can experience a deepening of faith as we continue to grapple with our response to this terrible virus. As more friends return to public worship week by week, we are planning to re-open St Paul’s soon. MU and Kids’ Club are still active in different ways. All this has been possible by the committed and prayerful teams of people to whom I would like to say a huge thank you!

Pax et bonum, Rev. Chris Mac Bruithin
At the time of writing this, we are some 5 ½ months into our four church buildings being closed for public worship because of Covid. Many said this would be the end of our churches - yet the Church goes on - albeit in so many different ways to the conventional worship we had been used to. In our parishes we have been on Facebook, and on DVD, audio CD, or printed copy for those who cannot access social media. We also have a Whatsapp Fellowship with about 60 parishioners from across our churches - many of whom didn’t really know each other before now.

In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 18 and verse 20, Jesus says “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” As we have continued to worship around our phones and tablets and computer screens in small family gatherings - in our two’s or three’s in His Holy Name - we pray that the Holy Spirit has truly been amongst us at these times.

Our parishes may not be gathered together in person just yet - but within the next few weeks we certainly hope to take our first steps across the thresholds of our church buildings. Things have most certainly changed for us all and perhaps may never be the same again, but our God has remained faithful to us and for that we, as a Parish, are all truly thankful!

Brian Robinson, Diocesan Reader
Harvest
It’s hard to imagine a Harvest service without a lusty congregational rendering of “Come, ye thankful people come”, yet, as things stand, that’s exactly the situation we face this year. I read about a student on her first solo trip away from home. She was having such a good time that it was only after a few weeks that she remembered to call home. Her mother answered the phone: “Are you ok?” she asked. “Do you want to come home?” Suddenly that girl realised she’d fallen into the habit of only calling her parents when she needed their help or support. She resolved, then and there, to make a point of calling to share all the positive experiences she was having as well. Isn’t it funny how we often treat God the same way? Make no mistake, just like the mother in the story, God is always ready to help us. But he loves it even more when we turn to him to say thank you for the blessings he has poured on us. Even though we might not be able to sing our favourite hymns we’ll be having our Harvest Thanksgiving Service as usual. It’s on Sunday 4th October at 11am.

Blessings out of Buffetings
We plan to publish a book of recipes, tips, photos, stories, poems and encouraging words that people have found helpful during lockdown. We’d particularly love readers of n:vision to submit an item. Please contact Melonie on mm06mel@aol.com or phone her on 07720405555. Electronic submissions can also be sent on stcaniceschurch@outlook.com. To help cover the cost of printing the book we suggest a donation of £2 for each item you include. Simply text BLESSINGS to 70085 to donate £2. The book will be produced to a high standard and will be available in time for Christmas. Gift problem solved!

Reopening Church
By the time that you read this St Canice’s should be reopen for public worship, although limited in the numbers due to the coronavirus precautions. Please call or text our Parish Administrator Mr. Willie Robb on 07719516879 to book your place.

Online Worship
We know that not everyone will feel able yet to attend Sunday worship so we are making services available as usual on the St Canice’s YouTube Channel.

Food Bank
We’ve recently brought our first post-lockdown delivery to the food bank and it was particularly gratefully received. You can again bring items and place them in the container in church. Sadly, the need has never been greater.

We are living in very uncertain times. Everywhere we turn—in print, on the news, or on social media—everyone is talking about this coronavirus. Fear, loneliness and stress have become companions in our homes and in the community. As we deal with this virus and as we enter these next months of uncertainty about another spike, let us remember who our hope for the future rests upon, Jesus! Jesus is our living hope! Jesus dispels doubts and fears and pride because Jesus lives! Your faith is in God’s hands! And what’s the result of this sure hope and God-protected faith? The salvation of your souls! We’ll have times of struggle, times of sorrow, times of doubt, times of suffering and trials, times of the Coronavirus but we can face them because Jesus lives!

Because he lives I can face tomorrow; because he lives all fear is gone; because I know he holds the future, and life is worth the living just because he lives.

Jesus is our living hope! Amen.

During the lockdown All Saints’ Church has been focusing on the next phase of Parish development.

Men’s Shed
Mental health is a major problem especially among men. The church is delighted to be announcing that it will be opening a “Men’s Shed” in Arnold House right beside the All Saints Centre over the coming months - the date to be finalised shortly. A ‘Men’s Shed’ is a community-based project, where men can come together to learn, share skills and make long-lasting friendships together. Most Sheds engage in activities such as woodwork, gardening, carpentry and community work. However, there are other interests’ that Men’s Sheds focus on, such as music, fishing, restoration work, snooker, table tennis. Men’s Sheds are places where men can find meaning and purpose, where a friend is always there. In a Men’s Shed they
say the greatest tool is the kettle, because there’s nothing more powerful than a cup of tea and a chat. There are many reasons to join a Men’s Shed. If you are someone who has health problems, retired, unemployed and still have a lot to offer, you might want to share your skills with other men. Or if you have found yourself in need of a friend, whatever your reason is, you will be made very welcome at Clooney’s Men Shed. If you would like more information or want to join please contact the Rev David or email Sarah in the Parish Office.

Charity and Coffee Shop
In conjunction with opening the Men’s Shed, All Saints’ will open its new Charity and Coffee Shop “Reloved” in Arnold House. The date to be finalised. All proceeds for the Charity and Coffee Shop will go towards parish funds and the extension project which will begin next year. Over the lockdown the Rev David held several concerts on Facebook for different charities. The NHS, All Saints’ Church, Teen Challenge, Smiles Foundation, Grangewood Hospital. The total raised for all the charities was the amazing sum of £14,483.00.

Congratulations Rev David well done!

All Saints Harvest Celebrations
Takes place on Sunday 3rd October at 11am in Church and live on Facebook. Our guest speaker this year is Bishop Andrew Forster.

All Saints Mission Week
Monday 12th - Friday 15th October at 7.45pm. In church and live on Facebook. Guest Speaker each evening - Bishop Andrew Forster.

Glendermott & New Buildings
Rector: Rev Canon Robert Boyd
Tel: 028 7134 3001
Facebook: Glendermott and New Buildings Church of Ireland

We now have a new member of staff within the parish, the Rev Iain McAleavy who was ordained Priest by Bishop Andrew in Glendermott on Sunday 13th September. With the present restrictions in place this had to be an invitation only service, but it was still a very special occasion for Iain and the parish. Iain is now in residence at the Curate’s accommodation in Newbuildings and has been out and about saying hello following social distancing procedures. We look forward to Iain’s ministry among us and please do remember him in your prayers.

Usually in September we are preparing to reopen various organisations for a wide range of activities. Unfortunately that is not possible this year and we have to find other ways of meeting up in order to protect one another. Full details will appear in the Parish Magazine and on our Facebook page. We hope to widen our social media presence in the near future.

Thank you to all who helped to reopen the two church buildings at the start of July. The various stewards rose to the challenge and by now it is almost second nature to everyone and it is good to hear people say that they feel safe in the churches on a Sunday morning. Thank you to all the parishioners who to a person have been wearing masks from the second Sunday in July, well in advance of the requirement to do so. Numbers at the shortened Sunday services are growing and to accommodate those who are not yet ready to join us, we are still recording one of the morning services and putting it up on social media later in the day.

We congratulate all those who were appointed, elected to various positions at the recent special Easter General Vestry meeting held on Thursday 3rd September in the Canon Kelly Hall. Thank you again to all who work often behind the scenes to keep the Parish running as smoothly as possible throughout the years.
The Service of the Installation of Canons
The Service of the Installation of The Reverend Robert Boyd, the Rector of The Parish of Glendermott and Newbuildings, Londonderry and of The Reverend Katie McAteer, the Pastoral Director of The Grouped Parishes of Christ Church, Londonderry, Culmore, Muff and Saint Peter, will be held in Saint Columb’s Cathedral on Wednesday 7th October at 7.30pm. The Preacher will be The Right Reverend Andrew Forster. Please note that attendance at this service is by invitation only in order to comply with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic government guidelines.

The Reverend Canon Patrick Whitworth
The Reverend Canon Patrick Whitworth is a direct descendant of the Earl Bishop, The Right Reverend Frederick Augustus Hervey. Patrick’s grandmother, Alice Hervey, was the great great granddaughter of the Earl Bishop. Patrick will be visiting Londonderry in October and he will participate in the service in the Cathedral on Sunday 11th October at 11.00 am. Patrick, who is also an author, is retired, having served in various parishes in The Church of England, most recently in Bath.

Sunday Service
Since March the service in Saint Columb’s Cathedral on Sunday morning has been recorded by Robert McGonigle, assisted by his wife Linda. From a printed form of service, then by mobile phone and later by pre-recording in the setting of the Cathedral, the service is now recorded live each Sunday. Parishioners and friends can continue to watch the service later in the day on the Cathedral Facebook page or by logging on to www.stcolumbscathedral.org and going to ‘Worship’ on the menu bar.

I hope that together we will cultivate an attitude of gratitude and I leave you with a few words of Gandalf to Frodo from JR Tolkien, Lord of the Rings, “I wish it need not have happened in my time” said Frodo. “So do I,” said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”

Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy One.
Rev Adam Pullen
The name Frederick R. Barnard might not mean much to people nowadays. Even a century ago, while he was still alive, he was the largely anonymous national advertising manager for the Street Railways Advertising Company, which had offices in New York, Chicago and San Francisco. But Barnard does have one claim to fame, as the man who first said, “A picture is worth ten thousand words.”

Last month, after the funeral of the Nobel peace laureate John Hume, there were numerous pictures testifying to the accuracy of Barnard’s observation. They included photographs of the late politician’s grieving widow, Pat, and the couple’s children; various dignitaries - among them President Michael D. Higgins and Lord-Lieutenant Dr Angela Garvey; and leading clergy, including Bishop Andrew Forster, all wearing masks because of the need to take precautions against the coronavirus. A politician of Mr Hume’s stature undoubtedly deserved a much grander ‘send-off’ than he got, although the humble funeral was done at the family’s request. The Humes had not wished to expose mourners to the danger of the Covid virus. The ensuing photographs of a modest gathering stood in stark contrast to recent social gatherings in the North and the South at which public figures blatantly ignored the coronavirus health guidelines. The way in which John Hume was borne to his final resting place was consistent with the manner in which he lived his life and practiced his politics. He was a visionary and - as with many visionaries - his was to be a voice in the wilderness. If they’re lucky, the wisdom of what they say will be recognised in their lifetimes.

Over time, the route to peace originally prescribed by John Hume in the Irish Times over 50 years ago came to be accepted - first abroad, then at home. The Good Friday Agreement in 1998 was arguably his crowning achievement, paving the way to an admittedly imperfect peace in Northern Ireland.

The Church of Ireland Primate, Most Rev John McDowell, was among the many who paid tribute to the former SDLP leader. “Those of us who are the beneficiaries of his legacy can only regret his passing,” Archbishop McDowell said, “while, at the same time, being thankful for his gargantuan efforts in the cause of peace and good relations.”

The American literary critic, Helen Vendler, described Hume’s fellow Nobel laureate, Seamus Heaney, as a poet of the in-between, who wrote from somewhere between North and South, between Catholic and Protestant, between Ireland and England and America. John Hume was a politician of the in-between, a man who addressed what he called the totality of relationships in these islands. “The only method of solving a problem of divided people”, he said, “is by dialogue taking place in a peaceful atmosphere and the objective of the dialogue is agreement.”

We all have a role to play in shoring up the peace. There are two images from John Hume’s funeral that I will remember long after the tributes have been forgotten: one is of Bishop Andrew seated next to the Roman Catholic Primate, Archbishop Eamon Martin, at the front of St Eugene’s Cathedral, during the Requiem Mass. The other shows Bishop Andrew’s head bowed in respect as the hearse bearing Mr Hume’s remains were driven away from the church. As Bishop Forster said, we will honour John Hume best by completing the quest to build a better society and a peace that endures.

There was a tribute, too, from the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster who said Mr Hume had “mapped out a route which... gave rise to our modern peace process.” Praise indeed.

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Happy ..th Birthday to Paul, our Diocesan Press Officer!
n:vision Magazine, Diocesan Centre, 24 London Street, Londonderry BT48 6RQ

Articles must be with the editor no later than 12noon on Wednesday 28th October 2020.

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Parish notes must be with the assistant editor no later than 12noon on Wednesday 4th November 2020.

Assistant editor: revpaul07@btinternet.com

THE DEADLINE IS NON-NEGOTIABLE

Magazines will be available for collection on Friday 27th November 2020.

(depending on Government and Diocesan guidelines at the time)

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