

Issue 63 / Christmas 2020

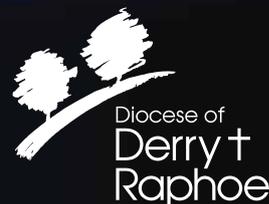
n:vision

Transforming Community, Radiating Christ



THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND MADE HIS DWELLING AMONG US. WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY, THE GLORY OF THE ONE AND ONLY SON, WHO CAME FROM THE FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.”

JOHN 1:14



Armchair Christmas Quiz

All proceeds going to Christian Aid via Bishops' Appeal especially the worldwide Covid-19 relief funds. Christian Aid/Bishops' Appeal are charities which provide emergency and long term aid wherever it is most needed in the world. ENJOY the Quiz and Please Give Generously.

Minimum entry fee €2. The need is greater than ever. Not finished? Send it anyway. Prizes for "Also Rans" too. Prizes: €30, €20 & €10. Also rans: €20 & €10. Closing date: Feb 5th 2021.

Very Revd. Denis Sandes, Ballyhasty, Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary E53 HX85

Name

Address

ANSWERS: Creepy Crawleys and associates! Example: Sounds like mother's sister! ANT

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. LBJ's wife! | - - - - - I - - - |
| 2. Could be a tractor? | - - - - - I - - - - - |
| 3. Hen's hubby and fish! | - - - - - O - - - - - |
| 4. Run away | - L - - - |
| 5. Pilot version of example? | - - - - - ANT |
| 6. Military version of example! | - - - - - ANT |
| 7. Good with Wild Honey, says John | - - - U - - - |
| 8. All of us Bad! | - - - I - - - |
| 9. Expensive Coat | - - - - - A - - - - - |
| 10. Lots of legs? | - - - I - - - - - |
| 11. Found in Old style Chemist shop. | - - - O - - - - - |
| 12. Equestrian fly? | - - - FLY |
| 13. This fly is a heavy lifter. | - - - FLY |
| 14. Welsh Fly? | - - - FLY |
| 15. WW2 Fighter plane | - - - I - - - |
| 16. Good for fishing | - - - FLY |
| 17. In the Russian Navy? | - - - I - - - - - |
| 18. Pale Veg | - - - A - - - - - |
| 19. Correct mark | - I - - - |
| 20. This fly can sing | - - - FLY |
| 21. Rhymes with house | - - - E |
| 22. This fly is a young lady! | - - - FLY |
| 23. Jumps on the lawn: | - - - O - - - - - |
| 24. Papa on stilts? | - - - O - - - - - |

Please feel free to copy this and/or email it among your friends.

Editor...



All communication is mission and witness. Our diocesan strapline, *Transforming Community, Radiating Christ* lets everyone know the purpose of all our communication. n:vision is one of the Diocese's tools of communication and in this Christmas issue n:vision includes different expressions of mission and witness.

How did God the Creator choose to communicate with creation? Through his Son, Jesus Christ the Word of God, who came to be one of us. Jesus Christ is both the Messenger and the Message of God's infinite love for the world - the perfect communication. John 3:16.

For communication the importance of 'words' is obvious but, in Christ, communication is lived out in his whole life of mission - word and action, which should inspire our speech and written word, our body language, humour, art, behaviour and our interaction with others.

Russell Baker, Pulitzer Prize-winning American Journalist wrote: *When speaking aloud, you punctuate constantly - with body language. Your listener hears commas, dashes, question marks, exclamation points, quotation marks as you shout, whisper, pause, wave your arms, roll your eyes, wrinkle your brow. In writing, punctuation plays the role of body language. It helps readers hear the way you want to be heard.*

As I know most of the n:vision contributors I imagine them speaking as I edit their writing. My aim is to allow their communication to come alive through my editing (especially punctuation and grammar). If you know some of the contributors to this issue then try to 'hear' their voice and 'see' their body language as you read their articles and the parish notes. There are some real heart-searching moments, inspiring moments, 'laugh-out-loud' moments - enjoy!

It is my fervent prayer that the joy and glory of Christmas dispels the darkness and gloom of Covid-19 with all the accompanying restrictions on our movements. We travel in hope and in the light of Our Lord and Saviour, Immanuel.

Rev Canon Katie McAteer, the Editor
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E3 - Scripture in Action

Engage - Equip - Empower...



An E3 Worker for the North West. For some this has been an answer to years of prayer, for others it prompts the question "what is E3?" For me, it was something I was excited about, but never imagined I would have the privilege of being a part of in the way that I am.

As a school pupil I saw E3 workers from other areas support and encourage their local Scripture Union (SU) groups and I so desperately wanted it for my school and my area. I attended prayer events; praying for our local schools and for an E3 worker for the North West. I couldn't wait to have a school's worker supporting me as I lead our SU committee. Little did I know then that the job would be advertised about four years after that prayer meeting, just as I was looking for a job. God may not always answer our prayers in the way we want, but His way will always be immeasurably more than we could have imagined.

The E3 Schools Project is run by Scripture Union Northern Ireland and aims to work with local churches to minister to their local schools. At the heart of Scripture Union is Psalm 78:4 which says, "We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done." I love this vision of telling children and young people the "praiseworthy deeds of the Lord" because, while many children and young people have heard of God, they aren't aware that the Bible is good news, and good news for them. This call isn't only to those who haven't yet made a faith commitment, but also to those who are already following God. We seek to encourage and remind them that there is joy in having a relationship with God.

The three E's explain the three main aims of the project; to **engage**, **equip** and **empower**. We aim to **engage** school pupils with the opportunities and resources that may lead them to encountering Jesus through His word, praying that they can make an informed decision about Jesus and His truth. We do this primarily through assemblies, RE lessons

and SU groups. In the current climate, engaging is slightly different as we cannot physically visit schools. However, we continue to engage through producing online assemblies, creating RE lessons and even "zooming in" to SU groups.

Secondly, we **equip** Christian pupils and teachers by giving them support and encouragement to facilitate growth in Christian maturity and to encourage them to be salt and light in their schools. We do this through providing training opportunities and distributing resources. One way we equip pupils is through our pupil leadership conference, "*Making your Mark*", which is for those serving on their SU committee. Currently we are focusing on how we can equip in the midst of this "new normal" and so we are running 6 online training sessions called "*Times like These*." These range from training how to produce online assemblies to family discipleship. Check out the Scripture Union Northern Ireland Facebook page for more information on these. We also equip SU leaders through gathering them to share ideas and to pray in cluster groups. This is proving essential at the moment as staff can feel isolated and in need of creative ideas to keep their SU running in a way which abides with current restrictions.

Finally, we **empower** churches to actively pray, support and get involved in Schools ministry by partnering with the project. This is achieved through running empowering workshops, distributing prayer news and giving presentations to help others catch the vision of the project and learn about how they can get involved.

This is the beauty of school's work; it is an opportunity to reach all children and young people. Children and young people don't have to go to church, but they do have to go to school, it's the place where they spend most of their time and where they are open to learning. School years are some of the most formative years in our faith development. It's a time when many are searching for something more and the E3 project aims to give them

the opportunity to hear God's good news, prayerfully expecting that they will choose to be in relationship with Him.

In Ephesians 5:16 Paul encourages the church to "[make] the most of every opportunity" and therefore, while schools are open to us, we want to make the most of those open doors. It is currently still a legal requirement for schools to teach religious education and hold a collective act of worship. This is a massive opportunity for us to serve our local schools; through equipping staff with RE lessons which fit the curriculum, or by coming into schools and taking an assembly.

While I am the E3 worker for the North West, the E3 project only works with the involvement of the local church. Therefore, here are three easy ways you can get involved:

1) Pray: *I would love you to join me in praying for our local schools. One of the easiest ways to do this is to subscribe to my monthly prayer news. If you would be interested in receiving this send me an email at rachelm@sunni.co.uk*

2) Act: *perhaps you would like to volunteer to help with an assembly, an RE lesson or an SU group. Or maybe you can think of other creative ways to serve your local schools. There are lots of small things you can do, but they make a big difference.*

3) Give: *you can give financially to secure the longevity of the project, or maybe you could give of your time to promote E3 through existing connections you have with schools and churches.*

All your support and prayers are very much appreciated. I look forward to working in partnership with the local church as we aim to make God's good news known to those in our local school communities.

Rachel Miller, E3 North West

Facebook Page: E3 School's Project-North West. Email: rachelm@sunni.co.uk

The E3 Project in the North West covers Derry-Londonderry, Limavady and Strabane

Bishop Andrew writes...



Dear friends,

Christmas, 2020, is going to be quite unlike any other Christmas in living memory.

You have to go back over a century - to December 1918 - for the last time when the holiday was disrupted by a pandemic. Back then, it was Spanish Flu, which claimed tens of millions of lives. Today, it's Covid-19, which has already killed well over a million people.

For all the disruption to people's day-to-day lives, many are looking ahead nervously to the festive season and wondering how the coronavirus will affect their Christmas plans.

While Easter is the highlight of the Church calendar, Christmas is the great family occasion - the time when ports and airports are thronged with sons and daughters, children and grandchildren, making their way home to their loved ones. It is, undoubtedly, the most joyful time of year - usually.

As I write, though, joy is thin on the ground. Our churches in Raphoe are closed. Those in Derry are open, but with severe restrictions in place. Nobody knows exactly what the last week of December may bring.

At the beginning of the pandemic, as the community rallied together, I heard someone saying we had to anticipate uncertainty. That's easier said than done. Uncertainty, separation from loved ones, and fear of the virus have all taken their toll. The second wave is leaving people discouraged, anxious, fearful even.

Things have changed undoubtedly. But the central truth of the Christmas message remains unaltered and undimmed. Jesus is Emmanuel. God is with us, shining a bright light in the darkness of the pandemic. God loves us. He cares about us. He is here to help us through these difficult days.



Clearly, there won't be much opportunity for fellowship this Christmas, but we can still invite God into our lives. We should place our trust in Him.

This will all pass, some day. We will meet again. We'll worship together again. We'll sing together again. And as hard as it is to believe, right now, there will be bright days again. In the meantime, let's do our bit: let's follow the rules, listen to the scientists, stay safe, love our neighbours - and let's stay close to God.

+Andrew Derry & Raphoe

NO MORE 1 IN 3

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM 2020

Diocesan President Jacqui Armstrong updates n:vision on this year's 16 Days.

Are you walking on eggshells? What has been happening in Ireland in 2020? Sad to report - domestic abuse incidents in Ireland continue to increase. Pandemic times have brought to the surface what is now termed by the World Health Organisation, a "shadow pandemic". In Ireland alone Women's Aid has seen a 43% increase in calls to their helplines since March 2020. It is estimated one in three women and girls worldwide experience gender-based violence, including domestic abuse.

The PSNI respond to a domestic abuse incident every 17 minutes and Divisional Protective Services Units have been rolled out in all Garda divisions. In effect, specially trained officers are now available across the island to ensure that when victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence present to the PSNI or the Gardaí - at perhaps their most vulnerable moment - they are met with professional and expert assistance.

Refuge services and helplines tirelessly work to provide help, support and guidance to victims past and present. Community engagement and advocacy play an important role in combatting and supporting victims of domestic abuse and gender-based violence.

In this Mothers' Union continues to play its role through advocacy, prayer and practical matters. Each year, beginning on the 25th November, *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women*, and ending on the 10th December, *International Human Rights Day*, we are actively engaged in the international campaign, the *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence*.

Throughout the year branches support refugees, according to local needs, providing

items, home start packs and vouchers for families that have just arrived. The response from members has been phenomenal.

CRITICALL is a new initiative to support people emerging from domestic violence circumstances compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. Starting in Dublin and spreading to volunteer centres in other counties, CRITICALL coordinate donations of items and deliver directly to refugees. People have volunteered their holiday home or second property as a safe haven and letters of courage and hope are welcomed for those emerging from domestic abuse. Mothers' Union is delighted to have assisted in getting a CRITICALL drop off centre up and running in Cork.

Advocacy in 2020 has included calling on the Northern Ireland Assembly to hasten the introduction of the *Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill*, and in the Republic of Ireland to encourage further resourcing to enable the full implementation of all aspects of the *Domestic Violence Act 2018*. This work is ongoing. Leading assemblies and workshops in secondary schools is stalled at the present time. Schools with which Mothers' Union have engaged will be receiving 16 Days bookmarks. Each Mothers' Union member will also receive two bookmarks and is invited to pass one onto another person. Why?

Well, experience has taught us that keeping the conversation going is pivotal to keeping

domestic abuse high on the agenda. Individually we may not create a huge impact, but as Mother Teresa, reminded us *we can do small things with great love*. Together, our actions contribute to the creation of safe spaces, openness and understanding. Together we can challenge the stigma surrounding domestic abuse, tackle the root causes and offer better supports.

In 2020 the annual *All-Ireland Mothers' Union 16 Days Prayer Vigil* is moving from a series of dedicated events to individual homes. Mothers' Union have produced a *16 Days Prayer Diary* which highlights the issues involved, together with the positive work taking place across the Church of Ireland in highlighting and combatting domestic abuse and gender-based violence.

The 16 Days Prayer Diary is informative, and thought-provoking, drawing its readers into reflection and prayer accompanied by simple points of action. A copy can be downloaded at: <http://www.mothersunion.ie/files/16-Days-Prayer-Diary-for-Interactive.pdf>. Copies may also be ordered from Mothers' Union by contacting allirelandmothersunion@gmail.ie. Postage costs will apply.

Worldwide, in 2020 Mothers' Union is hosting a *Global Day of Action* on Saturday 5th December. This Global Day is centred around that disturbing statistic that "1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced domestic or



sexual abuse". Mothers' Union, as a leading women's organisation, believes this to be unacceptable. We, male and female, are created equal and, as Christians, we are destined to portray God's kingdom in love. Jesus came that we might have life to the full - may we continue to work resolutely towards this goal in 2021.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

The 16 Days of Activism and Global Day of Action will be framed in the context of prayer and action with a series of online events:

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM...

Wednesday 25th November:

Online Morning Prayer - 8am.

Worship to mark the start of the 16 Days of Activism - Facebook Live and You Tube.

ZOOM Evening Service - 8.20pm.

Derry & Raphoe Worship for first evening of 16 days of Activism.

Sunday 29th November:

Online Morning service from St. Brigid's Church, Castleknock. Speaker: Ifra Ahmed, Ambassador for ending FGM (female genital mutilation) and gender-based violence.

Saturday 5th December:

GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION. Online Protest launch - 9am. Throughout MU social channels including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Online "Cup of Tea for No More 1 in 3" - 11.30am. Join us with a cup of tea as we take time out of our day to reflect and pray for our "No More 1 in 3 campaign" This will be followed by Midday Prayers - Facebook Live and You Tube.

No More 1 in 3 Global Day Service - 8pm. Facebook Live and You Tube: <https://www.facebook.com/MothersUnion/>

Sunday 6th December:

16 Days online service from Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh - You Tube.

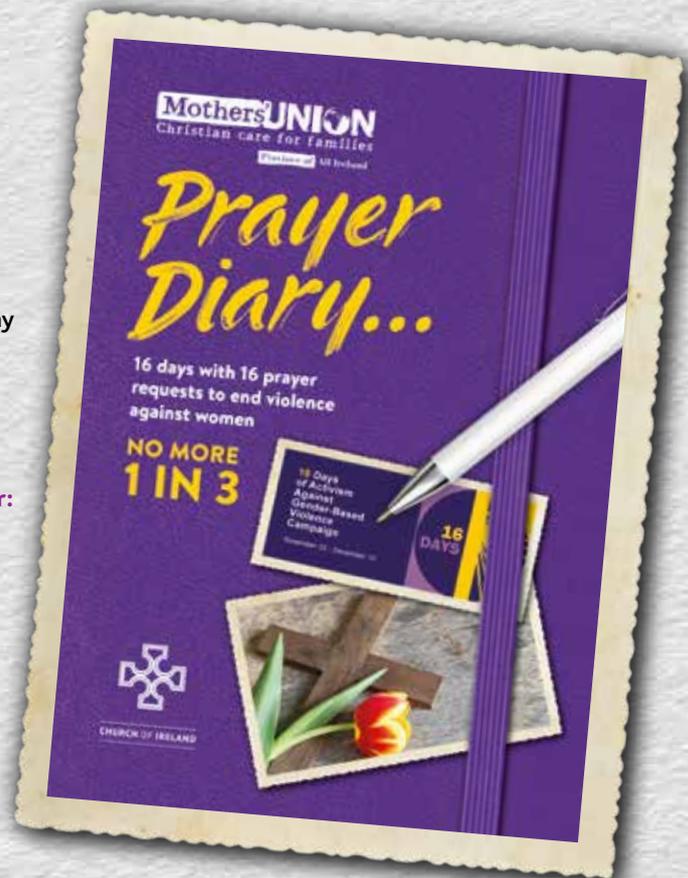
Thursday 10th December:

Online Compline - 8pm
Worship to mark the close of the 16 Days of Activism Facebook Live and You Tube:

Loving Lord, your care and love are ever present in our lives. We pray for our brothers and sisters throughout the world who live in situations of abuse and violence.

Give them hope in their hopelessness; help them find strength in their weakness; grant them freedom from their oppression;

transform their brokenness into wholeness; and heal their wounds, visible and invisible. Grant us all the courage and wisdom, grace and humility, to act at all times with compassion and care. And grant all who are harmed by abuse or coercion, peace through justice. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.



A PRAYER FOR THOSE WORKING TO END SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

God bless you with insight to recognise violence in all its forms, and courage to name it, speaking out for justice. The Lord Jesus bless you with compassion for the vulnerable, and grace to stand with them, sharing his strength. The Holy Spirit bless you with a prayerful heart, and power to breathe peace, transforming the world. The blessing of the holy and glorious Trinity, eternal Wisdom, living Word, abiding Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

(With thanks to the Anglican Church of Australia)



Second Bite of the Cherry

Pat McClement's Faith via Poetry...

I have been writing poetry for some time now and, quite by accident rather than design, I was asked to speak at a church ladies' group. I have to confess, the first speaking engagement caused my heart to have a few extra beats (and still does to this day).

Word got around and soon I was taking a lot of groups on a journey of part of my life and faith via poetry. My family and friends were always asking me to compose poems for special occasions and we had many trips down memory lane.

My husband Bertie has always wanted me to print my work but I never had the confidence. Recently he suggested that I produce a book in aid of charity and that was the prompt I needed. It was a very strange feeling to approach a printer about printing my own work but the thought of raising funds for the RNLI and my own church restoration fund spurred me on.

Choosing which poems to publish took a while and my book is an eclectic mix of humour, sadness, inspiration, disappointment and hope. The feedback I get from people has been good and quite often they say that they have never laughed and cried so much from page to page. There has also been quite a number of people who have returned to purchase extra copies for presents.

My most poignant message was from a lady who was in hospital with Covid 19 and she requested a copy of my book. She said she read a lot of it out to the ward where there was laughter, tears and clapping. One of her fellow patients died two days later and she was telling his wife about how he had enjoyed the poems she had read and when she gets out of hospital she wants to purchase some for his family. I was deeply touched.

People asked me why I chose the title 'Second Bite of the Cherry' and I tell them it becomes clear as they read a particular poem.



I have written about life, pain, faith, nonsense, frivolity, inspiration and in no particular order as that is what life is like - up one day and down the next. Being silly and being serious, and even in the worst of times, we need a little lightness.

The cost of the book is £7.99 or £10 if postage is required. I can be contacted at mcclementsapat@hotmail.com or on 07734186321. In some cases I can arrange for collection or delivery.

Christingles showing the Light of the World



When I was a youth worker one of the jobs that was delegated to myself and the young people was the making of Christingles.

Oranges were gathered, red tape sourced (because it is so much easier than ribbon); sweets discussed at length and twice the amount needed bought because there needed to be an incentive! The dedicated time for making Christingles always allowed for great discussions and lots of laughter. The significance of what we were making was often forgotten until the actual service when we handed out our hard work with the warnings to be careful with candles and watch the cocktail sticks!

Christingle services started out as a Moravian tradition in Germany in 1747 when children were given a candle with a red ribbon tied around it. This was a reminder of Jesus as the Light of the World. Missionaries brought the Moravian Church to England in the 1700s and they continue this tradition of Christingle Services to this day. The Christingle as we know it has been adapted and developed and it is thought one of the first services took place in 1968. John Pensome, who is also known as Mr Christingle, developed the service to promote the work of, and to fundraise for, the Children's Society. This

society still produces service ideas each year – 2020 being no exception. This year the Children's Society have partnered with Messy Church and have provided ideas for a service that can happen while families are in their bubbles, and one that can be done at home - both provide an opportunity to think about Jesus as the Light of the World and can be found at <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/resource/messy-christingle-2020>.

Christingle services can take place at any time during the season of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. Each aspect of the Christingle has a different meaning that helps us focus on Jesus as the Light in the darkness. But what does the Christingle mean?

The orange represents the world. The four cocktail sticks represent the four seasons, spring, summer, autumn and winter. This is to remind us that God is always with us. Another idea is that they can be used to represent the four points on a compass. This reminds us God is with us wherever we go. On each cocktail stick there are sweets and treats to remind us of the provision God has made for us and that he will always provide. Traditionally these treats have been dried fruits like raisins, but now are commonly sweets - jelly tots and dolly mixtures work particularly well.

Around the middle of the orange there is a red ribbon (or red electrical tape). This is a reminder of the sacrifice Jesus made for us with his crucifixion.

The last aspect of the Christingle is the candle. This is a reminder that Jesus is the Light of the World. A light that shines in the darkness, a light that cannot be diminished. For me the highlight of the Christingle service occurs when all the Christingles have been handed out and they are lit. It is a health and safety nightmare but seeing the light spread across the church is something to behold and a very special moment.

Christingle services are a great way of engaging people of all ages and allowing us a time to think about all that God has done, and will continue to do, for us. It is also a great way of spreading the light of God. Families are encouraged to take their Christingles home and light them again safely so others can share in the light. As we approach the season of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany lights are everywhere and play an important part in our celebrations. Why not add a Christingle into the mix and allow this symbol of the Light of the World to shine brightly for all to see?

Kirsty, Diocesan Children's Officer



Without Water With Water *Two Different Stories...*

Without Water...

Mekonnen Sofar kneels in the sand, determinedly digging with his hands into the dirt of the dry riverbed, in search of water. He is thirsty and desperate with the dry hole more than a metre deep. Mekonnen knows that if he does not strike water today, some of his livestock may die.

The effects of climate change are real in the village where Mekonnen lives with his wife and five sons. The rains have stopped, drought has dried the rivers, and crops no longer produce a harvest. Even the honey bees have disappeared. The conditions have become unbearable.

Mekonnen worries that his way of life as a pastoral herdsman will not last much longer as the climate crisis worsens. Many of his livestock have already died, and hunger has forced him to sell off some of his remaining

animals to feed his family. Yet, in the face of prolonged drought, he persists. He recalls stories of friends and fellow herdsman who have dug so deep to find water that they are killed by collapsing sand.

"A number of people have died because when they excavate, they dig deep with sand above their head and the sand collapses on top of them. Even small children. We pray for rain but when there's no rain, we have to dig.

Some people have shovels but most don't - we use our hands. The changing climate has made it too difficult to live around here. My farm and my animals are no longer enough."

Mekonnen desperately needs a reliable water source to keep his animals alive and maintain his livelihood. Each day that passes is another day of digging and another day of desperation. This Christmas, will you stand

with families like Mekonnen's, living on the frontline of the climate crisis?

- **£25/€28 will plant elephant grass to feed livestock.**
- **£53/€59 will teach 12 farmers how to grow drought-tolerant crops.**
- **£105/€117 will buy three goats to give poor families an income. (Goats tolerate drought well.)**
- **£500/€555 will help build a community pond from which Mekonnen can draw water for his animals and crops.**

You can donate online at www.caid.ie/ChristmasAppeal or by telephone on 028 9064 8133 (Belfast) or 01 496 7040 (Dublin)



With Water...

Kawite Koyrita rises with the sun to gather water for her animals from the community pond. In the morning light both her pregnant belly and warm smile glow in expectation. Hope has returned to her community like a spring in the desert.

Today Kawite will make breakfast for her family, send her youngest children to school, and tend to her business of trading goats and sheep. After she completes her chores she'll meet with her community savings group to dream of ideas to empower other women in her village to thrive like her.

Kawite's smile has not always shone so brightly. For the past ten years Kawite's family struggled to make ends meet as the effects of the climate crisis ravaged her village with prolonged drought and hardship. *"When I was young, the wells were full, and going to collect water didn't take much time,"*

she explained. "When the climate changed and the rains stopped, the water disappeared."

Kawite and her daughters travelled up to five hours every day to fetch water, and her children often missed school or went hungry. As the burden of prolonged drought became unbearable, Christian Aid and our local partner worked alongside the community to build a pond from which they draw water for their animals and crops.

Kawite and her community were provided with drought resistant seeds to boost the harvest, elephant grass to feed the livestock, and goats and sheep to help the women build livelihoods.

The women in the village have also established a savings group which provides loans to women so they can buy essentials, empowering their community from within.

christian
aid

The community pond saves Kawite hours of precious time that she can spend at home with her family, and the other support from Christian Aid's partner has enabled her to put food on the table and build a better future for her community, her ten children, and her baby on the way.

"The pond is not only for me. It has changed the life of this village."

Lisa Fagan, Christian Aid

SUNDAY SEQUENCE BEGINS ON TUESDAY

That's when I get a sense of what's on the agenda for the Sunday ahead.

But of course, that could all change. Indeed, much of it could, and has, changed as late as a Saturday evening, if a major story has happened somewhere in the world.

Sunday Sequence is the product of a great team effort - a very small team of Adam Nixon and me, led by our producer Seamus Boyd. It's a very democratic process - everyone has their say, everyone pitches in their ideas, and agreement on the final running order is usually by consensus. Our desks and minds are cluttered with ideas - and the programme is a very fertile ground. Almost everything we do in our lives has an ethical, moral or religious underpinning. Why do we give to one charity but not another? Should someone living in pain have the right to choose when to die? What sacrifices do we need to make in our own lives if the planet is to thrive?

Personal choices. Government choices. An infinite number of decisions are made every hour of every day which have ethical and moral implications for us and society. What *Sunday Sequence* tries to do is get under the skin of those decisions and host intelligent and curious debates and discussions. Hopefully by the end, we all think a little bit more and question our previously held beliefs. We're not fans of black and white discussions. We live in the grey. *Sunday Sequence* tries to explore the

grey, the nuance. There never is just two sides to a story - no one has the monopoly view on a subject. There have always been three, four, five sides to a story. Perhaps those views weren't always heard. We aim to give them a voice.

The other thing we don't like on *Sunday Sequence* is noise! Confrontation, aggression, disrespect - they have no place on our programme. We're on your radio at 8.30 on a Sunday morning, so you need a gentle start to your day. Radio can be background noise for so many. People aren't really concentrating on every word that is being said. That is why we try to make a programme which makes you want to turn up the volume, to listen a little bit more closely, to make you remain rooted to the spot until it's finished. For me it's all about stories and people. People with great insights and expertise, but also people who have remarkable resilience, courage and hope.

That has been witnessed on the programme since March, when we began our Living Through Crisis slot, which is broadcast after the news at 10am. We have heard from people who have lost much through illness, bereavement, addiction, imprisonment, depression. But they have dug deep to find a strength and belief that they can survive, recover and continue living. I know they have helped so many people over the months to deal with the worst aspects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. My background is in news and

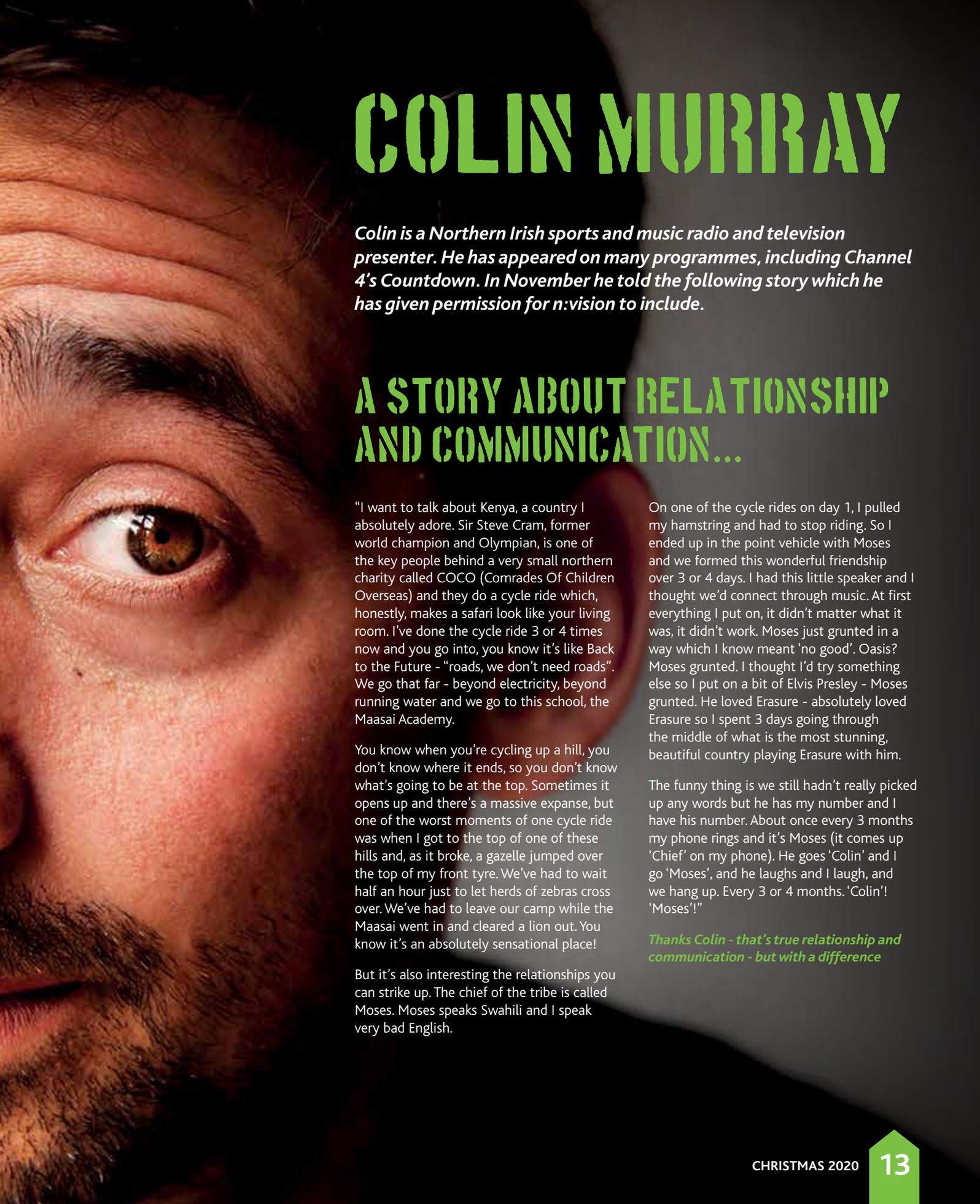


current affairs - I have been a journalist for nearly 30 years. I love news, but sometimes it does feel a bit like *Groundhog Day*. *Sunday Sequence* allows me to broaden my horizons and discover a richer and deeper selection of issues and stories - domestically and globally - and I think it's one of the few radio programmes on this island where you will hear such stories being explored in this way.

The programme has had a long and cherished history on the BBC Radio Ulster schedule. It has had many wonderful presenters and I am honoured to contribute to and continue its legacy. There is a real sense of satisfaction at 10.15 each Sunday morning, when the red microphone light goes off, that we have opened up a small bit of the latest ethical dilemma and perhaps told you something you hadn't known.

I hope *Sunday Sequence* continues to occupy a special place in the hearts and ears of our audience too. From all of us on the team, may you all have a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Audrey Carville

A close-up, high-angle portrait of Colin Murray, showing his forehead, eyes, and a portion of his beard. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

COLIN MURRAY

Colin is a Northern Irish sports and music radio and television presenter. He has appeared on many programmes, including Channel 4's Countdown. In November he told the following story which he has given permission for n:vision to include.

A STORY ABOUT RELATIONSHIP AND COMMUNICATION...

"I want to talk about Kenya, a country I absolutely adore. Sir Steve Cram, former world champion and Olympian, is one of the key people behind a very small northern charity called COCO (Comrades Of Children Overseas) and they do a cycle ride which, honestly, makes a safari look like your living room. I've done the cycle ride 3 or 4 times now and you go into, you know it's like Back to the Future - "roads, we don't need roads". We go that far - beyond electricity, beyond running water and we go to this school, the Maasai Academy.

You know when you're cycling up a hill, you don't know where it ends, so you don't know what's going to be at the top. Sometimes it opens up and there's a massive expanse, but one of the worst moments of one cycle ride was when I got to the top of one of these hills and, as it broke, a gazelle jumped over the top of my front tyre. We've had to wait half an hour just to let herds of zebras cross over. We've had to leave our camp while the Maasai went in and cleared a lion out. You know it's an absolutely sensational place!

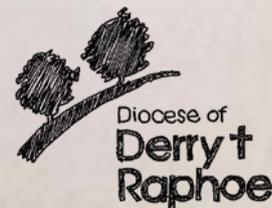
But it's also interesting the relationships you can strike up. The chief of the tribe is called Moses. Moses speaks Swahili and I speak very bad English.

On one of the cycle rides on day 1, I pulled my hamstring and had to stop riding. So I ended up in the point vehicle with Moses and we formed this wonderful friendship over 3 or 4 days. I had this little speaker and thought we'd connect through music. At first everything I put on, it didn't matter what it was, it didn't work. Moses just grunted in a way which I know meant 'no good'. Oasis? Moses grunted. I thought I'd try something else so I put on a bit of Elvis Presley - Moses grunted. He loved Erasure - absolutely loved Erasure so I spent 3 days going through the middle of what is the most stunning, beautiful country playing Erasure with him.

The funny thing is we still hadn't really picked up any words but he has my number and I have his number. About once every 3 months my phone rings and it's Moses (it comes up 'Chief' on my phone). He goes 'Colin' and I go 'Moses', and he laughs and I laugh, and we hang up. Every 3 or 4 months. 'Colin!' 'Moses'!"

Thanks Colin - that's true relationship and communication - but with a difference

Diocesan noticeboard!



HARVEST CHALLENGE WINNERS...

The winners of the recent Harvest Challenge art competition have been announced. Prizes were awarded in four different age categories and the winners are:

1st Prize (Amazon Tablet) to: Noah Stewart, Holy Trinity National School Dunfanaghy; Polly Leslie, St. John's Rossnowlagh; John Lyons, St. Mary's Macosquin; Jake Hewitt, St. Columb's Cathedral.

2nd Prize (£30 Amazon Voucher) to: Mark Hewitt, St. Columb's Cathedral; Caleb Ferguson, Derg and Termonamongan; Hannah Leslie, St. John's Rossnowlagh; Anna Lyons, St. Marys Macosquin; Amy McCann, Derg and Termonamongan.

3rd Prize (£20 Amazon Voucher) to: Shona Leslie, St. John's Rossnowlagh; Ellie Mae Mahon, St. John's Rossnowlagh; Joel McCaskie, Lower Langfield Parish; Jodie Parkhill, Bovevagh.

The competition was organised by SEEDS Children's Ministry and Derry and Raphoe Youth. You can see some of the young artists' work here: https://www.derryandraphoe.org/?page_id=4576



Ministry of Healing

The Ministry of Healing Team has decided to organise online healing services. In November Rev Paul Lyons led our first service. On Wednesday January 20th 2021 Canon Katie and Brian Seaton will lead A Celebration of Wholeness and Healing on @CCCMSP facebook page at 7pm. In March we are in Rev Carmen Hayes and Gillian Millar's hands and in May Rev Heather Houlton will lead us.

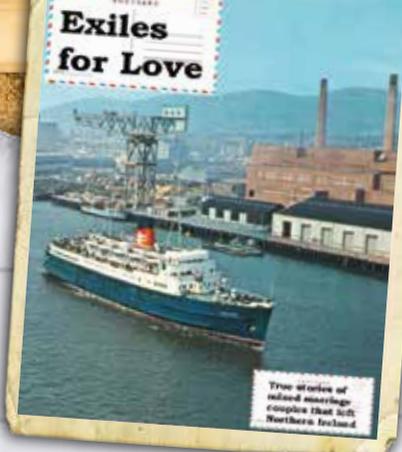
'Exiles for Love'

A new book about mixed marriage couples who left Northern Ireland is the latest publication from the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association (NIMMA) to tackle the taboo subject.

The paperback 'Exiles for Love' gives five couples the chance to tell why they left home after marrying 'across the divide'. It is the third part of a trilogy that has put mixed marriage firmly under the spotlight. NIMMA Chairman Ken Dunn said, "The project will, hopefully, reinforce the message of reconciliation that our first two books, 'Mixed Emotions' and 'Both Sides Now' are already bringing to local secondary school pupils and also highlight the position of the substantial mixed marriage community in the Province. We are responding to the constant demand for information about both the logistics of mixed marriage and the actual experience itself from prospective couples, the press, the churches and community groups, but the stories of those, who either chose

or were forced to leave Northern Ireland as a result of their marriages, are the final parts of an emotional jigsaw. We have shown over the past five years that our young people, in particular, are keen to know more about mixed marriage, how things have changed over the years and how compromise and accommodation within such relationships are like a blueprint for a shared future, but the untold stories of the exiles must also be heard. We see the book as entertaining, as well as educational, and we hope to have it distributed widely to teenagers in our schools".

Meanwhile, we will strive to offer support, information and pastoral care to all who need them on our helpline 07706285042 or at info@nimma.org.uk



'WE'VE GOT SOLE!' MU COMPETITION 2020

In the mid-60s, when times were tough, my Mother bought me a pair of red sandals which I loved. One day my Mother said "you have outgrown those sandals we'll give them to your cousin".

My cousin was here on holiday from England with my Aunt and family. I was sad my sandals were given away. Many decades later my Mother took a stroke and needed 24-hour care from the family. During my time with her we talked a lot and many of the conversations were about the past. One night she remembered about the red sandals and why she gave them to my cousin, even though they still fitted me. My Aunt had borrowed money to come to see her elderly parents as her husband had left her with 4 young children. My Father gave my Aunt and family the fare to get back to England and my Mother had given them my red sandals. Ever since, I buy red sandals for the summer. I wear them with pride and remember my kind, thoughtful, wonderful parents.



**Most Imaginative
Setting Winner: Anne Claire
Morrow; Inver Union MU**



**Most Loved Shoe
Winner: 'Red Sandals',
Viola Duncan, Inver
Union MU**

From White Coat to White Collar...

Rev Adam Pullen, Rector of Stranorlar



Some of you may not know that before I was a minister I used to work in the diagnostic laboratories in a hospital in Swansea, South Wales.

My original Degree was in Microbiology. After university I went on to train to work in the hospital laboratory as an MLSO, (Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer). It was hard, exacting work yet rewarding, knowing that I was helping people. Without that work in the lab the doctors would not have known what was causing an infection. I worked in bacteriology and for a time virology. Believe me, I could tell you a lot of stories that would put you off your dinner!

As you can imagine I have been watching this pandemic with great interest. The cause of this pandemic is a small virus Covid-19,

called corona because if you looked down an electron microscope the spikes on the outer layer look like a crown! These spikes are what it uses to attach itself to a human cell. Unfortunately, it is very good at that! It then makes its way inside the nucleus and hijacks the cell to replicate itself again and again. Think of it like a pen or usb drive, a small package with the virus information inside.

Yes, it's a similar virus to the flu or a cold but the problem for us is that it's new. It is new to our bodies which can't recognise it. Our bodies don't have the ammunition to kill it. That is why it runs amok. It also attacks, amongst other places, the heart and the lungs. Hence people with lung or heart conditions have to be so careful.

We all know by now about masks, social

distancing and washing hands. I can't emphasize enough how important these things are. We literally have the power in our own hands to keep people safe and well, because we can have it before we know, as it spreads via droplets, by our breath and on our hands and on surfaces.

Yet all is not without hope. We have hope in God and we have His help. God has gifted many with the knowledge and skills to develop treatments and vaccines. They are coming, both treatments to help the body to fight this off, and vaccines to give the body that ammunition I spoke about.

When the virus turns up these treatments enable the body to be ready and armed to kill off this Covid-19. We are not there yet, but there is light at the end of the tunnel!

From New York,
New York to
Derry and
Raphoe...



Greetings Derry and Raphoe! Allow me to introduce myself. I am Kevin Moroney; an Episcopal priest serving as the Professor of Liturgics and Director of the Chapel at General Seminary.

If the name looks familiar it's because I held a similar position at the then Church of Ireland Theological College from 2000 to 2005, so some of us may actually be old friends (Hiya!).

With that said, I also have a deeper root that goes back to Derry and Raphoe. As a seminarian I spent three months in 1991 serving in the Church of Ireland and the first of those months was spent at All Saints, Clooney with Canon John Mayes. I will never forget the hospitality shown to me by the Mayes', by Bishop Mehaffey and by the parishioners who took me in and fed me so well that by the end of an Irish Summer I had gained a stone and a half! So, I am very pleased to renew this relationship and I am honored to try and provide some insight into what life is like in America these days.

By the time you read this it will be over a month since our presidential election. God only knows what has transpired between the typing and the reading. I do have my own perspective on the unique brand of chaos that emerges daily from the White House. One that, perhaps out of respect for the office of President, those in the government and in the media have tactfully decided not to raise, but I think it is worth raising now. Please do not misunderstand me; I write as a pastor. There are some who neither need our support nor deserve our disdain, but they may need healing, and they definitely need our prayers.

With all that going on you may wonder how I, as an American, stay reasonably positive. A student of mine in Dublin once observed: "You never met a ritual you didn't like." There is truth to that, and during this time of year when we anticipate the annual celebration of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, I wrap myself in the many cherished rituals of Advent and Christmas. There is some drama hanging over one of them. I have two daughters, ages 13 and 11. As pastor's kids they have hardly ever missed a Sunday in church and Christmas is always a highlight. My favourite ritual this time of year is that, since they were old enough to walk, my girls have carried in the baby Jesus during the candlelit singing of Silent Night, and placed the baby doll in the manger scene in the front of the church. I am a sucker for this stuff; I cry every time. Last year my eldest announced before the service on the very night, that she was too old for "this sort of stuff." I begged and cajoled and eventually she agreed to do it. Fast forward to now. At the close of the hardest and most bizarre year ever, will my not-so-little girl help her sister carry in the baby Jesus one more time? These "little" things settle my mind and help me anticipate with hope what I assure you are larger things than doll-carrying. But the little things suggest the greater things. Jesus does come to us through the Incarnation and over the stormy, surging waves of life.

Just one more year Sweetie, please ... for Daddy. Tune in next time for the outcome!

God bless, Kevin

Bible Commentary

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

Most people can think of an encounter during which they experienced a 'never to be forgotten' moment. For me, one such moment, came about in a care home, during a Carol Service for residents with Alzheimer's. As I began to read Isaiah 9:6 I heard Martha, an elderly lady, quietly reciting the verse, word for word. "For to us a child is born." As she spoke, her appearance began to change, and Isaiah 55:11 came to my mind:

"So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

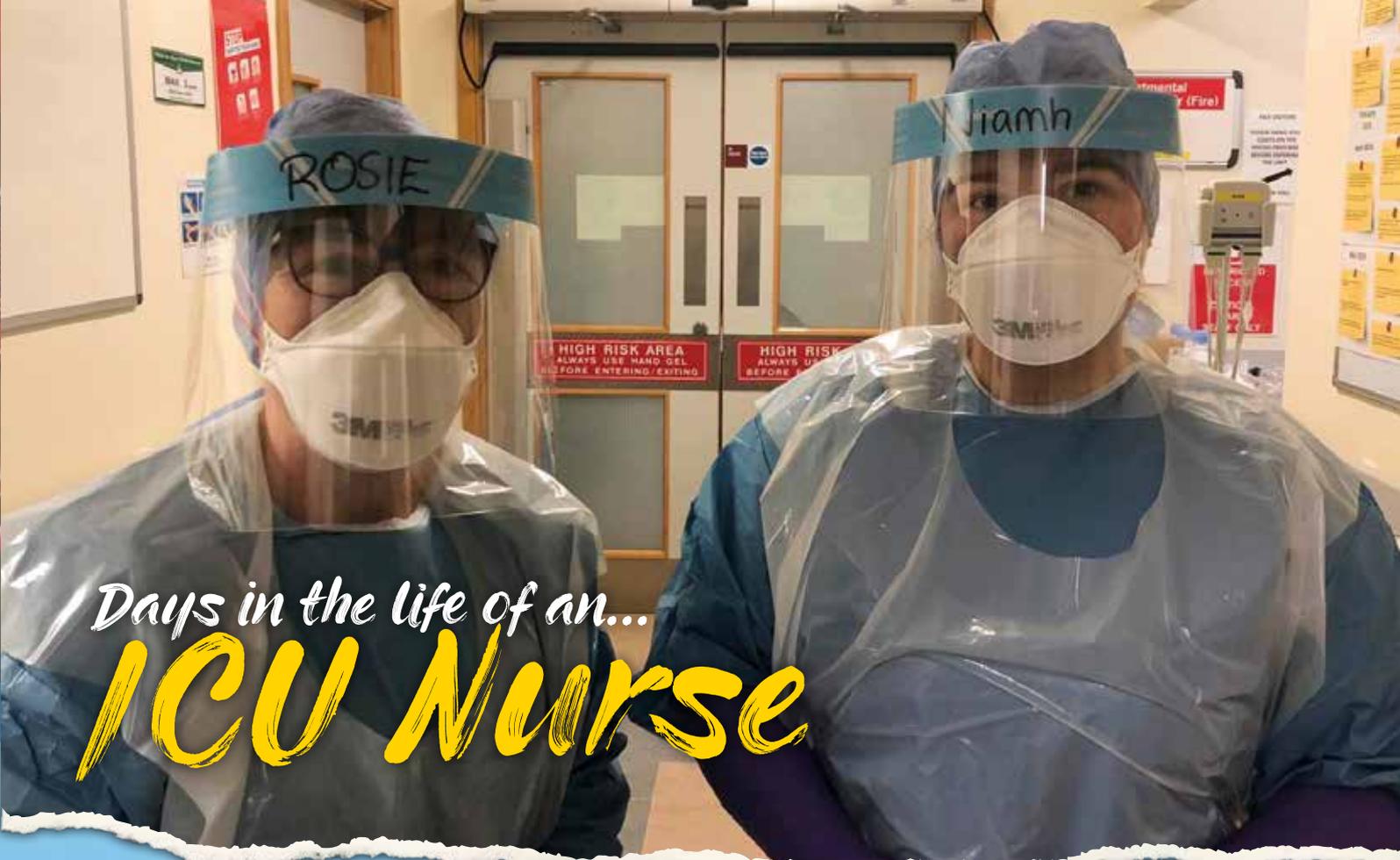
The incredible words of Isaiah 9:6 had obviously reached deeply into Martha's life, dispersed the confusion of Alzheimer's, and brought a moment of clarity and a reassurance of hope.

Isaiah 9 was written at one of the worst times in the history of Israel. Locked in battle against the seemingly relentless war machine of the Assyrian Army, the Israelites found themselves desperate for clarity and a reassurance of hope. Today, this is a sentiment that many people will share in the build-up to Christmas 2020. As the world finds itself locked in battle against the

seemingly relentless war machine, Covid19, we all need to experience clarity and hope. Isaiah reminds us that we find such clarity and hope in the One who is the fulfilment of Isaiah 9:6. For a child has been born, a child of promise, a child of hope, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Despite the current restrictions which are in place, we can still experience lasting joy, hope, peace and love this Christmas time. This year we are challenged to focus our hearts on that moment when God, the Everlasting Father, became a vulnerable baby, born in a messy stable, born into all the mess of this world. God, the Sovereign One, stooped low to show that He will love us for all eternity. Isaiah brilliantly reminds us, "Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end." (Isaiah 9:7)

It is reassuring for each of us to remember that God is sovereign. He is our Everlasting Father, the Creator of Heaven and Earth. He is in control of all life's circumstances and, this Christmas time, He continues to care deeply for each of us. The birth of Jesus, just over two thousand years ago in Bethlehem, offers us clarity as to who He is and an eternal source of hope. This Christmas time, God also offers us the fullness of His peace. He is the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings, and He is sovereign. For unto US a child is born, a child of promise, a child of hope, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

**Rev Rosie Diffin, Rector of Kilcronaghan,
Ballynascreen and Six Towns**



Days in the life of an... ICU Nurse

By Niamh

I was preparing to undertake my final placement as a student nurse, when it was announced that the first case of COVID-19 had reached the UK.

Little did I know that this would mean that my fellow classmates and I would be deployed to support the frontline staff. From standing on our doorstep applauding those in the health service, I was soon to be joining them. I was then offered my first staff nurse position in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). I was a bit apprehensive as my mum was the Ward Sister in ICU but I knew that I wanted to work in this specialist area, so I accepted the post. As the second wave of the pandemic ensued, staff in ICU prepared for the first COVID-19 positive patients. Each day we arrive on the unit, make a quick cup of tea and prepare to relieve our colleagues who are finishing their 12 hour shift. Before entering red zones, we are required to dress in full personal protective equipment (PPE). This process is known as donning. Removing PPE is known as doffing.

This takes some time, but we get quicker with practice. We usually pair up to get dressed as the correct use of PPE is extremely important in order to protect ourselves, patients and the public. After handover, we introduce ourselves to our patients and begin our day's work. I have found that communicating with patients is much more difficult whilst wearing PPE - patients cannot see our facial expression and often find it hard to understand us. Therefore, we find ourselves often using non-verbals, like a thumbs-up. During Covid-19 visiting in the hospital has been prohibited, apart from exceptional circumstances. I know I don't speak for myself, but we all feel saddened by this and try to facilitate virtual visiting through FaceTime as often as we can. We can only try to understand the turmoil that families and friends are going through whilst waiting at home.

Patients, families and staff can also get support from the hospital chaplains who offer virtual spiritual care and prayers through FaceTime, which everyone finds comforting.

It is at times like this that we can truly appreciate and be thankful for the advances in technology.

Although working in ICU can be very tough, the level of care the patients receive remains our priority and focus. Everyone finds it very rewarding when our patients improve and leave ICU. However, this is not always the case. When patients die, all of the staff are affected, even more so now when families are not always able to be present at such a sad time.

I have found that my faith in God has helped me to stay strong throughout these uncertain times. At work I often experience many emotions such as sadness, fear and happiness. As a practitioner I can only begin to imagine what patients, their families and my colleagues are feeling. I find strength in faith and prayer. *'But as for you be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded'* (2 Chronicles 15: 7.)

DRY Update

Derry Raphoe Youth Invites @ Advent

Sunday 6th December live from 4pm on Diocesan Facebook page

Guest speaker - Andrew Watson (youth worker Ballyholme Parish, Bangor). Praise, Prayer, Advent Resources, Interview with Rachel Miller Scripture Union E3 Worker for the NW. This service will be shared on the Diocesan Facebook Page. For the Young and Young at Heart - you are invited!

Zoom Children's and Youth Leaders Encouragement Night with Bishop Pat Storey

Tuesday 8th December 7:30pm on Zoom
To join email dryboard123@gmail.com

Organised by SEEDS & Derry Raphoe Youth

Shine the Light

DERRY RAPHOE YOUTH
JOHN 1:9



1 Listen to your favourite worship song

2 Donate clothes or toys to a charity shop

3 Say the Lord's Prayer Matthew 6:9-13

4 Search for a Christian book you can ask for for Christmas

5 Write a letter to a friend

6 Join DRY Invites @ Advent service shared on our Diocesan Facebook page today

7 Give a gift to someone in your community

8 Pray for the Zoom encouragement evening for leaders with Bishop Pat

9 Contact the Principal of your Primary School to encourage them

10 Light a candle & read John 1:1-18

11 Clean up without being asked

12 Pray for each person in your home

13 Christmas Shine Your Light. Every Sunday in Advent at 5pm take your light outside.

14 Memorise Psalm 136:1

15 Spend 1 minute in silence reflecting on God's glory

16 Find out about the work of the Mothers Union & pray for them

17 Contact your church leaders & ask how you can pray for them

18 Reduce your time online & on screens today

19 Give a compliment to a friend

20 Write out the words to your favourite Carol

21 Help to make dinner

22 Ask your family how you could help over the next week

23 Do a secret Christmas Act of Kindness

24 Pray & ask God to draw close to you



CHRISTMAS SHINE THE Light

— 2020 —

Throughout Advent and as we approach Christmas place a star or a battery powered candle or a Nativity Scene in your window as a sign of Jesus the Light of the World. You could also put a poster in your window. Templates are available on Pinterest.

Christmas Shine the Light 2020

Every Sunday in Advent take your LIGHT outside at 5pm and Light Up your community. Hold up your star or candle and then sing a carol or play one on your mobile. Say the Advent Prayer & the Lord's Prayer or simply let your light shine. If mobility is an issue do this in your own home.

"In Him was life, and that life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:4,5

Suggested carols - (a reflection on each carol will be placed each Sunday on the Diocesan Facebook Page)

29th November - Joy to the World

6th December - Away in a Manger

13th December - Silent Night

20th December - Once in Royal David's City

Christmas Eve 24th - O Little Town of Bethlehem

Christmas Day 25th - Hark the Herald - Angels Sing

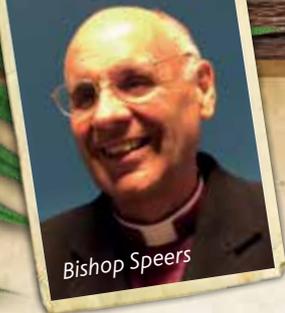
Advent Prayer

Heavenly Father, Your Son Jesus is Your greatest gift to us, a great sign of Your love. Guide us as we strive to walk in that love together this Advent. As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, bring us closer to each other and to You. Give us the strength and grace we need every day. Help us always to trust in You. Come, Lord Jesus, lead all the people closer to You. Come and dispel the darkness of our world with the light of Your love. Amen.

4, 3, 2, 1 count the weeks 'til Jesus comes. Each week we add another light.
Our hope of Jesus shining bright. We pray, we share, we do our part...
To welcome Jesus into our heart.

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." Isaiah 9:2

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families



Bishop Speers

Our Mad Life extracts...

Collapse, Departures, and On the Road Again

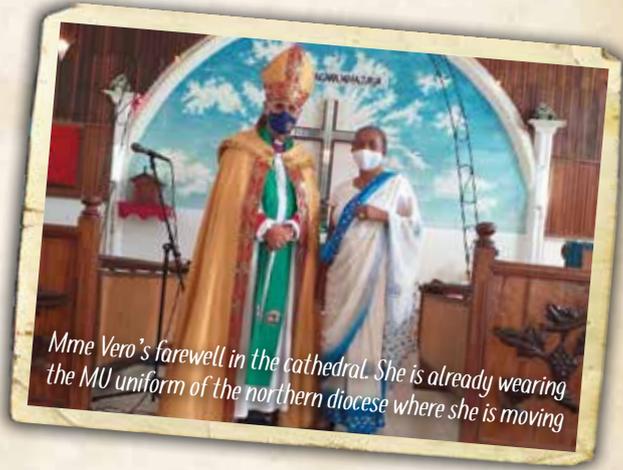
I gasp in horror while those around me look on in a resigned sort of way and say the obvious. “It has collapsed” was the factual comment when St Andrew’s Church, Ampobitika, in the northern part of the diocese, literally hit the dust. The first part collapsed while I was speaking at a meeting in the church. It was only a small part of the wall near me, but a bigger section near one of the readers. I was surprised that people were so dismayed that a piece of the wattle and mud had fallen down. They saw a sign which I was unaware of: the termites had destroyed the bottom of the building.



It was several weeks later that the whole thing gave way, luckily while no one was in or near it. This is one of our livelier churches and the only one with a lady (non-stipendiary) priest. Situated on the main road north, it is one of our best church sites so a very public icon of the diocese! To rebuild will cost 12 million ariary, about £2,600, which is utterly beyond the reach

of the local community who are all subsistence farmers. I applied to an American charity which builds simple new churches for a congregation of this size but sadly had a flat refusal as they are not taking on new projects during the current pandemic.

On a slightly more positive note, the reported cases of Covid-19 have reduced to a trickle and there have been none in the last few days here in Mahajanga. Apart from wearing masks all the time, Covid is out of the news for most people. It is difficult to hold these things in perspective but I was very struck by the fact that over twice the number of people who died of the coronavirus died of malaria in Madagascar this year. The deaths due to malnutrition and hunger are unknown but significant. Given that we still have bubonic plague here you can see why people are astonished at the panic about Covid elsewhere in the world.



Mme Vero’s farewell in the cathedral. She is already wearing the MU uniform of the northern diocese where she is moving

“Doesn’t the beauty of the dawn speak to you of the glory of God?” fellow travellers have sometimes said to me. My honest answer is “No” – it simply tells me my night was too short, or, too long if I have been on the road all night! I would much prefer bed to admiring the light slowly spreading across the sky bringing a rich palette of colour to the world. Sunsets do it for me!

Nevertheless as we set out for Marovoay for the dedication of the new vicarage and farewell service to the rural dean very early on the last Sunday of September I suddenly felt exhilarated in the pristine early morning air as we drove up into the hills with a vast panorama across the great Betsiboka River estuary. I realised that what made this so wonderful was freedom after the months of various stages of lockdown in the Evêché. The new vicarage at Marovoay was wondrously decorated for the dedication. These huge swags of material with their rosettes right across the front and round the sides of the house were made up of just two incredibly long pieces of material, one orange, one white, which had been hired for the occasion.



Our Development Committee deliberated on how best to spend the grant aid to deal with Covid-19. It was decided to provide every church with soap and hand-washing facilities and every member of the congregations with the obligatory face masks. My companion Andry on these journeys is now the chairman of our Development Committee. He and I were startled to discover that not a single member of the congregation and nobody in the massive Sunday market which was taking place in the town was wearing one. We suddenly felt like foreigners from the city who knew little of country ways and reality. The congregation in the church were tightly packed. What is social distancing? What the wealthy people - who have space - do in the cities.

The following weekend I was in Port-Bergé for a Confirmation. Guess what? The face masks that Andry and others had worked so hard to produce and send by expensive express delivery were still in a box in the priest's home. I began to feel that Mahajanga and the rest of the diocese are on different planets. I was informed that on the Saturday afternoon I would be in church and people would come to see me. At 3pm I was to meet two mayors. Andry pointed out that the water and soap was not available at the church. The rural dean was surprised, "But isn't that for Sunday Services?"

At three o'clock precisely (such precise timing here is in itself very strange) 23 men and a lady marched into church and took their places in the desks. The Church is two school rooms during the week. Introductions were made with greatly exaggerated courtesy. I really do not like the custom of addressing me as "Your excellency my lord Bishop".

Then the shock of the meeting. The lady at the back was asked to stand up and was introduced as the midwife who is working at the new Bishop Speers hospital! (Pronounced Bee.sop Spees). Who had given permission for this? Who was responsible for this? Obviously, I was meant to be



thrilled and flattered at this initiative. I was alarmed. At 3.30pm precisely in trooped a very different group: the local football club, their trainers, etc.

Repeat performance of introductions and speeches. Substance: would I be or could I get them a sponsor?! I explained that, sadly, buying football kit was nowhere on my priority list. I appealed to them to look at the building they were in and guess what my priorities might be. Nothing daunted, they were sure that someone of my eminence... had all the contacts. Please, at least tell your friends about us. So there you are, my dear friends, I keep my promise!

Next in, more or less, were the Confirmation candidates for a talk and rehearsal with me. They too, all except two, had walked great distances for this and would have to sleep the night in the church. These occasions are immensely moving for me as I pray over each individual for the gift of the Holy Spirit. (I did get my hands between anointing and laying hands on each candidate but I rather suspect that was seen as a new ritual exclusive to the bishop.)

I read recently, instead of taking all your problems about the church and the world to God, rather pray, "God you have some problems here. How can I help?"

On that note I must thank God and you for immensely generous responses to the last Mad Life. We are now in a position to rebuild St Andrew's Church, Ambobitika slightly bigger and a lot better.

Love and Prayers

+Hall



Ivan's Fundraising Causing a Stir on the Walls



Ivan Taylor writes...

Covid-19 has had an undeniable impact on all our lives and, sadly, continues to do so. Not just physically, but financially and spiritually also. We have had to come to terms with and adapt to the 'new normal'. For some it has been a relatively easy transition. For others less so.

The Lighthouse - a think tank organisation from the University of Sydney - has identified 7 positive outcomes of the Pandemic. One of these is Connectedness - 'a rejuvenated sense of community and social cohesion... using social media platforms to connect and reconnect. There is a huge wave of formal and informal volunteering where people use their skills and abilities to help others.' Lighthouse goes on 'as heartbreaking and frightening as this crisis is, its positive outcomes can be gifts we should not overlook. If we ignore them, all of this becomes meaningless. This crisis will end. We will meet again. We can do so as better human beings.'

As a church we (and other churches) gradually managed to find a way forward through the darkness and into the light as initial Lockdown restrictions were eased.

From online worship to drive-in worship services. From in-church private prayer on to in-church services and Communion. Sadly our Tourist Ministry, monthly Flea Market and catering events have not been possible, consequently leaving a dent in our coffers. Fund raising ideas were considered and straight off we looked at ways to expand our already successful SA Deli project. Set up in 2011 it offers a range of branded Chutneys, Curds and Coffee and is an offshoot of the LEAH (Lunch with the Elderly And Housebound) Project which has been up and running since 2009. And so the Deli Soup Kitchen was born.

A range of soups, made in the church kitchen, are containered, frozen and sold to the congregation, family and friends. Pre-ordered, they are collected each Sunday and Tuesday after worship. The price is £2.50 per tub which contains two good, nutritious portions. All soups are coeliac and vegan friendly. The costs of the project are covered by private donations so all monies received go into church funds. Neighbouring churches (with whom we built a strong, lasting bond during our drive-in services) are also invited to avail of the soups. To quote our Rector: "It is with great anticipation that we launch

an entrepreneurial and creative approach to fundraising this Autumn season and hopefully beyond. We are so pleased that the skills and talents amongst the congregation are being given so willingly and I am sure the expansion of the SA Deli to include a soup kitchen will go down a treat with our congregation and wider community. I would like to thank everyone who will assist over the coming weeks and months, and I have pleasure in heartily commending this project to you". Rev Nigel Cairns, October 2020.

The project has been a great success on a number of levels including, additional financial support, the establishment of a renewed sense of community within the congregation and further opportunities for our willing volunteers to continue to utilise their baking and cooking expertise.

It has also proved that St. Augustine's remains 'a living, vibrant Church'.

We cordially invite you to scan the QR code to experience a 'Virtual Tour' of 'the Wee Church on the Walls'.

Enjoy!

Email: weechurch@btinternet.com

Mobile: 07980 667613



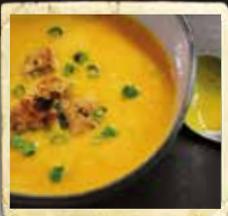
Soups and "Bits"

Here are a few, simple recipes for soups and "bits" to serve with them. The soups can be made up to 3 days beforehand, covered and stored in the fridge. They can be frozen up to a month ahead. Perfect for Christmas! The bits are a tasty way to use up leftover turkey and ham. Enjoy...

Curried Butternut Squash and Apple Soup...

1 medium to large butternut squash; 2 tablespoons rapeseed oil; 2 small white onions, chopped; 2 tablespoons curry powder (or to personal taste); 1 teaspoon dried ginger; 1 teaspoon turmeric (optional); 2 firm apples, cored and chopped; 1 litre vegetable stock (cubes are fine); 1 400g tin coconut milk; 1 tablespoon lemon juice; Croutons and sliced scallions to serve.

Heat oven to 180c. Halve the squash and remove the seeds. Place, cut side down, onto a baking tray and roast until skin is browned and flesh tender - about 35/40 minutes. Meanwhile heat the oil in a large pot and cook the onions until soft. Add the spices and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. Chop up the squash, including the skin, then add to the pot along with the apple and stir with the onions and spices. Add the stock and bring to a boil. Turn down heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Add the coconut milk and lemon juice, bring back to a simmer, then ladle into warmed bowls and top with the scallions and croutons to serve.



Roasted Cauliflower, Bacon and Hazelnut Soup...

100g skinned hazelnuts; 1 medium cauliflower cut into small florets, stalk finely chopped; 2 tablespoons rapeseed oil; 1 small fennel bulb, chopped; 1 small white onion, chopped; 180mls dry white wine (or water); 1.5 litres vegetable stock (cubes are fine); 250mls whipping cream; 4 slices lean back bacon, roughly chopped; 2 bay leaves

Heat oven to 160c. Spread hazelnuts onto a baking tin and toast for about 10 minutes tossing occasionally until golden. Let them cool, then coarsely chop and set aside. Increase oven to 180c. Toss the cauliflower florets in the rapeseed oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast, tossing once, until lightly browned and tender - approx. 25 mins. Heat a large pot on a medium heat and dry cook the bacon until crispy. Remove with a slotted spoon onto kitchen roll. Cook the fennel, onion and cauliflower stalk in the bacon fat until soft. Add the wine (or water) and cook until almost evaporated. Add the roasted cauliflower, stock and bay leaves. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes until cauliflower is tender. Remove bay leaves and add the cream. Very carefully blend the soup with a stick blender until very smooth. Season with salt and pepper and bring back to a simmer. Ladle into warmed bowls. Top with the chopped hazelnuts and bacon. Drizzle with a little extra oil and serve.



Turkey, Brie and Cranberry 'Toastie'

4 slices sourdough or country bread; Softened butter; 2 tablespoons cranberry sauce or SA Deli Beetroot Chutney; 125g Brie, sliced; Leftover turkey, thinly sliced; Baby spinach or rocket leaves.

Spread each slice of bread thinly with butter - don't be too generous at this stage!! Add the cranberry or chutney on top of the butter. Layer the turkey, Brie and leaves onto 2 of the slices and place the other 2 slices on top to make two sandwiches. Butter the outsides, again thinly. Heat a frying pan over a medium heat and place the sandwiches, with the Brie side down, into the pan. Fry for 3 - 4 minutes pressing down a few times with a spatula. Carefully turn the toastie and repeat the cooking procedure. Serve immediately with extra chutney or Mayo (or both!)



Baked Ham and Tomato 'Rarebit'

4 thick slices sourdough or country bread; 200g mature Cheddar, grated; 1 small onion, finely chopped; 2 tomatoes, chopped; 2 medium eggs; 1 teaspoon HP sauce; leftover Christmas ham, thinly sliced.

Toast the bread on both sides, butter while warm and set aside. Turn on grill to medium. Combine the cheese, onion, tomatoes, eggs and HP sauce in a bowl and mix thoroughly. Lay the ham on the toasts and spread the rarebit mix evenly over each slice. Grill until golden brown and bubbling. Perfect with SA Deli Tomato Chutney!!



Life in the 'New Normal' School Day Welcome to St Mura's

The past few months have brought many challenges for everyone around the world not least among all school communities throughout Ireland.

Our school had been focussing on embedding digital technologies within the school curriculum as our focus area under school self-evaluation (SSE) for the past couple of years. Through the support of our board of management and parents' association and aided by Department of Education and Skills (DES) IT funding, we had enough laptops or iPads to allow each child individual access. We contacted each family to ask whether they would like to borrow a school laptop to support their child in his/her learning during lockdown. Some families were glad to avail of the offer.

We kept in contact with our families through regular text messages and emails. As principal teacher, I was particularly concerned about some of our newcomer families from Eastern Europe who did not have family support living locally and might be feeling quite isolated. When we were allowed to enter the school building once more, I made frequent phone calls to our school families. Some of these phone calls could have lasted up to an hour as sometimes the children wanted to

have a chat with the principal to share their news and, on other calls, people just wanted to have a chat, glad to hear another voice. Although everyone had their done their best in this time of distance learning, it was apparent that nothing can or could replace the classroom environment - the interchange, the engagement, the buzz, the craic-that special atmosphere which you can only find in a primary classroom. We all looked forward to the schools reopening so that some sense of normality could be restored for the children, their parents, their teachers and their entire school community. I sent regular emails to our families, informing them of the safety precautions that would be in place to ensure a safe return to school. I was available to discuss any fears which they might have had. I wrote a postcard to each child telling them how much we were looking forward to seeing them in St Mura's on the 1st of September.

September 1st finally arrives! The principal teacher is standing at the gate to welcome everyone to school and to ensure that physical distancing is maintained by both children and parents. Newly stencilled footprints and smiley faces indicate the route to the school door. Marie, our Special Needs Assistant, is there to ensure that everyone sanitises their hands properly. Infants say goodbye to their parents at the door

as we are minimising visitors to the school. Miraculously, no tears! It's as if these 5-year olds were experienced hands at coming to school. Their teachers await them in their classrooms. The first school day of the 2020-2021 year begins. A year which promises to be like no other. Many of the children haven't seen their friends or their teachers except in a virtual sense since the 12th of March. They haven't been in a classroom for 5½ months. Things are very different since they were last in school and yet they accept it all as if it were the most normal thing in the world. They quickly adapt to the new ways of frequent handwashing, sanitising hands and surfaces, social distancing etc. It seems strange at first that our playground is now organised so that the class bubbles don't interact during breaktimes and lunchtimes. It's especially strange in a small school like ours where the children all used to play together regardless of age. Something else to get used to. Again, within a few days, it's as if this is the way things have always been.

We are now back at school for two months and everything has gone relatively smoothly. If you were to visit our school, you would probably notice all the safety signage and safety measures in place but, in many ways, life at school continues much as it always did. Our school is a place of learning, of engagement, of laughter. We might not have the usual visitors to the school or engage in the many visits which we made to other schools as part of our cross-community studies. We cannot visit our local library or other places of interest at the moment. However, through the use of digital media, we can have our class assemblies with Rev. Judi McGaffin via Zoom. We participated

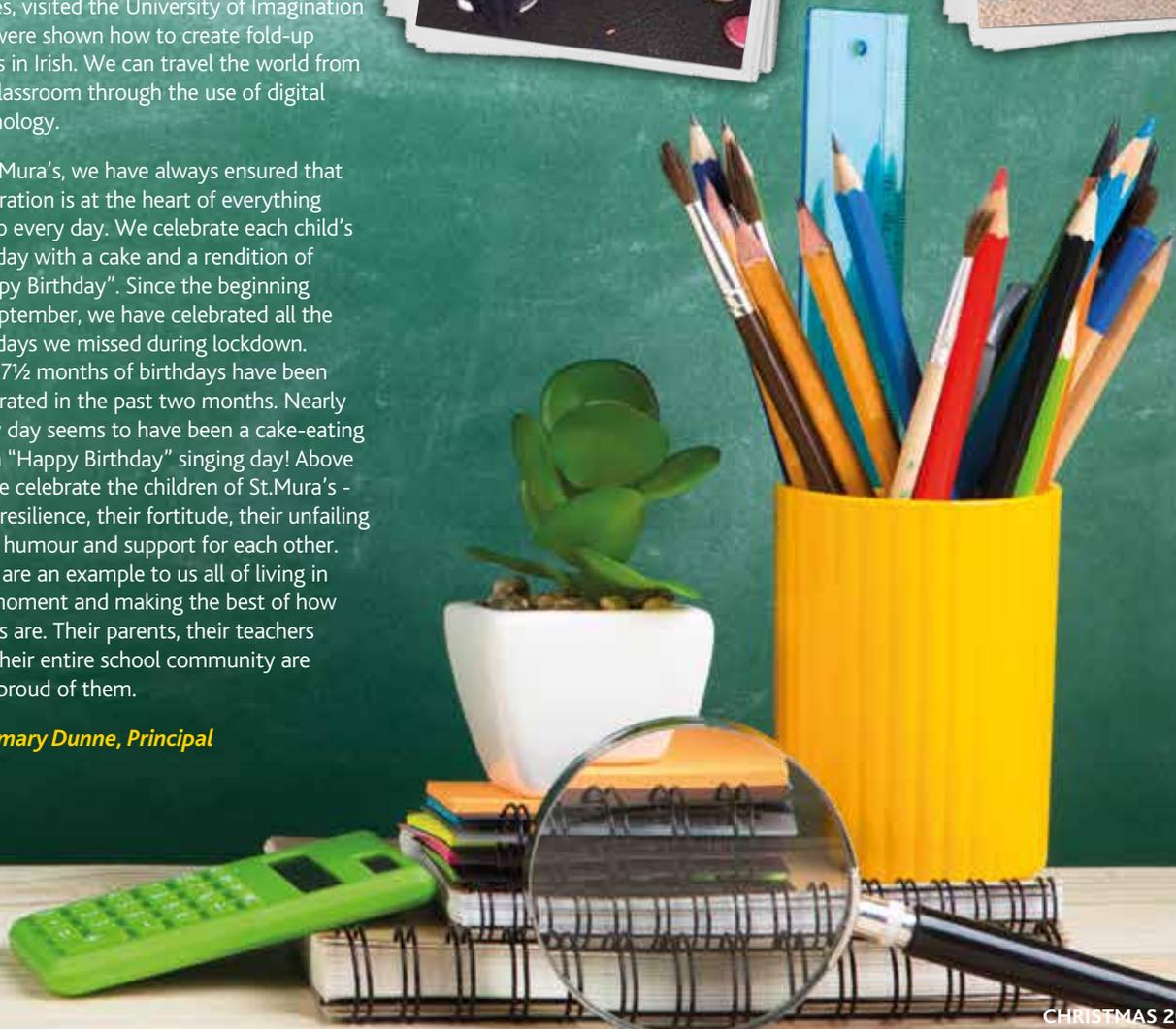




in Wainfest, organised by County Donegal Libraries during October where we listened to stories, visited the University of Imagination and were shown how to create fold-up books in Irish. We can travel the world from our classroom through the use of digital technology.

In St.Mura's, we have always ensured that celebration is at the heart of everything we do every day. We celebrate each child's birthday with a cake and a rendition of "Happy Birthday". Since the beginning of September, we have celebrated all the birthdays we missed during lockdown. Thus, 7½ months of birthdays have been celebrated in the past two months. Nearly every day seems to have been a cake-eating and a "Happy Birthday" singing day! Above all, we celebrate the children of St.Mura's - their resilience, their fortitude, their unflinching good humour and support for each other. They are an example to us all of living in the moment and making the best of how things are. Their parents, their teachers and their entire school community are very proud of them.

Rosemary Dunne, Principal



Richard, Radio & Rainbows...



Seven Amazon Alexa voice-control assistants scattered about his home, near the Donegal border, tell you that Richard Moore is not your average technology user. The *Children-in-Crossfire* founder has deployed the devices in various rooms about the house to carry out basic tasks - make phone-calls, play music and podcasts and audio-books, play his favourite radio stations.

He does not use the term himself, but Richard is a bit of a technophile. It was that interest in technology - and his love of radio - that prompted him to set up Derry's independent radio station, **Drive 105**, just over 10 years ago, to "engage" the community in his home city.

"At a personal level, I have a genuine interest in radio," he explained. "Radio's something that I have relied on all my life. I find it a great way to communicate with people and to learn things and for people to stay connected. I'm also a musician, and very interested in recording, technology and editing and all that, and I just had a genuine interest in all that goes on behind the scenes at radio stations, as well. So, when the licence for a new local radio station came up for grabs, back in 2009, it was a 'no brainer'."

The 59-year-old, Creggan-born father-of-two is best known for having been blinded by a rubber bullet fired by a soldier in May 1972. Richard was 10 years old at the time and was on his way home from school when the shooting happened. Remarkably, in 2007, he met the soldier who fired the rubber bullet, Charles Innes, and even more improbably they became friends. Richard says, "Being able to forgive Charles - on a profound level, the

emotion of forgiveness - has been uplifting."

"There is a sadness about blindness," he says. "Not being able to see my children, I find that sad. That'll always be there. My Mammy and daddy are both dead, and I have my memories, but I'd like to look at photos of them. I miss scenery and colours. Two weeks ago, I was coming home from work and the person I was with stopped the car and got out to take a photo of a magnificent rainbow. I'd like to have seen that."

His blindness hasn't stopped Richard from living life to the full. For 14 years he was involved in the family bar business. He travels to Belfast by bus for meetings connected with his charity, typing on his computer en-route. He operates a recording studio at home; is an accomplished guitarist and plays keyboards; he composes music and plays regularly with the Long Tower Folk Group, which he co-founded with his wife, Rita. Recently he started a podcast, *'What About You?'*, in which he converses with others who have suffered in the Troubles.

Richard acknowledges the impact that being blinded has had. "I'll be 60 next year, at some point I'll be retiring. Blindness affects that. Most of my life, though, blindness has been a positive experience. There are challenges, but I've managed to beat them or navigate around them. Yes, I get stressed, I can take on too much, I can get let down by a funder, I can get crabbit, as they say in Derry - we're all just human. But I never be in bad form about blindness, that I can recall".

He can add cycling to the North Pole to his list of achievements. He's part of a group of friends, the aptly named Raw Hide Club, who

take to the roads at weekends, Richard on a tandem with his son-in-law. The North Pole in question is a bar near Clonmany.

"People have made blindness a positive experience for me," he says. "My blindness has meant I've had to engage with people in a different way."

Richard's resilience and indefatigability are humbling. The lockdown means our conversation is happening on the telephone rather than face-to-face. But he meets even the coronavirus restrictions with equanimity. "If you're in bad form, you can hop in the car and go to the shop. I can't do that. I have to do something else. I'll get on the treadmill, get the guitar out, go outside and sniff the air."

I ask him whether - after almost 50 years of blindness - he still sees things in his mind's eye? "I used to love Christmas tree lights in our house in Malin Gardens. We had a bay window and my mammy and my daddy always put the Christmas tree in the bay window. So, one of my fondest memories is looking down Malin Gardens at our house because the windows used to be steamed up, and the Christmas tree lights would be in behind the steamed-up windows, and it used to create a kind of a watery, bluey, greeny.... all the different colours of the Christmas tree lights...and it was like all the lights were spinning into each other. I look at that with a 'memory head' on but I also look at it with a bit of sadness, because I can't see that anymore. There's nothing wrong with being sad. We all get sad about something. I've acknowledged that sadness will happen, it's just that I'll be sad about things that you'll not be sad about. You can make things as big or as small as you want them to be."



“

Radio's something that I have relied on all my life. I find it a great way to communicate with people and to learn things and for people to stay connected.”

Book Review... 'Bishop'



Want a good read about a fictional bishop and church goings-on? Then maybe "Bishop" by Ted Woods is the book for you!

Even as a student, Arthur Easterby was tipped to become a bishop. Ambitious and able, he carefully plotted his progress to preferment including marrying his Rector/Archdeacon's daughter. So it was no surprise when in due course he was elected as Bishop of Daneford, just outside Dublin. What nobody realised was that he also carried a dark secret!

This short novel contains pathos, humour, disappointment and anger - all qualities we find in any community. I recommend it as a good read - a gripping story which displays Ted's ability to involve the reader in the whole atmosphere of what is happening. One could have an idea about how it might end; but, like me, it is unlikely to be correct. Ted's first novel will be enjoyed by all, not just those involved in Church matters.

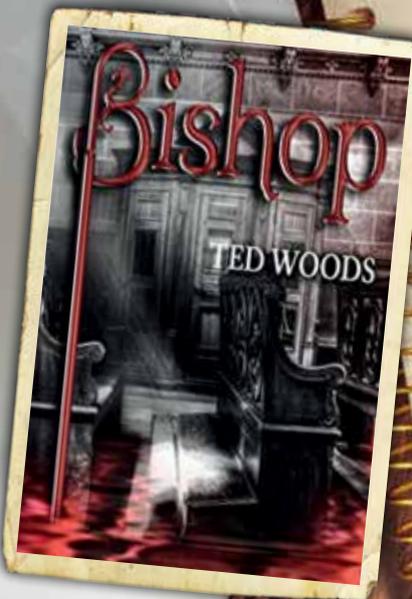
Canon Cecil Hyland

"A super novel; couldn't put it down!" Canon Frances Briscoe
"Couldn't put it down; read the book in one sitting!"
Rev Sheilagh Williamson

Ebook Edition: £2.99 Paperback Edition £7.99 available from Beaten Track Publishing & Amazon <https://www.beatentrackpublishing.com/bishop>.
Amazon, use http://mybook.to/Bishop_TedWoods

Rev Ted Woods is a retired rector who spent all of his ministry in the Church of Ireland. He now lives in Liverpool where his wife, The Rev Anne Taylor, is vicar of St. Peter's, Formby.

Ted's first book "AND SOME THERE WERE - Sketches of Some Irish Anglican Prelates and Priests" is available as an ebook on Amazon.



DON'T FORGET YOU CAN PULL OUT MY SPECIAL PAGES FROM THE MAGAZINE!



Hello my friends, welcome back. I just love the season of Advent and Christmas, don't you?



CJ News

NUMBER 25

I love all the preparations, the lights, the Christmas Carols, surprising someone with a Christmas gift, but most of all I love to get in touch with people that maybe I haven't spoken to, or seen in a while. Then I can spread some Christmas cheer.

It is important that each and every one of us makes the best of what we can do and communicate with those around us as we celebrate the true meaning of Christmas and the greatest story ever told.

2020 has been a very different year for us all, and we may find that this Christmas could be different from those we have been used to.

Communication with others is extremely important. It can help us stay connected to others and stop us from feeling lonely. It can help us all feel healthy and better within ourselves. Communication can show that we care.



COMMUNICATION A MEANS OF SENDING AND RECEIVING INFORMATION



Well, how can we communicate with others during this Christmas season?



I think there are lots of ways that we can communicate with each other. I also think that we can learn much from the Christmas story where the joy of the birth of Jesus was communicated to all who needed to know, and for the world to see and experience.

The Christmas story is the greatest story ever told to each one of us. About two thousand years ago, in the town of Nazareth, there lived a young woman named Mary. She was engaged to be married to Joseph, a carpenter. One day an angel appeared to her and told her she had been chosen to have a special baby. The baby would be God's Son and she was told by the angel that she must call him Jesus.



Unlike today there were no modern forms of communication. The angel bringing this message to Mary was extremely important for God's plan to work.



The way this message was communicated was very special and needed to be very clear. Mary had to take this message and live it out in her life to ensure that God's Son was born for us all.

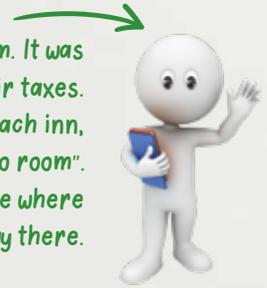




Mary had to communicate to Joseph the message the angel gave her. Joseph supported Mary and so soon after the angel's visit, Mary and Joseph were married. Mary was due to have her baby when they were told they had to go on a long journey to Bethlehem, where Joseph came from, to be registered, because they had to pay a special tax. Mary had to travel this long journey over the hills of Galilee to reach their destination even though baby Jesus was so close to being born.



At last Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem. It was crowded with other people who needed to pay their taxes. Mary was very tired and needed a place to stay. At each inn, they kept getting the same response. "No room, no room". Eventually, one kind innkeeper said he had a stable where he kept his animals. They were welcome to stay there.



Just a few hours later, Mary gave birth to her son, Jesus, in that stable. She wrapped Jesus in strips of cloth and laid Him in a manger full of hay.



Now this was a very special message to be communicated to others. How would this be done? How would people find out just how special this baby, born in a stable surrounded by the animals, was going to be for us all?



Again, an angel played an important part in communicating this message. The shepherds were told exactly what they needed to know, and they left to go and see the new born King.

On a hillside overlooking Bethlehem, some shepherds were watching over their sheep. A bright light appeared in the sky. They were very afraid. It was an angel sent by God. The angel told them not to be afraid, because he had some good news. He said the Son of God had been born and they would find Him in Bethlehem.



The shepherds wanted to go and see the baby as they were amazed at what the angel had said. When they arrived at the stable, they were filled with joy at seeing Jesus lying in the manger and knowing that they had been chosen to come and witness this great thing that had just happened. They knelt down and worshipped Him. They told Mary and Joseph how the angel had appeared in the sky and told them that Jesus was to be the Saviour of the world.



You see, communication is the key to getting important information to others. Without the effective communication of the angels then the people involved would not have known the message God wanted them to have and this would not have been passed on correctly to others.

This Christmas time let us all make a big effort to communicate with others. We need to be like the angel and find a way to get the important messages of Christmas, and how we care, out to others. Remember to stay safe and follow all advice given by the adults.



HEART ANGEL



Activity: You will need cardboard and string.

Cut out the heart and head shapes. Take the large heart and turn upside down. Take the two smaller hearts and face pointy bits towards each other for wings. Tape wings to body. Use the circle cardboard for the head and tape to the wings. Turn the angel over. Draw on eyes, nose and mouth. Punch small hole in head and thread ribbon for hanging.

CJ's Christmas Communication Challenge...

Each day of December I challenge you to complete a task where you are communicating and showing you care. Choose a person you know.

Draw a picture

Write a letter to a friend

Write a Christmas card

Leave a gift

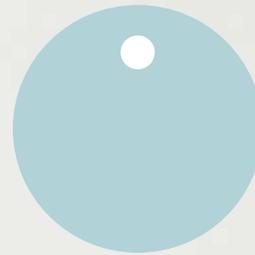
Donate something to charity



Can you come up with some ideas of your own?

Head

Body



Wings



MARSHMALLOW REINDEER TREAT



Let's colour!



Ingredients

- 12 large marshmallows
- 1 bag small pretzels
- 12 eight inch lolly pop sticks
- 12 red mini M&M's
- 24 small candy eyes
- 1 cup chocolate or chocolate chips
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Instructions

1. Break the pretzels into antler shapes
2. Melt the chocolate in the microwave
3. Add a small amount of vegetable oil until the chocolate drizzles easily off a spoon.
4. Dip the tip of the lolly pop stick into the chocolate and press it into the side of the marshmallow, slightly off centre so it's near the back of the reindeer's head.
5. Dip the marshmallow in the chocolate until it's fully coated.
6. Set the marshmallow on top of the antlers.
7. Add the red mini M&M nose.
8. Allow the chocolate to set for 1 to 2 hours
9. Use a small dab of icing or melted chocolate to "glue" the candy eyes onto the reindeer.



CJ - KEEPING CONNECTED...

URNEY PARISH



HEY CJ! We hope you are safe and well. As we find ourselves in strange and challenging times we have decided to set up a virtual way of keeping in touch in Urney Parish. We started by distributing folders to all children at the beginning of September with activities for all ages. Each week we uploaded videos and pictures in correspondence with the folders. Reverend Jonathan McFarland was involved by making videos, playing his guitar, singing some songs and helping the children with their prayers. We asked the parents to send in photos of the children with their completed work and we were able to put together our Harvest display. We thought it would be nice for the parishioners to get a glimpse of all the smiling faces of the children that they may miss from coming out to church. We encourage and support the children and their parents as we help spread the word of God to the homes around the parish. God Bless and stay safe.

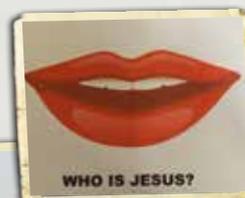


My friends from Fahan & Bunrana

Our names are Jill and Jack and Kylie and Kevin. We help the Rev Judi to tell stories from the Bible. We know CJ too! Jack and Jill are brother and sister and Kevin and Kylie are cousins. We all live together on a farm. As we live on a farm we are all very busy most of the year with farm work and of course school work too! We have a pet sheep and a pet goat. The sheep has been helping with some of the stories and the goat will be appearing soon too! When we were off school we helped Rev Judi at the Friday Fun time and now because we are back at school we help her at Saturday PRAISE at 10am on a Saturday morning! We also help the children of St Mura's National school learn about the Lord's Prayer! We love to talk - but we know that we need to listen too! We listen to God and then we tell people about him! Some of the wonderful pictures that people have sent to us when we have been thinking about listening and then talking about God are here for you to see. Aren't they just wonderful!



During Advent challenges will be completed. The advent calendar will be opened each day and there will be a piece of the Christmas story explained and something to do - for an adult, a child or a family.



MERRY CHRISTMAS

Take care of yourself and others during this Christmas season. Remember to take time to communicate and show others that you care.

Contact me on email cj@derryandraphoe.org



MEDAL, MEALS, MINISTRY...

Rev Canon Paul Hoey, how did you feel when you heard that you had been nominated to receive an MBE?

Initially, shocked. I received a phone call out of the blue from a member of staff at the Prime Minister's Office asking if I had had time to consider the email they had sent asking if I would accept an honour if I were to be offered one. Since, however, they had sent their email to an address I had not accessed for some time, I really hadn't a clue what the gentleman was talking about. Very kindly, he explained what it was about.

I was half-expecting it to be revealed as a very late April Fool joke, but when he said that I needed to respond within a few hours, I realised it was no joke. I took some time to consider this very great offer carefully. I believe that the good that has been achieved in this community could not have happened without a whole team of fantastic people working together, rather than being just down to me. However, I came to see that the award could be seen as recognition of the part that everybody played, and that is very much how I hope it will be viewed. The fact that my late mother received an MBE 24 years ago also influenced my decision.

How has the news been received?

I've been humbled and greatly encouraged to receive hundreds of messages of congratulations and good wishes from public figures, parishioners and friends. It was particularly touching to hear from people from every part of the country where I have served previously, and even from people with whom I went to school. However, the reaction which impacted me most was that of my father, who was immensely touched by the fact that his son was following in his late wife's footsteps.

For what is the award being presented?

"For services to the local community" is the official wording. It's a recognition of the recent effort to support people in our local community affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. When it began to impact in March of this year, the three local churches, in partnership with Eglinton Community Centre, worked together to organise an amazing team of almost 90 volunteers who delivered groceries and medicines, made supportive phone calls, and delivered meals to those who were having to shield or needed extra support. Feedback was that this was a lifeline for some individuals. We were able to mobilise quickly in March 2020 because of our experience of working together following the terrible flooding in the area in August 2017, which was traumatic for this community.

Around 130 families had to leave their homes for up to a year, and my instinct, at that time, was that rather than local groups working on their own, there would be a deeper impact if we worked together to support those most affected. The whole is definitely greater than

the sum of the parts! We secured grants, organised meals, put on concerts, delivered hampers and much more besides. My role in this response is also cited in my nomination.

How will this change things?

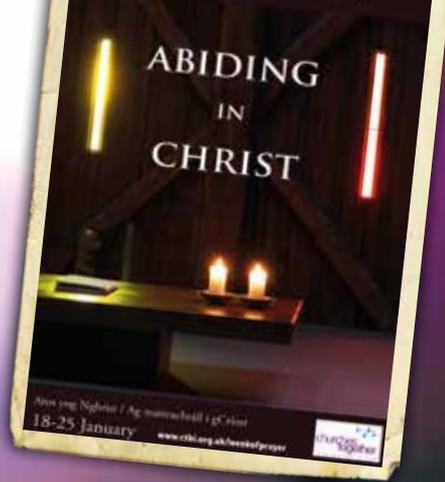
Obviously, I will now expect people to bow or curtsy when they meet me! Seriously, I know that the honour won't change me, other than to reinforce my desire to continue, by the grace of God, to build on the great sense of togetherness that we have in our village and surrounding area. I hope that it will also affirm the calling of St. Canice's to be a light for the whole community.

Finally, Paul, when will you receive the award.

I've been told it's likely to be next year, subject, of course, to the situation allowing. At least through the long winter months I will have something to anticipate. I shan't, however, expect that Her Majesty will remember me from the time I accompanied my mother to receive her award!



Silent Communication...



The Archbishop of Armagh and Chairman of the Church of Ireland's Commission on Christian Unity and Dialogue, the Most Revd John McDowell, has endorsed and encouraged the use of resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, in January 2021, which are available from the website: ctbi.org.uk

"There could hardly be more challenging circumstances in which to plan for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on 18–25 January. 'Getting together' in local settings was in itself a witness to the underlying communion we share by virtue of our baptism and faith in the Crucified and Risen Lord. In large parts of the island of Ireland that will probably be impossible in 2021. In other parts, it will be very limited.

However, clergy and lay people have shown themselves to be imaginative in keeping the worshipping life of the Church alive in general and I trust that new ways will be developed to give some concrete expression to Our Lord's desire that "...they may all be one".

The resource material in this unusual year has been prepared by a very singular group, the Grandchamp Community based in the French speaking part of Switzerland. It is a monastic community of women, begun by members of the Reformed Tradition, but now fully ecumenical, sitting outside the formal

structures, of any tradition, but with strong links to the Taizé Community. It began when a group of Reformed women rediscovered the practice of silence in gathering around the Word of God. The material they have produced centres on a well-known passage

from St John's Gospel, 'Abide in me'. I pray that their spirit of silence in the presence of the Word may inspire you as you think about the opportunities for ecumenical witness and worship in the period of silence we are passing through."

+John Armagh

Editor's Note:

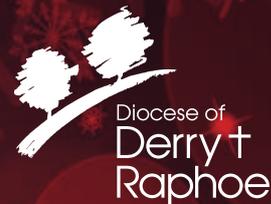
"Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit", is based on John 15:1-17 and expresses Grandchamp Community's vocation to prayer, reconciliation and unity in the Church and the human family. Today the community has fifty sisters, all women from different generations, Church traditions, countries and continents. In their diversity the sisters are a living parable of communion. They remain faithful to a life of prayer, life in community and the welcoming of guests. The sisters share the grace of their monastic life with visitors and volunteers who go to Grandchamp for a time of retreat, silence, healing or in search of meaning. For 2021, the sisters are inviting churches across the world to enter into their tradition of prayer and silence that is rooted in the ancient traditions of the Church catholic.

Social Media:

Show your support for Christian Unity by posting unity messages and details of your events to our Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Twitter wall - simply add the #wpcuwall hashtag to your Twitter post (note there is a delay before they appear). You can also find updates about the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Twitter by following the #wpcu2021 hashtag.

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. @cccmsp 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



Deacon Intern:
Rev Claire Henderson



Sunday worship

As we are now currently in a further phase of 'lockdown', having moved to Level 5 of the government's guidelines. It has not been possible to return to 'in-church' worship. However, following a brief intermission while Dean Arthur was on sabbatical leave during October, our services have returned to Facebook Live each Sunday at 12 noon.

Funerals

The funeral of Roy Barnett took place in his home on Monday 5th October, with burial afterwards in the Cathedral graveyard. The Reverend Judi McGaffin conducted the funeral.

The funeral of Tommy Gordon took place in Raymochy Parish Church on Monday 26th October, followed by burial in the adjoining graveyard. The service was conducted by Canon David Crooks.

Raphoe Cathedral Renovation Project 2020

The works to the Cathedral are progressing well, despite some challenges. Some bad weather has delayed work slightly, and also a redesign of the roof structure over the chancel and sanctuary was necessary, as some structural issues were discovered when the old tiles were removed. Otherwise work is progressing and the new slates are looking very well indeed. Further work involving the

renovation of the clock faces and louvres is being undertaken, as well as essential lead work to the external 'steps' of the tower. We are extremely grateful to the All Churches Trust which has provided a very generous grant of £12,000. This will help us to narrow the financial gap. Donations can still be made towards the cost of the project (now budgeted to be in the region of €420,000) either directly to the Dean, or the Hon. Treasurer, or by Paypal via the cathedral's website - www.raphoeacathedral.ie.

Convoy, Monellan & Donaghmore

Rector: Rev Canon William Long
Tel: 074 9101817



Stranorlar, Meenglass & Kiltcevogue

Rector: Rev Adam Pullen

Mobile 087 7547880 Email: adam.pullen@googlemail.com

Facebook; Stranorlar, Meenglass & Kiltcevogue Cofl @smkcofi



"Give thanks with a grateful heart"...at the time of writing we have just given thanks and celebrated the harvest gathered in. Yes I know we were late but I had hoped that we might have had the service physically rather than digitally. Oh well, we took the challenge as a positive and I was able to interview and include some of the farmers, Atty Hardy, Keith Patton, Paul Stewart and William Kee, with thoughts and prayers from the farm. It was also great to be able to include two readers from Meenglass Church, Irene Kee and Jennifer Rule as the church, due its small size, has been closed though this time of Covid-19. We also gave thanks with a grateful heart, a big

thank you, for the generosity from the parish and beyond, (as you can see from the photo), in donating non-perishable food and toiletries. These will be passed onto the Finn Valley Family Resource Centre and then onto St Vincent De Paul, and will help needy families this Christmas.

..."because he's given Jesus Christ his Son"...this Christmas will be different and we are going to make this difference a positive! We are going to try a Virtual Nativity, with the children playing the parts and videoing themselves telling us the story of Christmas. Thanks to DRY & SEEDS we hope to join in "Shine the light for Christmas", a time to share the light of Christ this Christmas. At this darkest time of the year let the light of

Jesus that has come into the world, shine brightly giving hope. Unfortunately it's too early to say what the Christmas services will look like, yet I'm reminded of a little phrase I heard "we don't need to save Christmas because Christ Jesus has saved us"! So on that positive note let's shine the light of hope and keep safe.

God Bless, Rector Adam Pullen



Donegal, Killymard, Lough Eske & Laghey

Rector: Venerable David Huss, Archdeacon of Raphoe

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"Saving Christmas?"

A lot of the public discussion around re-imposing Coronavirus restrictions has mentioned that these measures are necessary in order "to save Christmas." Both the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Tony Holohan, and the UK Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, have used this phrase. But thankfully, we don't need to save Christmas. Indeed, we can't save Christmas - Christmas saves us! The message of Christmas, in the words of Paul in 1 Timothy 1:15, is that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Perhaps instead of trying to preserve our consumer-driven, consumption-mad, sentiment-laden Christmas practices, we will focus again on the true glory of the Nativity - that God came to be with us in

our darkness and to bring his saving presence and eternal hope into this afflicted world. That is a real reason to celebrate!

Plans and preparedness

At the time of writing (early November) 2020 we have gathered inside our church buildings on 23 Sundays and out of them on 21. It's too early to know what combination of in-person and on-line worship will be possible at Christmas time. I would imagine our Christmas worship will be primarily digital (on [Facebook.com/DonegalGroupofParishes](https://www.facebook.com/DonegalGroupofParishes)) but if the opportunity arises to celebrate Holy Communion together in our 4 churches then we will do so with thankfulness and following all public health guidance. I'd love to see if we can find a way to sing carols - perhaps

outdoors or even together in our own homes. Most important of all, I want us to make sure that no-one in our community is left behind, either in terms of the finance/ food/fuel they need, or in terms of the human company and encouragement, which are equally essential. We must do all we can to ensure no-one goes hungry this season - whether through lack of food, warmth, friendship or hope.

Prayer

Let's make this Advent a season of sustained prayer, focusing on the words with which the Bible's thousand-and-more pages come to a close: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen."

Drumholm, Kilbarron & Rossnowlagh

Rev Canon Brian Russell: Rector and Rural Dean
Tel. 0749734025
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Inver, Mountcharles, Kilaghtee & Killybegs

Bishop's Curate: Rev Lindsey Farrell
Tel: 074 973 6013 Email: lindseyfarrell@btinternet.com
Facebook: Inver and Mountcharles Church



A Funny Old Christmas

'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it'. John 1:5

This Christmas, perhaps even more than any other, we need the light that shines in the darkness. We need to see its glow relieving our heaviness. We need to feel its heat warming our chill moments of loneliness and isolation. This pandemic has reminded us of the importance of that great commandment to love God and to love our neighbour. We need to look out for one another. We need to stay in contact with one another. We need to support our local community. We need to go to Christ, to draw close to him in prayer. We yearn for fellowship with one another again. We long for our church doors to open once more and to be able to join together in worship as we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christ-child. Advent is the season of four Sundays which fall before Christmas Day.

Advent, as the season of longing, reminds us of our need of God, of our desire to draw close to him, of our need to be relieved of our heavy burdens. A relief that only God can bring. But the true blessing of Advent is that it is followed by Christmas, by the fulfilment of God's promise, not only to come in the birth of the Messiah, but to come a Second Time to bring our longing to an end.

This Christmas our hope is built on the knowledge that this longing will come to an end. Christ will come. Our hopes will be fulfilled and our fears will be dispelled. Families will reunite. Friendships will be restored. Doors will be open. Christ will come, and we will celebrate. We will give thanks. We will be blessed by his presence, and that blessing will carry us through the challenges and uncertainties that lie ahead in the New Year. We know that this will come to pass because we faithfully believe that the light shines in the midst of this and every darkness,

and this darkness has not overcome it.

As I write this, our church doors are closed. It is my deepest hope and prayer that they will be open for Christmas. If the church doors are open, we will have services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, albeit with a much deeper sense of thanksgiving at being able to come together again. More details will follow closer to the time and will be dependent on local restrictions. If our church doors remain closed, we will continue our services online and we will find additional ways of celebrating the birth of Christ as the family of God.

I continue to keep each family in prayer and ask God's blessing upon us all as we continue this difficult journey together. Even though we are apart at the moment, we stand shoulder to shoulder as brothers and sisters in Christ, under the authority of God and surrounded and upheld by his love.

Ardara, Glencolumbkille, Glenties, Inniskeel & Lettermacaward

Bishop's Curate: Rev Robert Wray
The Rectory, Lackegh, Portnoo, Co. Donegal
Email: robert_wray@talktalk.net



Gweedore (Carrickfinn & Bunbeg) & Templecrone

Bishop's Curate: Rev Liz Fitzgerald
Tel. 074 953 1043 Email: ea.fitzgerald@btinternet.com

Coronavirus, Level 5

A new language, a new outlook on life - "but not as we knew it." Questions about Christmas are on the tongues of many. It is very reassuring that Christmas is so important to so many people. It is very reassuring that family and close friends are so important to so many people. And this is good.

Anticipation and hope are part of Advent. We do all sorts of things in preparation - Christmas decorations, Christmas tree, presents, family meal, parties. When to bake the cake or pudding? One of my favourite things is lighting the Advent candles. The steady countdown; the four coloured candles representing hope, faith, joy and peace, lit, one each Sunday, as we journey through Advent, and the fifth candle lit on Christmas

day, representing the Light of the World in a time of darkness. I have a photograph of my Advent candles, and a crib Sean and I were given for our first Christmas after we were married. It came from an aunt who had worked as a missionary in Nigeria. All the characters are Nigerian, which reminds me that Jesus came to rescue everyone, no matter what country or creed, rich or poor. He came to us all, without exception.

Most years we worry about Christmas presents and decorations and the big meal. But this year is different; we need to look at what is important. It is important to celebrate the birth of Jesus. To recognise our Lord as he became part of a human family, while we are surrounded by our own family. But not



all the family may be able to be home, so we need to cherish them in our heart. Be patient and understanding. Advent is also about the anticipation and hope of the Second Coming of our Lord. We know Jesus walks with us during these difficult Covid days, but just as there will be a time when we can again have large family gatherings, there will be a time when Jesus will come again, and we will see Jesus face to face.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:2,6)

Our Christmas services will be announced in accordance with Covid restrictions.

Dunfanaghy, Raymunterdoney & Tullaghobegley

Rev David Skuce, Rector and Rural Dean, Kilmacrennan East & West Rural Deanery
Facebook: Holy Trinity, Dunfanaghy @holytrinitydunfanaghy



Clondehorkey, Cashel & Mevagh

Priest in Charge: Rev Canon George Irwin
Tel: 028 81659531 Mob: 07444642760
Email: wgirwin@btopenworld.com

Looking Forward

It goes without saying that the hardship caused by the Covid-19 restrictions has been a heavy burden for some and a trial of the patience of all of us at times. However, patience is a Christian virtue and one of the

fruits of the Spirit. And patience is also what keeps the door open to hope for the future. This pandemic will pass, so we must persevere and steady one another as we face the days to come. That virtue of patience is writ large in the Scriptures - our never-failing source of

comfort and encouragement. And so, for example, the prophet Isaiah's message to people in a time of trial is: "those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength." (Isa. 40:31). The same message is expounded by the Psalmist in similar circumstances: "Wait



for the Lord; be strong and he shall comfort your heart; wait patiently for the Lord.” (Psalm 27:17)

Thanks

We were pleased to benefit by way of a cheque for €1,750 from Mr Benny Kelly of Carrigart in September. This wonderful act of generosity was part of the proceeds

of Benny’s 300 kilometre walk completed in August. This is the kind of sacrificial, public-spirited and ecumenical initiative that brings people together and gives hope for the future. Well done Benny!

Worship

It seems unlikely that churches will be open again for Sunday worship until December.

In the meantime the Priest in Charge, Canon Irwin will continue to broadcast a Service at 12noon on Sundays. You can tune in on: facebook.com/wgirwin.

From The Registers

Baptism

Sunday, 20th September: Éabha Rene McElhinney (Carrigart)



Clondevaddock, Rosnakill, Portsalon & Leatbeg

Priest in Charge: Rev David Griscome
Tel: 074 9192811

Congratulations

On behalf of Clondevaddock parish, I wish to congratulate Rev Canon Paul Hoey, who has been awarded an MBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours.

Women’s Refuge - Letterkenny

Margaret McKemey and Georgina will be in the parish hall on December 5th from 11am-1pm to receive any Christmas gifts for the women at the Refuge.

Lighten our darkness, O Lord we pray and in your mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of your only Son, our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. (Evening Prayer).

This prayer, familiar to us all, reflects the desire of us all to seek God’s help and guidance 24/7. Cries have gone up to God regarding the Covid-19 virus asking him: 1) to protect us from the virus, 2) restoring to health and strength those who have contracted the virus, 3) to protect the HSE staff, carers and the sick and 4) bring peace and comfort to the bereaved. It is our prayer that he will hear us.

To be honest, trying to remain positive is very difficult. Level 5 restrictions of movement and the uncertainty of future plans has caused my mind to become unsettled and often confused. What makes it harder is the fact that all my relations are in England. The phone and WhatsApp do make it bearable - just.

These months are going fast and when this issue comes out we will be facing Christmas. What that will be like? I have no idea; but one thing we can be sure of is that God’s message of the gift of life in Christ himself, will remain the same.

“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel which means, God with us”. (Isaiah 7:14)

May I wish you all a Happy and Peaceful Christmas.

From David Griscome.

Tullyaughnish, Kilmacrennan, Killygarvan & Glenalla

Rector: Rev Canon Harry Gilmore
Tel. 0749151013 Email: tkkgparishes@hotmail.com



Conwal Union with Gartan

Rector: Rev David Houlton

Facebook: The Parish of Conwal Union @ConwalParish



It's Covid-19 All Over Again

Having actually held church services in July and August it was with some trepidation that we started September with some baptisms still to do, and a wedding planned for the autumn. As Donegal was threatened with lockdown again (well, level 3 restrictions - which included no in-church services) we ran out of time for the last baptism. A month later the wedding, very sadly, had to be postponed too. On top of those disappointments, there had already been the weddings that had been postponed, and the baptisms that were never planned!

The pandemic is throwing everything up in the air, as we find we can't plan ahead with certainty, and can't do normal things, but that is surely a good challenge for people who know and trust God - even if some of the restrictions on church services are probably disproportionate to the actual risks from short, socially distanced, mask-

wearing, non-singing events in a large buildings that are only used once a week. Certainly other counties in the EU have now decided that churches should not be closed, especially given Freedom of Religion's status as a Human Right and often a constitutional right - not just a legally permitted privilege.

Nevertheless, come October we were venturing online with our Harvest Thanksgiving Services, the second with Bishop Andrew as our (virtual) guest preacher in St Columba's church, Gartan. Filming in church and adding hymns from the Church of Ireland recordings actually proved very popular. Especially popular was the children's harvest service!

Now, as the year end approaches, there is not only Christmas but also the forthcoming celebrations of the 1500th anniversary of St Columba's birth to look forward to. So we are now planning to record something for the anniversary of Columba's birth in Gartan on 7th December, and to go online to celebrate

Jesus's birthday at Christmas - with the annual Service of Lessons and Carols, and Christmas communion with carol singing. Even if we are able to have in-church services as well, most people would not be able to attend under the likely attendance restrictions.

How things have changed in a few short months!

Christmas online:

Sun 20th Dec, 10.30am: A Service of Lessons and Carols from Conwal Parish Church
Christmas Eve, 7.00pm: A Service of Lessons and Carols
Christmas Eve, 11.30pm: Christmas Communion from St Columba's Gartan
Christmas Day, 10.30am: Christmas Communion

In-church services, if permissible, will be announced nearer the time!

Taughboyne with Craigdoosh, All Saints & Killea

Rev Canon David Crooks: Rector and Rural Dean

Tel: 074 914 0135 Mob: 00447871974658

Email: dcrooks@eircom.net



A provisional date, Sunday 10th January 2021, has been set for the Confirmation, which had to be postponed from last May. There is no way of knowing at this stage if the Confirmation will be able to be held on that date, as circumstances may alter. It may not be possible to complete the course by then. However, much of the important ground has been covered, and each young person will receive a folder containing notes on each topic in the entire course. In the circumstances, I think that this will be perfectly adequate. The young people are keen to be confirmed,

which is a good sign, so we will get on with it! The candidates are Rachel Browne, Ellie Cox, Sam Coyle, Alan Devenney, Ava Garvey, Joshua Garvey, Natasha Gordon-Moore, Rachel Jeffrey, Stirling Moore and Rachel Porter. Please remember them in your prayers.

At the time of writing, church services cannot be held. A provisional date for return to church is Sunday 6th December - hopefully this can be achieved. However, it is impossible at the moment to arrange the usual Christmas activities, Carol Services, the Children's Party

and the various other social activities which take place around Advent and Christmas. If we can have Christmas Services, these will be as follows: Sunday 20th December, Service of Nine Lessons and Carols in Killea, 11.00am, Thursday 24th December, the First Eucharist of Christmas, St Columba's Craigadoosh, 11.15pm, and Christmas Day, Friday 25th December Holy Communion Killea 8.30am, Taughboyne 9.45am, All Saints 11.00am. Other arrangements, such as Advent mid-week services, will be announced if and when and where they can be held.

Congratulations again to Sean McClafferty on completing the Diocesan Reader course. His Commissioning has had to be postponed twice. It has now been provisionally arranged for Sunday 6th December in All Saints' Church at 7.30pm.

In the present circumstances, there really is not much to report. The plague is decimating our finances. It will almost certainly mean that we cannot have our usual Christmas sales, valuable sources of income. However, please

continue to pay in your Sustentation, and fill the Gift Sunday envelopes.

Whilst our own finances may be severely curtailed, parishes of Derry and Raphoe are being asked to support Bishop Hall Speers in Mahajanga in Madagascar. Whatever our financial difficulties, we are indeed rich by comparison. Bishop Speers desperately needs large sums of money to recruit, train, house and pay clergy. I will do a sponsored cycle some day in the new year from Moville to

Newtown, linking the Moville and Donagh and Taughboyne groups of parishes, If you would support this, I would be very grateful. I have a personal interest, of course, as Bishop Speers is my brother-in-law. Anne and I attended his episcopal ordination in Mahajanga Cathedral nearly two years ago - in the blazing tropical heat!

Thank you everyone for your perseverance and prayers.

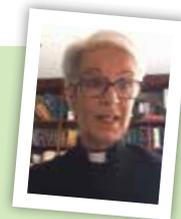
Fahan Upper and Lower

Rector: Rev Judi McGaffin

Tel: 07834561433

Facebook: [Fahanandbuncranachurchofireland](#)

"Cherishing and connecting with all God's children"



Cherishing and connecting with all God's children

Normally at this time of the year we are looking back to the start of another Sunday School year, community harvest services and suppers and looking forward to Christmas nativity plays, and packed churches, with a great community feel at the "midnight" on Christmas Eve and a family atmosphere on Christmas Day.

This year has been, and probably will be, different. We have in this group of parishes realised the losses endured by so many, but have also recognised the creativity released in many too! And in all of this chaos we have found that there is still much to look back on and celebrate and to look forward to too.

Although our Sunday School didn't open again in September we have at 10am on a Saturday morning a PRAISE service (Prayer, readings and reflection, activity, inspiration and songs for everyone). We have "helpers" - Jack and Jill and Kevin and Kylie who are friends of CJs! Through this time together we have continued to encourage our ministry of art and craft that was started on Palm Sunday. On Harvest Sunday we revealed the first 2 of what I hope will be many collages

of the work of so many people across the globe. Creativity that has helped many people worship and learn about God in a different way.

And although we weren't in church we were able to broadcast an online harvest with at least some of the usual decorations! (It's just a pity that as yet smells aren't able to be transmitted over the internet! The "helpers" got into the harvest celebrations too!!) Our "helpers" have also been busy during our Zoom calls with St Mura's National school as we learn about the Lord's Prayer this year. It will be great to see and share the work that the students produce by the year end!

Zoom has also helped us to continue our Bible Study with weekly meetings looking at Mark's and John's Gospels.

Not to be deterred by COVID we celebrated our annual prayer week online this year! Each evening at 8pm we continued to celebrate creativity as we thought about the creation story through reading, reflecting, mediating, praying, and suggesting something to do, or continue to think about. We had a wonderful global congregation connecting with God and each other!

Looking forward Advent is a time for preparation and this year we will be really concentrating on our preparation for Christmas, with Advent calendars and something for everyone to do every day of Advent as we prepare! More information on our [fahanandbuncranachurchofireland](#) Facebook page and in the CJ section of this edition of n:vision.

We are also planning a Virtual Nativity play!

We have no idea what restrictions will be in place across our land in the future - so keep connected with us on our facebook page - [fahanandbuncranachurchofireland](#) - for worship and news and much, much more!



Moville, Greencastle, Donagh, Malin & Culdaff

Vacant

Rural Dean Rev Canon David Crooks
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Email: dcrooks@eircom.net

Due to the Covid pandemic, there really is not much to report. Once again, services cannot be held in our churches. However, Sunday 6th December has been set as the date when we might be able to return. This will be confirmed nearer the time. Sadly, it looks as if the usual Christmas activities - Children's parties, Carol Services and the various social gatherings may have to be cancelled. However, if we can celebrate Christmas in our church buildings, the dates and venues of the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols and the Christmas Services will be arranged and announced as soon as possible.

Once again, as Rural Dean, on your behalf, I thank most sincerely the Revd Mervyn Peoples and Mrs Maureen Williams for their conduct of services. I hear over and over

again how much they are appreciated. A Confirmation at some date next year is being considered. There are, I think, about three young people who are eligible. Revd Mervyn Peoples has kindly agreed to see to this, and together, we can arrange Confirmation classes and a date for Confirmation.

Parish finances at this time are being badly affected, so even if it may not be possible to hold the usual fund-raising activities, please continue to give as generously as you can through your Sustentation.

However badly affected our finances may be, we are rich compared to countries in the poorer regions of the world. Derry and Raphoe Dioceses are being asked to support the Diocese of Mahajanga in Madagascar, and Bishop Hall Speers. His diocesan coffers

are always empty, and he needs large sums of money to recruit, train, house and pay his clergy. I will do a sponsored cycle from Moville to Newtowncunningham someday early in the New Year. This would link the Moville and Donagh Group with Taughboyne Group. I would appreciate your support. I have a personal interest, as Bishop Speers is my brother-in-law. My wife Anne, his sister, and I attended his episcopal ordination in St Luke's Cathedral, Mahajanga in March 2019. It was quite an experience - an exciting mixture of high Anglo-Catholic worship, laced with 22 hymns and arm waving and Pentecostal style worship. A seven-hour service including a half hour sermon in Malagasy and speeches in 40 degrees heat! I wish you all a holy Advent and as happy a Christmas as possible in these trying times.

Christ Church, Culmore, Muff and St. Peter

Rector: Venerable Robert Miller,
Archdeacon of Derry
E rector@cccmsp.org
H 028 71352396

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Our Vision: Transforming Community, Radiating Christ.



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At the heart of our Christian faith is a belief in God's ability to redeem. In other words when the broken and sinful state of the world causes suffering, God is able to bring good out of it. When I have felt fearful or frustrated in this pandemic it is to that central truth that I have looked for comfort. This edition will come to you about Christmas time: the message of Christmas is one that the world needs very much.

The heart of Christmas is that God acted to redeem the world from evil. In the Christmas story the Church calls the world to remember God can redeem us from the suffering caused by this virus. Although the cost to the world around us is great, and the need to redeem the world, urgent, it is a need we hope will be met as God supports us by his presence. In part we look to scientists for a vaccine; to healthcare workers for a cure and compassion, and to one

another to pick up new patterns of behaviour (physical distance, washing hands and wearing masks). All of this is important! Around all of these we also look to God; Christmas reminds us that he cares about us and about the effect evil has on us and he has acted to redeem the brokenness around us. Christmas is the very message the world needs now. It is not about escaping from the grim reality of Covid-19. It is an assurance that God is by our side in

this terrible time. Emmanuel, 'God with us', - that is the message we need to share with our families, our neighbours and it is the message we need to remember ourselves. Christmas is a time when we can see that the foundation of our faith is God's love for us.

The other aspect, along with God's love, is the call to fellowship, togetherness. Physical distance does not mean we should let relationships fade; it means we need to work a little harder to keep them strong. Modern

technology, from the simplicity of a phone to the more complex forms on the internet, allow us to keep social nearness in a time of physical distancing. I've encouraged you before and do so again. Consider who you want to encourage with a phone call or text. When we recall Christmas, it is a time that makes us think of our loved ones and let us reach out with that same love to our friends and neighbours.

I want to finish by reminding you that as a clergy team we are here for you; and we are

thankful that you are here for us. Let us meet together when we can; support one another in prayer and practical service; and let us hold unto hope that God gives us when He reminds us in the Christmas story that He is Emmanuel.

God bless you and keep you safe.
Yours in Christ,
Robert+

St. Augustine's, Londonderry

Rector: Rev Nigel Cairns

Facebook: St. Augustine's Church, Londonderry



Our Select Vestry - like many, I'm sure - has noted how our fundraising programme hasn't happened this year! To proactively address this, we have launched a new addition to the St. Augustine's Deli range. (see page 24).

Recently our church community has benefitted from two grants - one from All Churches Trust Growing Lives, and the other from the Church of Ireland Board of Education. The first grant will be used to help us to sort out many of the storage problems we have in our church hall. So far we have done a good clear out, repainted one of our storage areas and ordered a bespoke storage solution for the space. More importantly though, the grant will allow us to remodel some of the internal space within the church hall to create an area for our youth. The final part of our Growing Lives grant will help us to refresh the furniture and resources for our Kidzklub and creche. We are extremely grateful to All Churches Trust!

The Education grant will enable us to commission a narrated history of St Augustine's,



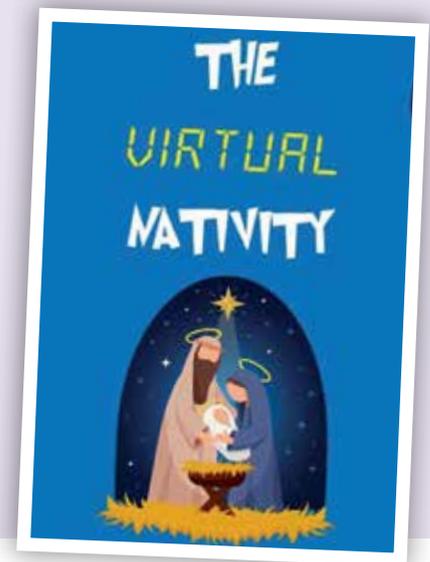
particularly highlighting the unique place it has as the oldest ecclesiastical site in the city, as well as our parish links to St. Columba, dating back to the sixth century. We hope this resource will be significant as the 1500th anniversary of St Columba begins to gather momentum, and we envisage the resource as being of educational benefit to the Key Stage 2 classes in our local primary schools.

During the month of October, the Rector, as well as other neighbouring clergy, was involved in the First Light Project, which was released on the DCSDC website on 1st November 2020. We were delighted to be involved in this once again, and we enjoyed picking up the theme of 'first light', which is pertinent at this time for so many reasons, not least All Saints, Advent and Christmastide.

Looking ahead, our Kidzklub leaders have taken up Kirsty's offer and registered for the Virtual Nativity performance. We hope to be able to show this on the screen in church on a Sunday during Advent. During the earlier part of autumn, the church choir met once or twice (four metres

apart!) to record some choral music for Harvest Thanksgiving and Remembrance Sunday. Subject to government guidance, we hope to do the same again soon. This will hopefully allow us to hear some of the much-loved Christmas carols in our services.

A full list of Christmas services and events will be in our Church Magazine and posted on our Facebook Page. In the meantime, the Congregation at St. Augustine's brings you season's greetings, and wish you God's richest blessing as 2020 merges into 2021.



Leckpatrick & Dunnalong

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Thoughts On Covid 19

We are living in difficult times; two months ago we thought we were on top of the virus and winning this battle. However, in the space of a few weeks we felt as if we are back to where we were in April and May. We need to get to what we were doing back then and I know it's very difficult. Every day we need to be praying for a vaccine. This is what we need more than anything.

In the middle of lockdown we stayed in touch with each other a lot better than we are at the moment. We need to get back to texting, phone calls, WhatsApp,

Facebook and whatever else we do to keep one another's spirits up. We need to re-ignite our awareness that many people are on their own and try to keep in touch with them.

We need to get back to a consistent prayer pattern. There's a lovely verse in Proverbs 3 "In everything you do put God first and he will crown your efforts with success." I have been carrying this verse around with me for many years so I know how true it is. Take a bit of time on your own, find a quiet place and pour out your heart to God, be assured that he will be right with you wherever you are. We need to get back to in-church worship if at all possible. We were going well with

numbers increasing each week. However, this stopped when we had the tighter restrictions in Derry and Strabane Council area. We have very stringent protocols in place and if we follow these then there is no safer place to be than in our churches. In the meantime stay safe, follow the protocols and may the Lord bless each one of you. Christmas Services will be on our Facebook pages.

In the meantime follow the protocols, stay safe and have a lovely Christmas. I plan to!

Donagheady

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Revd Canon Paul Whittaker Rural dean

At the time of writing these notes our thoughts and prayers are with the Rector as he recovers from further knee surgery. Many thanks to Revd Ken McLaughlin for covering the service twice a month and to the Diocesan Lay Readers Mr Paddy Quinn and Mrs Kaye Nesbit for covering the other Sundays.

We plan to try something different this year with our First Communion of Christmas on 24th December will be at the earlier time of 7.30pm. Christmas Day will be at 10.30am.

Sunday 6th December - Mr Paddy Quinn

Sunday 13th December - Revd Ken McLaughlin

Sunday 20th December - Mrs Kaye Nesbitt

Christmas Eve - Revd Ken McLaughlin

Christmas Day - Revd Ken McLaughlin
Sunday 27th December - Revd Ken McLaughlin

Have a great Christmas, follow the protocols and stay safe.





Camus-Juxta-Mourne (Strabane)

Rector: Rev John White

Facebook: Christ Church, Strabane @ChristChurchStrabane

Our Vision... 'Preach the Word... be shaped by the Word'.

This is the Christmas edition of n:vision. But will there be a Christmas this year? Or will Christmas not happen? Will families be able to get together to celebrate the feast? Or will families not be able to meet together? Will there be traditional Carol Services this year? Or, will singing still be frowned upon? So many questions. So much uncertainty.

Life has been dramatically upended by COVID this year, and I know that children have been especially affected. The whole world is different! Will Christmas be different too? Most likely.

But I'm hoping it will be different in a good way. That the busyness and "clutter" of Christmas we've seen in the past will take a lower priority this year. That perhaps we'll see Christmas with new eyes. That we'll get back to the essential message of why Jesus came to this earth in the first place.

Now, I very much like Christmas. I just don't need 3 months of it. This year, more than ever, it seems to go on and on - from October through to December! It goes on and on and on, with the pressure to buy, buy, buy.

Perhaps, this year more than any other in recent times, things seem bleak. No end in sight to the pandemic. No certainty as to what way we can celebrate this great event. Yet, there is a sense in which we should always celebrate the coming of Jesus. Is this not a good time to recalibrate how and why we mark the most wonderful time of the year. Should this be a time, not for a commercial windfall, but a time to give thanks to our God for giving us the most precious gift ever? In a time of deep darkness, God promised to send a great Light. Isaiah prophesied these words long ago, and time went by ... 700 years.

And then at just the right moment, Jesus came. Miracle birth. Light bringer. Hope instiller. Saviour and Lord. Given to "us". To you. And to me. He came to dwell among us. He came to set us free. He came that we might have life, more abundantly.

In this time of uncertainty, we can rest assured, He is a big God. Nothing is too difficult for Him to handle. And He cares about all that concerns you.

Maybe this uncertainty is causing you heartache and anxiety. Not being able to see loved ones. Not being able to share meals with family and friends. Having to isolate for fear of catching the virus. Maybe, even, this is the year when that loved one was taken by Covid 19. Maybe this year you have experienced that sense of deep loss, and you're feeling all alone this season, and fear or despair have gripped your heart. You can bring it to Jesus. All of it, the brokenness, the questions, the uncertainty, the pain.

The gospel is the real meaning behind Christmas, and it is able to unify and heal and refocus our priorities on what truly matters. When we're troubled and hurting, when we feel lonely or afraid, He is our Wonderful Counsellor.

When we need a miracle in life, when we need someone to fight for us, He is our Mighty God.

God bless and stay safe.
John



Urney and Sion Mills

Rector: Rev Jonathan McFarland

Facebook: Parish of Urney Christ Church

and Church of the Good Shepherd @urneyparish



Derg & Termonamongan

Rector: Rev Peter Ferguson

Tel: 028 8167 1362

Facebook: Derg Parish Church. Termonamongan Parish



I write this after our churches have reopened for in-church worship after many challenging months. How joyful it is to meet together in worship again, to sing hymns, to open God's word, to pray for our needs and the needs of others and to be sent out in God's world and for God's mission.

Harvest 2020

This year things were slightly different but with God all challenges are opportunities. We held different services for different age groups so all were encouraged and provided for. We held Harvest Zoom Kids on Friday 9th October, an interactive Zoom meeting for parents and primary school children hosted by Sarah Emerson from Scripture Union. We also held Harvest Zoom Youth on Saturday 10th October, an interactive Zoom meeting hosted by Rev Peter Smith for parents and secondary school children. Then on Sunday 11th October we held three traditional Harvest Family services in church, Derg at 8:45am / Killeter at 10am / Derg at 11am - giving folks different options as we Give Thanks at Such a Time as This.

Butterflies of Hope

We partnered with local schools and nursing homes who prepared colourful Butterflies of Hope with Bible verses and prayers. These were displayed on Derg Parish Church railings as a sign of Christian hope at this time. They made a huge impact in our community.

Remembrance 2020

On Sunday 8th November we marked Remembrance Sunday with an Act of Remembrance at all our morning services. Representatives of the Royal British Legion were in attendance and we had a retiring collection at all services for the Poppy Appeal. On Sunday afternoon 15th November we held two afternoon services in Derg and Killeter for families called Poppy Kids. The children decorated Poppy Rocks and they returned and displayed them at this service and over the following weeks. Kirsty McCartney was our visiting speaker.

Advent and Christmas 2020

Already we are looking forward to the opportunities that Advent and Christmas

bring to reach out into our community. This year some of our activities will be reimagined in a Covid safe way. In place of our Sunday School and Parish Family Christmas Party we plan to run a Christmas Car Trail, finishing in the stable at Bethlehem (Aghyaran, Once in Royal David's City C.F Alexander Garden). We plan to use Play It By Ear Virtual Nativity this year as promoted by SEEDS and Derry Raphoe Youth. We will also take part in all the SEEDS and DRY initiatives for children, young people and leaders that are being planned.

Butterflies of HOPE at Derg Parish Church



Drumclaph & Clare, Langfield Upper & Lower

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Facebook: Drumclaph ClareandLangfield



Carol Services

St. Andrew's Clare: Sunday 20th December at 10:00am.

Drumclaph Parish Church: Sunday 20th December at 10:00am.

Lower Langfield: Sunday 20th December at 11:15am.

Christmas Eve

Holy Communion will be celebrated in St. Andrew's Clare, starting at 10:45pm on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Day

Holy Communion in Drumclaph at 9:00am and Lower Langfield at 10:30am.

A united service for our group of parishes will be held in Lower Langfield Church on Sunday 27th December at 11:15am.

Prayer Point

At time of writing we are in a circuit breaker for the pandemic. We all need to pray for

the scientists that they will be able to develop safe and effective vaccines which are the key to ending the pandemic. God's grace: To understand the word 'imputed', picture funds being transferred from one account to another. Banks do it every day. Imagine yourself totally destitute and unable to pay your debts. Then in an astounding act of grace someone assumes all your debts, and at the same time transfers to your account such 'abundance' that you never have to work. That's what happened at the cross when God 'imputed' all your sins to Christ's

account, and 'imputed' all His righteousness to your account. Mind-blowing, isn't it? Would you say, 'I can't allow you to pay all these debts alone, so I'll work to prove self-worthy of your grace'? We do that when we 'add' our good works to Christ's finished work. Salvation is like health food labelled 'no man-made additives'. Paul writes, 'For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him' (2 Corinthians 5:21). In the same sense God 'made' Jesus who never sinned, to 'be' sin, He 'made' you who could never be righteous enough, to 'become righteous in His eyes.' 'But

I feel such guilt when I sin.' You're supposed to! But when Christ took away all your sin, He took away all your guilt. So what are you feeling? Inner conflict! Your regenerated spirit is telling you that you can't indulge in sin; it's not who you are anymore!

Why did God do it this way? Because any righteousness we could achieve falls far short of what He requires. Rejoice - today God sees you clothed in the righteousness of Christ, therefore you're always loved and accepted by Him.

Edenderry & Clanabogan

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With Us to be Like Us

There was a farmer who did not believe in the Christmas story. The idea that God would become a man was absurd. His wife, however, was a devout believer and raised their children in her faith. The farmer sometimes gave her a hard time, mocking her faith and belief in the incarnation of God in the baby of Bethlehem: "It's all nonsense," he said. "Why would God lower himself to become a human like us? It's such a ridiculous story."

One snowy Sunday evening his wife took the children to church while the farmer relaxed at home. After they had left, the weather deteriorated into a blinding snowstorm. Then he heard a loud thump against the window. Then another thump! He ventured outside to see what was happening. There in the field was the strangest sight: a flock of geese! They had been migrating south but had become disorientated by the storm. They were

stranded on his farm, unable to fly or to see their way.

The farmer had compassion on them. He wanted to help them and realised his barn would give them shelter for the night. He opened the barn door and stood back, hoping they would make their way in. But they didn't realise it would be shelter for them. So he tried to shoo the geese in, but they ran in all directions. Perplexed, he got some bread and made a trail to the barn door. But they still didn't catch on. Nothing he could do would get them into the warmth and shelter of the barn.

Feeling totally frustrated, he exclaimed, "Why don't they follow me? Can't they see this is the only place where they can survive the storm? How can I possibly get them to follow me?"

He thought for a moment and then realised that they would not follow a human. He said to himself, "How can I possibly save them? The

only way would be for me become a goose. If only I could become like one of them. Then I could save them. They would follow me and I would lead them to safety."

At that moment he stopped and realised what he had said. The words reverberated in his head. "If only I could become like one of them, then I could save them." Then, at last, he understood God's heart towards humankind.

He fell on his knees in the snow and worshipped God.

Greetings

To all readers, may you have a blessed Christmas, despite Covid-19, and hopefully 2021 will bring an easing of Coronavirus, bringing some degree of normality back into all our lives.

Drumragh & Mountfield

Vacant

www.drumragh.derry.anglican.org

Facebook: [@stcolumbomagh](https://www.facebook.com/stcolumbomagh)

Happy Christmas! The preparations for Christmas this year are somewhat different than they have been in previous years, with the Covid-19 regulations limiting the 'usual activity'. Packed churches enjoying Carol services and the First Communion of Christmas. However, we must be reminded of the simple nature of the first Christmas and preserve this quieter time to enjoy family and fellowship.

The past few months have been busy at Drumragh with Mountfield. In November, we bade farewell to our popular Curate Rev

Sean Hanily, wife Cherith and baby Marcus as Sean embarks on his first incumbency in the Dublin Diocese. Sean and his family contributed significantly to the church communities over their 2 years with us and will be greatly missed. Nevertheless, we remain confident that they will flourish under God's guidance in Dublin.

Church services continue to be broadcast online, with good success.

We celebrated Harvest by welcoming Rev. Liz Fitzgerald of Gweedore St Patrick (Bunbeg) as

our guest preacher, with a congregation of 84 filling St Columba's Church to almost capacity under Covid-19 guidelines!

The 'Building Our Community through Rebuilding our Church' project continues apace, with the scaffolding now moving from the front elevation of St Columba's Church Omagh (Drumragh) to the side elevations. The façade now looks wonderfully refreshed and we are excited that the project should be finalised in the next 3/4 months.

Cappagh & Lislimnaghan

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At the time of writing these notes what Christmas 2020 will look like is still anybody's guess but it will definitely be like no other Christmas we have ever experienced. Coronavirus Covid-19 continues to cast a very dark shadow over our land and over so many other countries right across the globe.

Christmas this year will be disappointing for many, particularly if families and friends cannot get together for the traditional festive celebrations, and if current restrictions on worship are still in place. It will be an incredibly difficult Christmas for those who have lost loved ones during the past year. Our thoughts and prayers are very much with them, as well as with all who have suffered in one way or another

as a result of the terrible pandemic that has blighted the world since the start of the year. We are being bombarded with so much bad news on a daily basis that it would be easy to become depressed and despondent, and forget that Christmas is essentially a story of good news for the whole world. In Luke 2 v 10-11, the angel said to the terrified shepherds, "Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord." Surely that is the message the world needs to hear at this incredibly difficult and stressful time. Christmas is a celebration of the coming of Jesus - Immanuel, "God with us". The God who visited this earth in human form on the first Christmas is still with us, and He has

not turned His back on the world He has created nor given up on us, His creation. Difficult days may lie ahead but whatever may happen we know that we are not alone for God is with us and He will never leave us nor forsake us. That assurance enables us to face the future with renewed hope and confidence. Jesus, the Word made flesh, came to show us what God is like and to assure us of His boundless love and goodness. My prayer is that you and yours may know His presence, peace, and protection this Christmas and throughout the coming year.

A Closing Thought

God writes with a pen that never blots, speaks with a tongue that never slips, and acts with a hand that never fails.



Ardstraw, Baronscourt, Badoney Upper & Lower and Greenan

Rector: Rev Ivan Dinsmore

Tel: 028 8166 1342 Facebook: Ardstraw Parish

Baptisms

Baronscourt Parish Church, August 2nd 2020, Maya Rene Mary, daughter of James and Carol McCafferty, 27 Greenvale, Victoria Bridge.

Baronscourt Parish Church, August 16th 2020. Zac, son of Kenny and Stacey Allison, 21E Golf Course Road, Newtownstewart.

Upper Badoney Parish Church, September 20th 2020. Jake Kyle, son of Kyle Law and Donna Taggart, 5 Gleneden, Plumbridge.

Greenan Parish Church, Poppy Elizabeth Kirk, daughter of Rodger and Suellen Kirk, Glenlark, Gortin.

Greenan Parish Church, Nathan James Kirk, son of Rodger and Suellen Kirk, Glenlark, Gortin.

Lower Badoney Parish Church, October 11th 2020. Lucy Rae Robinson, daughter of Andy and Erin Robinson, 3 Glen Road, Newtownstewart.

Ardstraw Parish Church, October 11th 2020. Connie Frances, daughter of David Monaghan and Mandy Wilkinson, 49 Moyle Road, Newtownstewart.

Greenan Parish Church, November 1st 2020, Arabella Louise Geraldine, daughter of Shannon Murphy and Kimberley Ballantine, 21 Winter Gardens, Omagh.

Marriages

Baronscourt Parish Church, August 1st 2020. Gemma Spratt and Ryan Kidd.

Baronscourt Parish Church, September 18th 2020. Emma Cummings and James Warnock.

Burials

Baronscourt Parish Church, Barbara Crofts, late of Ballyrennan Road, Newtownstewart. Funeral service took place at Hood's Funeral Home, Newtownstewart on September 3rd 2020 followed by cremation.

Lower Badoney Parish Church, James Hayes, late of Main Street Gortin. Funeral took place in Lower Badoney Church on September 17th, followed by burial in the adjoining cemetery.

Ardstraw Parish Church, Pam Donnell, late of Tully Road, Mountjoy. Funeral Service took place in Ardstraw Parish Church on September 27th, followed by burial in the adjoining cemetery.

Lower Badoney Parish Church, June Cochrane,

late of Beltrim Crescent, Gortin. Funeral service took place in Armstrong's Funeral Home, Omagh on October 8th, followed by burial in Lower Badoney Churchyard.

Facebook Live

Services continue on Facebook Live each Sunday afternoon at 4pm and Wednesday evening at 8pm.

Parish Weekly

As the pandemic continues to restrict church activities, we have decided to once again suspend circulation of the Parish News, mainly due to the fact that there isn't any "parish news" except for Births, marriages and deaths. Instead, for the duration of the pandemic, we will distribute a weekly leaflet entitled "Parish Weekly", which will contain details of upcoming services, a short message from the Rector, the Collect of the day, the Readings, some prayers and the Sunday Sermon. To avoid handling and distribution of paper, the Parish Weekly will be emailed to parishioners each Friday. Parishioners are asked to print a copy and pass it on to family members or others in your social bubble who do not have access to email or Facebook. Copies can be obtained by emailing the Rector at ivandinsmore@hotmail.com

Kilcronaghan, Ballynascreen Tobermore & Six Towns

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In the build-up to Christmas 2015, Starbucks removed the word 'Christmas' from their paper cups, "in case the word Christmas would cause offense". Since then they have advertised: 'countdown to red

cups,' which is a time when they look forward to a festival, during which they serve 'seasonal beverages' in red cups. In the build-up to Christmas 2020, the word 'Christmas' has been grabbing headlines, as journalists speak

of how: 'Christmas 2020 may be cancelled.' It seems that the advertisers dream as to 'what Christmas should be like', has caused people to become confused as to what

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Christmas is all about. But then, there was a lot of confusion about on that first Christmas, as word filtered out that a King had been born in Bethlehem. A King who did not meet the advertisers dream, 'as to what a King should be like.'

Luke 2:1 tells us that Caesar Augustus (whose name means "worthy of worship") was emperor at the time of Jesus' birth. Caesar had defeated the enemies of Rome, bringing such peace that he was now to be called their "saviour" and "Lord." Caesar was the kind of king the world expected. But as the angels announced the birth of Jesus, they stated that everything Augustus claimed about himself, was true of Jesus. So, while Christmas may well be very different from anything we have ever

experienced, it cannot be cancelled. Because Christmas is a time when we celebrate the coming of the King, who is a King like no other, for: *Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."* Luke 2:1

J.I Packer writing in Knowing God says: *"The Christmas message is that there is hope, hope for a ruined humanity - hope for pardon, hope of peace with God, hope of glory - because at the Father's will Jesus Christ became poor and was born in a stable so that thirty-three years later he might hang on a cross. It is the most wonderful message that the world has ever heard, or will hear."* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1973) 63

The message of the angels is that, with the coming of Jesus there is hope. Hope that will help us to work our way through all of the struggles and disappointments of life. Hope that helps the human heart find a sense of peace, as we wait in expectation of that great and glorious day when Christ will return and fulfil His purposes for this world. In the meantime, as we wait, no matter what the circumstance let us continue to celebrate Christmas and the hope that is ours in Christ, as we hold on to the promises of Zephaniah 3:17:

"The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

Desertmartin and Termoneeny

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Christ Church Castledawson

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Hi everyone, I trust you are keeping well. As I write this article I'm entering my second day of 'self-isolation'.

One of my household tested positive for Covid 19 and I have been advised to hide away for two weeks. Of course the reason for isolating is to keep others safe, to help ensure that the virus isn't spread

beyond the confines of the Rectory. I must say how grateful my family and I are for all the messages from my parishioners offering prayer and practical support. We are most appreciative. However this whole concept of 'isolation' has got me thinking about the early Church and its propagation of the Gospel. I'm reminded that, 'the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.'

Acts 2:47b. I'm pretty sure that their number was added to because of at least two things:

1. *The work of the Holy Spirit convincing others.*
2. *The testimony of the believers and their willingness to share the Good News with others.*

I'd imagine it would have been much easier for the members of the early Church just to

sit quietly in a 'holy huddle' offering their praise, praying heartfelt prayers, reading the scriptures and supporting one another in every way. Praise God they never chose to do only these things. They knew that Jesus never called the Church to be a Church in 'isolation'. Jesus charged his disciples to 'Go and make disciples...' *Matt. 28:19*.

As I sit in isolation I do so fearful of spreading the coronavirus to others. I want to protect them from falling ill or even dying as a result of me carrying something to them that they certainly don't want or need. When it comes to the Gospel and it's sharing, I wonder if, sometimes as Christians

we are happy enough to isolate ourselves away from others. Is there a hesitancy to do as Jesus commanded? For example, work to make disciples.

Friends, we have a gospel to proclaim, and this good news should be spread, like a virus, to others at an ever increasing rate. Surely the gospel message is every bit as infectious now as it was at the time of the apostles. God's virus, his infectious word, doesn't bring weakness, illness or death, No! Among a host of other things it brings, hope, it brings strength, it brings joy, it brings peace and true Life. Let's not leave the spread of the 'Gospel virus' to 'the minister' or the 'super Christian'.

Let's be willing to fulfil the commission all believers have been set; 'to go and make disciples'. I wonder, is it time to come out of isolation?

As we approach Advent, Christmas time and 2021 and we recognise that the usual way we celebrate these festivals will be somewhat curtailed this year, let's consider whether our New Year Resolution should be to 'come out of isolation' fulfil the great commission and spread the Good News 'virus' so that many will come to New Life in Christ.

Christmas and New Year blessings to you all,
Colin

St. Tida's, Parish of Ballyscullion, Bellaghy

NSM in Charge: Rev Brian Hassan



We are delighted to say the church has been reopened since the beginning of October for Sunday morning worship under the Church of Ireland protocols and we have been very encouraged with the response of parishioners. It has given us the opportunity to experiment with modern technology and modern praise and worship music. We have had our first Covid-19 restricted Marriage Service as well as an evening Baptismal Service. Steadily people are becoming more confident and attending and getting used to wearing face coverings and entering by one door and leaving via another! The online service continues for parishioners still not in a position to attend church and it remains a great way to stay in touch with the parish. Any praise to God is worthwhile and it is always better done in a fellowship.

As we move from Autumn into Winter sadly our parish groups will not meet, but online get-togethers are planned and we hope by early Spring that there may be some light in this very long coronavirus tunnel we are all enduring. My favourite liturgical season is Advent and it is upon us again. I love lighting the Advent Wreath candles and the dramatic readings from Isaiah coupled with the focus on John the Baptist and Mary. I hope and pray that during these strange times we can all take Time Out in Advent to reflect on the readings and prepare ourselves for the Second Advent when our Lord and Saviour will return to claim His own. For us in Ballyscullion we will indeed take Time Out in Advent during the three Wednesdays, 2nd, 9th & 16th to reflect. Depending on the situation if we can't meet in the Church Hall we will revert to Zoom.

From all at Ballyscullion, we wish you a peaceful and Holy Christmas and a very blessed New Year.

Time Out in Advent, three Wednesdays in December, 2nd, 9th & 16th at 7.30pm.

Sunday 20th December, Advent 4, socially distanced, non-singing, Carol Service at 11:30am (What a challenge!)

Thursday 24th December, Christmas Eve, socially distanced Holy Communion service at 7pm.

Sadly no service on Christmas morning this year.

Sunday 27th December, Christmas 1, Christmas Worship at 11:30am.

Maghera & Killelagh

Rector: Rev Terence Kerr

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www.magheraparish.co.uk

Facebook: The Parish of St. Lurach's, Maghera & Killelagh



The Parish Church is now open for worship. It's just not the same, is it? Of course God tells us "where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst". So even though it feels different God dwells in this holy place and he unconditionally accepts our worship. Words like protocols, mitigations, thermometers, hand cleansing gel, masks and visors roll off our lips on a weekly basis.

Yes, we are prepared to worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness, but we don't easily adapt to changes in our worship. We are facing new challenges almost every week - broadcasting and uploading the service for Facebook. These are all new methods of communicating the Gospel that tests us to the very core of our spiritual being.

My 35 minute service is being well received, but I have had to do some soul searching in finding new ways to express

the Everlasting Truths that Jesus does not take away the Covid -19 in our time frame, instead he travels with us along the journey of our recent lockdown with it's many ups and downs. As Christians we need to hold on to some basic biblical truths - certainties if you like - that can help us maintain our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Recently, I reflected on the story of Jesus calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee. I reminded my flock that the pandemic is just like the storm. Both bring fear, as we see in the lives of both ourselves and the disciples. We need to be reminded that God through Jesus Christ will calm the storm of the pandemic in due course.

In the meantime we must remember.
STORMS WILL INEVITABLY COME TO ALL OF US. DON'T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING. THANK GOD FOR ALL HE HAS DONE FOR US IN THE PAST. GO TO JESUS WHEN THE STORM COMES PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING.

These are - dare I use these words - protocols and mitigations to help us live for God in these unprecedented days of the corona pandemic. They are simple yet profound measures that can help us get through these unparalleled days. Hopefully, I will be able to add another word - Vaccine - as God gives the scientists wisdom from on High.

We may be experiencing lockdown rules and regulations at present, but let us remember that we are about to celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ as a little babe, born in a manger our Saviour and Lord. Hopefully, we can all worship Him at Christmas as we remember the words of that great carol - "O Come Let Us Adore Him - Christ the Lord"

Rector of St. Lurach's, Maghera and Killelagh, The Rev. Terence P Kerr

Errigal & Desertoghill (Garvagh)

Rector: Rev Carmen Hayes

Tel: 028 2955 8226

Facebook: St. Pauls Church of Ireland, Garvagh



A Sunday School teacher had her year 1 class draw a nativity scene. One youngster had done a fine job in drawing the baby in a manger, with Mary and Joseph and the animals; but the teacher noticed with anxiety that he had drawn a little fat man right beside the manger. She asked, "Johnny, that isn't Santa, is it?" Johnny answered indignantly, "Of course not, that's Round John Virgin."

I can tell you that lovely wee story because it's now early November and I can officially mention the "C" word, that's the 'Christmas' word. It goes without saying that Christmas at a whole lot of levels is going to look vastly different this year, because of the other "C" word (the Coronavirus word), that is currently dominating all of our lives!

I remember waking up on the morning of

the 18th March 2020, believing that the previous days had been some sort of nightmare: church services suspended, people and families self-isolating and business' closing all around us. It was scary. That said, I also remember thinking that this crisis, if we used it properly, could become an opportunity for the church. The folks of St Paul's and Moyletra have really embraced that challenge and it's not

exactly been rocket science! At Harvest instead of decorating the whole church, we asked our folks to buy imperishable goods that would be passed on to local foodbanks and I know that many other churches did likewise!

Now as we look towards Christmas, we've been buying into the Dunelm idea, we initially put up our Christmas tree in the porch in mid-November - not decorated

aside from labels. These labels relate to folk from our church and community who would benefit from receiving a little extra gift this year. The parishioners were then encouraged to take at least one of these labels off the tree and to purchase a gift for the person on it, for example an elderly lady in the nursing home!

In early December, the tree was then brought to the front of the church and decorated in

the normal way, after which those who had purchased gifts were encouraged to place them under the tree, and in the week before Christmas they will be delivered!

This is just one of a number of initiatives that have been undertaken by the folks here who embraced the whole idea of turning a crisis into an opportunity! Happy Christmas and here's hoping and praying for a better 2021.

Kilrea, Tamlaght O'Crilly Upper & Lower

Rector: Rev Gary Millar

Facebook: The Parishes of Kilrea, Tamlaght O'Crilly Upper & Lower @kilreatamlaghtocrillyupperlower



On Sunday 1st November Bishop Andrew preached at a united service in St Patrick's Church Kilrea. During his sermon two words caught my attention, "look up". Two words we need to hear as we continue to face the uncertainty of this pandemic, "Look up". Look up from the problems we are facing and see the God who is in control of all, the God who loves us perfectly and completely. It's amazing that when do that, when we look up to God our fears lessen and we begin to feel his peace and his strength. The Psalmist says, I will lift my eyes to the

hills, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord the maker of heaven and earth." My friend look up!

The number of centenarians in the parish has grown from 2 to 4 with Jane Crockett reaching 100 at the beginning of November and Letty Murphy in December. We wish Jane and Letty a very happy and blessed 100th birthday. This year Christmas will look different and we are currently thinking through a number of ideas including a Muddy Church, a united Carols by car light, Christingle and other services. Further

details will be in the parish magazine.

We plan to hold an online Car Boot / Auction in January. Further details will be available in the parish magazine. Items for the auction may be left in Innisrush Parish hall.

I wish you all a very happy and blessed Christmas and may you know the peace of Christ in your hearts and home. Best wishes and blessings

Aghadowey

Rector: Rev Louise Crawford-McCafferty

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A spiritual seeker came to a Rabbi and asked, "Teacher, why doesn't anyone see God nowadays?" "People aren't willing to look that low," the Rabbi replied. The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem has

a tiny doorway, so small that anyone passing through must stoop low in order to enter. How appropriate! For we do not come to Christ -ever- by exalting ourselves. We come to Him only by bowing low, by bending the knee, by

following the example of Shepherds and Magi of old. It's going to be a different Christmas this year for sure. It isn't going to be the same even if the government relax

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the regulations. Many people have lives that have changed beyond the way they ever imagined. I do hope we will see the real reason for Christmas. It's definitely not about the presents or parties. It's not even about being able to go to church! It's about the reality that Christ came as a vulnerable human baby to show us our worth to God.

I was really encouraged by Robin Swann our Health Minister, who took time to send a video message to children about Christmas. Some children at school had said they were worried about Santa

coming. Robin told them he was the 'Elf' Minister, and he had a word with Santa and the other elves and all would be grand and not to worry. As adults we know we cannot add a single hour to our lives by worrying but children do worry too and they might seem like small worries but we need to encourage and bless them in this time.

Share this prayer with your children/ grandchildren and friends' kids if you wish: Dear Lord Jesus, You are so special to us all, and I am glad we have a season to celebrate the day You were born. If I can be a helper and

tell someone about You, keep me brave as I talk, and help me to know what words to say. Christmas is a good time to tell others what we know about You. I love You, and in Your name, I pray. Amen.

Blessing: We thank you, Lord, for Christmas. Grant that we may be grateful enough to keep it not for a day but for always. In the name of Christ, whose coming is a mystery, whose life is a miracle, whose ministry in word and deed and death is salvation, and whose presence is now our highest hope. Amen.

Camus-Juxta-Bann (Macosquin)

Rector: Rev Paul Lyons

www.camus-juxta-bann.org

Facebook: [St Mary's Church @camusjuxtabannconnections](https://www.facebook.com/camusjuxtabannconnections)



'With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all.' Acts 4v33

'Where am I looking...?'

Each year as Christmas approaches I often hear people lament about how this wonderful time of the year seems to be losing its true meaning. As I write we are in the midst of the second pandemic spike and no one knows what the Christmas celebrations will look like this year. As many people have rightly said, 'These are very strange days we are living in.' Yet, despite the powerful influence of commercialism and the understandable concerns the pandemic brings, I wonder could this year be a time for the world to hear clearly the true meaning of Christmas?

As I observe society in these days I'm seeing people whose lives are marked by frustration, fear, weariness, impatience, anxiety and selfishness. Frustration with the government guidelines and restrictions, fear about the economic impact, weariness of hardworking keyworkers, impatience with

the lack of freedom, anxiety about mental health and the selfishness of those who don't care how their actions affect others. It's not a very uplifting observation!

So what is the response of the Church? Whilst it is important to listen and be compassionate we also are the bearers of good news that is relevant for everyone at this time! In Psalm 121 the psalmist writes, 'I lift up my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from? It comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.' King David in the midst of his trials and tribulations in life realised that as he focused his attention on God it brought him comfort, protection and guidance. As we enter the season of Advent, we want to make a conscious effort to focus our attention on what God has done through the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. In lighting the Advent wreath candles each week we remember again the good news that Jesus Christ brings hope, love, joy and peace to all who follow him.

For lifting our eyes to Jesus brings hope of a different future. Lifting our eyes to Jesus brings love as we recall He is the Saviour of

the world. Lifting our eyes to Jesus brings joy as we listen and walk with Him daily. Lifting our eyes to Jesus brings peace in these unsettling times. This Christmas as we lift our eyes and focus on Jesus may we echo the words of Saint Paul, *'Praise God for this incredible, unbelievable, indescribable gift!'* 2 Corinthians 9v15

Christmas Celebrations at St Mary's, Macosquin

Friday 4th December 6pm Macosquin Christmas Tree Lights switch on.

Wednesday 16th December 6.30pm Christingle in church.

Sunday 20th December 10.30am Nativity (with a difference!) in the Upper Hall.

Sunday 20th December 6pm Carols around the Christmas Tree (Outdoors).

Christmas Eve 11pm Holy Communion service in church.

Christmas Day 10.30am All Age Family Celebration followed by Holy Communion in the church hall.

Sunday 27th December 10.30am Morning Worship on Facebook.

Killowen (Coleraine)

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"May we show Christ's love + teach his Word."



Castlerock, Dunboe and Fermoyle

Rector: Rev Chris MacBruithin

Facebook: Parish of Castlerock & Dunboe @CastlerockDunboe



Christmas has not been cancelled in Castlerock and Dunboe - it is just going to look very different and to be difficult for some people. But it is very definitely not cancelled!

The first Christmas looked like it might be derailed when Caesar ordered a census and the Holy Family had to travel the perilous journey to Bethlehem. King Herod tried to cancel Christmas when he massacred the infants of Bethlehem and the surrounding area. The birth of the Messiah didn't look at all like people expected or wanted. Teenage pregnancy, unsanitary maternity conditions, the burden of regulations imposed on the whole population ...

Our celebrations of our Saviour's birth will go ahead but, yes sadly, they will look quite different and it will be difficult for many of us.

The annual Carols by Candlelight service in Christ Church can't go ahead in its usual form, but we will be putting together a service in online format for 4pm on Sunday 20th December. 'Frozen' fans can look out for 'The Gospel according to Olof' and other pre-Christmas activities.

Services continue weekly on a booking basis, and these are livestreamed on Facebook @ CastlerockDunboe. We are so grateful to our newly formed Communications Team, who ensure people stay connected, and to

our team of volunteers who ensure our safety each week. Mothers' Union and Kids' Club continue 'by extension', with leaders delivering newsletters and activity packs door-to-door.

In-church or online, we look forward once again to celebrating the great mystery of the Incarnation, God-with-us, even if it looks different. On Christmas Eve, a Service of Holy Communion will be held in Christ Church at 10 pm, with Christmas morning services in Castlerock at 9 and St Paul's at 10.30 am.

To all, wishing you a very happy and holy Christmas!

Drumachose, Limavady

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Facebook: Christ Church Limavady @christchurchlimavady



Once again Christmas is almost upon us. Preparations began a lot earlier for many because of fear and insecurity. The fear and insecurity that the Covid-19 Virus has brought to our world. What restrictions will be in place over the holiday period?

During Christ's earthly ministry, he took people exactly as he found them, but he did not leave them. And so it is today. He wants to take us and our world just as he finds us, especially in this distressful and anxious time. He makes no pre-conditions. We do not have to qualify

for his presence. We do not have to prove ourselves. He takes us as we are and he is happy to enter into the situation we are in. It was into this kind of situation that Jesus Christ was pleased to be part of and to

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dwell. He takes us as he finds us. But he does not leave us as he finds us; he values us too much for that. If we allow him entrance; if we open the door, even a little bit, we may find that at least some of our fears and anxieties are easier carried.

His unconditional love; his unflinching forgiveness and his patient understanding, which he gives, can help us overcome

these difficult times. When we see this begin to happen, as the Christmas Carol has it, "The dark night wakes, the glory breaks and Christmas comes once more." The Psalmist also rejoiced that God reaches to the heavens. We can be thankful at Christmas time that his mercy also reaches to the earth - to us and to all men, right down to the very depth of our need. John Wesley said, "The best of all is that God is with us."

This is what Christmas is about:
*"Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man to man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel."*

I wish you all a happy and blessed Christmas.

Tamlaghtfinlagan & Myroe

Rev Canon Harold Given: Rector and Rural Dean

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Facebook: TAMLAGHTFINLAGAN PARISH CHURCH



Congratulations to the Revd. Rhys Jones on his appointment as Rector of Aghanloo Balteagh Carrick and Tamlaghtard. His institution was on Wednesday 18th November and we wish him and his family every blessing as they come to this beautiful part of the diocese.

As some of you may have noticed, if you watch our Facebook services, we are in the midst of some repair work in Ballykelly Parish Church. Hopefully this work will be completed soon and normal services - excluding scaffolding - will be resumed. Thanks to those who are doing the work.

No plans can be made at the moment regarding Carol Services and Christmas services so please refer to our Parish page for up to date announcements about them. Have a Happy Christmas and a peaceful new year.

Balteagh, Carrick, Tamlaghtard and Aghanloo

Rector: Rev Rhys Jones

Facebook: [Aghanloo, Balteagh, Caarrick and Tamlaghtard @TamlaghtardCofI](#)



November is a time of remembrance Every year on 11th November, we remember those who lost their lives on all sides during so many wars and battles around the world - especially in World War One and World War Two. On the Sunday previous to the 11th - we gather in our churches to offer our thanks to God for their lives and their memory. As we wear our poppies with pride - albeit in

such a different way this year - we do so to honour those who gave their tomorrows for our todays. As we remember them we also remember the One who made the ultimate sacrifice for us all on the Cross at Calvary, winning the battle over sin.

Platinum Wedding Anniversary

Jim & Tillie Milliken of Carrick Parish Church celebrated 70 harmonious years together

on 12th October 2020. Our heartfelt congratulations to them both!





Roe Valley Foodbank

In lieu of decorating our churches this year for Harvest Thanksgiving, on Saturday 17th October, several of us gathered (socially distanced of course!) at LCDI to hand over various items of food and toiletries to the Roe Valley Food Bank, run by Jim Herron and other volunteers. Before the pandemic and lockdown they were handing out

about 9 food parcels weekly - that number is now 140! A huge, huge thank you to all who donated to the Roe Valley Food Bank, and to those who collected on behalf of each church - Elizabeth, Carol, Orla and Nicola. (Nicola wasn't available on the day for the photograph).

Virtual Parish Harvest Service

On Sunday 18th October, Bishop Andrew



very kindly preached at our "virtual" Harvest Thanksgiving Service. We are indebted to Bishop for his time in preparation and recording - and to the IT systems for allowing us to gather for Harvest Thanksgiving in this way!

New Rector

As a Parish we wish our new Rector, Rev Rhys Jones and his family every blessing in his transition from All Saints' Clooney to our churches here in Limavady, and we pray for Rev. David McBeth and the parishioners of All Saints as they bid farewell to Rev. Rhys!



Dungiven & Bovevagh

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Facebook: Dungiven Church of Ireland

'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up' Galatians 6 v 9

In all honesty like most parishes in the Diocese we have had to resort to online worship since March, opting for pre-recorded services and Wednesday evening Bible Studies via Zoom. It has helped to maintain fellowship and social contact, but no alternative to 'face to face' and heart to heart'. In Bovevagh we began drive-in services from a lorry in early summer and these have evolved now that we have reopened the church. The vestry installed a first class outdoor audio system that relays all our indoor worship to the car park. Worshippers have the option of coming inside or staying in the car. Outdoor harvest decorations and dismissals in the car park help the sense of inclusivity. What has all this taught me? For one thing, restrictions implemented in the

name of disease prevention may at times be deemed necessary. However, lawmakers must never forget that the parts of our lives that make us feel normal are not mere luxuries, but are the very things that make us human. No one knows exactly what the church will look like once the current practice of social distancing is over. I am not entirely convinced that online efforts have secured any new or lasting recruits. It is wise to dig deep into the underlying stats of YouTube and similar, rather than just using the raw number of 'hits' as a measure of reality. That said I THANK GOD for WhatsApp and Zoom, which have been, and will keep being, a marvellous communication tool to parishioners.

Some are predicting difficult times ahead for churches. Others are saying the church will

come back stronger than ever. I doubt any of us really knows, but I am happy to stay faithful and remember God has a plan. The important thing to remember is that the Church is God's idea - His work in the world today (Matthew 16:18). Covid, hell or anything else cannot touch it! God is certainly able to take care of His own.

Hope is infectious, even healing. Many look to a vaccination to lift us all out of the cycle of lockdown and break free from the constraints of living with this 'pandemic'. Maybe it will. One thing is for sure though - remembering the birth of the Saviour will come as it always does, with that same message that Jesus is our only HOPE for this life and eternity.



Cumber Upper, Cumber Lower, Banagher and Learmount

Rector: Rev David Slater

Tel: 028 7133 8214

Facebook: Cumber Upper & Lower, Learmount, Banagher Group of Parishes



The Church is dead. At least that is what the many experts and books and articles on the subject say. It seems everyone has an opinion and Covid -19 is apparently the final nail in the coffin. Poor old Church. Let's try this though - the Church is not dead, rather it is middle-aged! I should know because on the middle-aged spectrum I am at the wrong end. So the Church is middle-aged and is readjusting to the new circumstances, as all of us with creaking knees have to do. Middle-age means a transitional period of ups and downs and the Church is no different. Some Sundays attendance numbers are up, other Sundays they are down. Easter, Christmas Eve, baptism, confirmation services are well attended and they give the hope and encouragement that the Church is connecting.

Until that is the following Sunday. Like middle-age the Church has to surf the wave of good days and bad days - one day sore knees, the next, not so sore knees. But is success really gauged by numbers? Jesus' ministry would suggest not. This is not the

1970s or 1980s. Middle-age means quality time, for example, with children who have flown the nest. Middle-age for the Church means more quality time with smaller congregations, a heightened online presence, more out-of-the-box thinking and not sweating the small stuff.

Does middle-age mean you stop living, or, stop being creative? Does it mean you give up? Of course not. So why would the Church? The Church too can and will evolve with creativity, with its ace in the hole - the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He hasn't gone away you know! Middle-age means adapting. Middle-age is not premature death - you are still actually alive and still able and ready to listen for God and where He is calling you into this new era of your life. So with the Church, an organisation that proclaims resurrection, and that means real life, not middle-aged life, rather, abundant life, eternal life. Way to go Church!

Not very person whom God used or uses is a teenager - some of those He used were really old - some were at least twenty five! The

Church is not dead. The Church is middle-aged and is good to go. For the Church age is but a number. Christmas is coming, a timely reminder in the year 'two thousand and coronavirus' that our God is still with us. We can say without any reference to data or statistics "for unto us a son is given ... and He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" Isaiah 9:6

A blessed Christmas to you all from the Grouped parishes of Cumber Upper, Cumber Lower, Learmount and Banagher, unfazed as we are by age, coronavirus, or Chelsea FC's dodgy defending.

P.S. Is it still possible to buy Algipan?

Editor's note: Yes, according to the Google gospel!



Faughanvale

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Sunday worship 11:00am also on www.youtube.com/channel/UC4UkpxodtO9ZwaUdvtL5nZtg/videos?reload=9

There has been some talk in the press about whether the politicians will be able to "save Christmas" this year, apparently without any intended irony! The truth is, of course, that it is only Christmas that will be able

to save us. The words of the herald angel to Joseph ring out down the ages, "You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people....." He came as the Light of the World to save us from the darkness of sin and death, in our lives, and in the world around us.

I'm hoping that this year, more than any other, people will be open to the gift of God that brings salvation, and even within our

restricted circumstances, we as a church will be doing all we can to bring that message to as many people as we can.

Mahajanga

Our diocese appeal for the diocese of Mahajanga was launched at the very time we began to move into another lockdown of sorts. Not great timing! But we as a parish will be doing our utmost to support

it 1. because Bishop Hall Speers has asked for help and, as he is someone who has deep roots in our diocese, we want to respond with generosity; 2. because it's good for us to be reminded that, bad and all as things are here, there are others whose need is even greater than our own.

Christmas Services

Whether we can gather physically for worship or watching at home we will be celebrating the joy of Christmas in our worship as usual.

Virtual Nativity Service

13th December 11am - our children will be cooperating with a professional drama

company to produce a Nativity not to be missed.

Carol Service

13th December 11am - the timeless service of lessons and carols but presented in an online format

Christmas Day

10:30am - short family worship followed by Communion for those who wish to stay on

Christmas Gifts

We normally encourage parishioners to bring gifts to our Nativity Service for local families in need, but with current restrictions that probably won't be possible this year. However,

we are aware that the need will be greater than ever, and are looking for ways to continue to support the homeless and hungry this year. Keep your eye out for details.

And Finally...

It's just been announced that Santa Claus will be unable to do his usual house to house visitation this year. "It's not that we're worried about Santa himself transmitting the Covid-19 virus. But we do have concerns about his little helpers," said a spokesperson from the Department of 'Elf and Safety.

Clooney

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Facebook: All Saints Clooney



Glendermott & New Buildings

Rector: Rev Canon Robert Boyd

Tel: 028 7134 3001

Facebook: Glendermott and New Buildings Church of Ireland



Curate: Rev Iain McAleavey



We are about to begin the season of Advent, a time to prepare and look forward to a gift from God. We will continue to look forward to the birthday celebrations of that gift coming into the world, "the Word made flesh". As to how, is all a bit of guess work at present! As a parish we have had to adapt over the past 9 months as we continued to worship within the framework of the various protocols, and we will find a way to allow us to celebrate the birth of Jesus in a meaningful way this year.

At the time of print, we intend holding mid-week Advent Services as follows:
Wednesday 2nd & 16th Dec, Newbuildings
Wednesday 9th & 23rd Dec, Glendermott
all at 7.30pm.

Carol services will be held on Sunday 20th December - 10.15am in Newbuildings and 6.00pm in Glendermott.

On Christmas Eve we will hold our traditional Community Crib service in Newbuildings at

4pm. There will also be the Midnight Communion Service in both churches commencing at 11.30pm.

On Christmas morning there will be a said service of Holy Communion 1 in Glendermott at 8.30am and Newbuildings at 10.00am.

Those are the plans which may or may not happen so keep an eye on our Facebook page for updates.

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Another Chance is our Mission and Outreach Centre which has just celebrated its 5th birthday with a thanksgiving service in Glendermott Church. We were delighted to welcome Bishop Andrew as the preacher. This imaginative initiative has grown each year and we are so grateful to all the volunteers who give up their time

to improve the life so many people through the funds we raise. We may have celebrated our 5th birthday, but we are in the infancy of our mission and outreach. We have just secured another unit at the Glendermott Business Park and have plans for rapid growth in our generosity and witness to the wider community. Hopefully as life gets back to

some sort of normality in 2021, we will be unveiling our plans to you.

Rev Iain joins May and myself as we wish the readers of n:vision a peaceful, blessed and safe Christmas.

Templemore, Derry Cathedral

The Very Rev Raymond Stewart: Rector & Dean of Derry
Tel: 028 7126 2746
Email: deanofderry@stcolumbs.net



The Rev Canon John Merrick
Pastoral Assistant
Facebook: St. Columb's Cathedral



One of the negative effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is that it proves to be extremely difficult to plan future events with confidence. One does not know if restrictions will be imposed again, meaning that the events will have to be postponed or cancelled.

Early in the year the Events Working Group at Saint Columb's Cathedral planned to hold a Christmas Tree Festival in the Cathedral from Thursday 10th - Monday

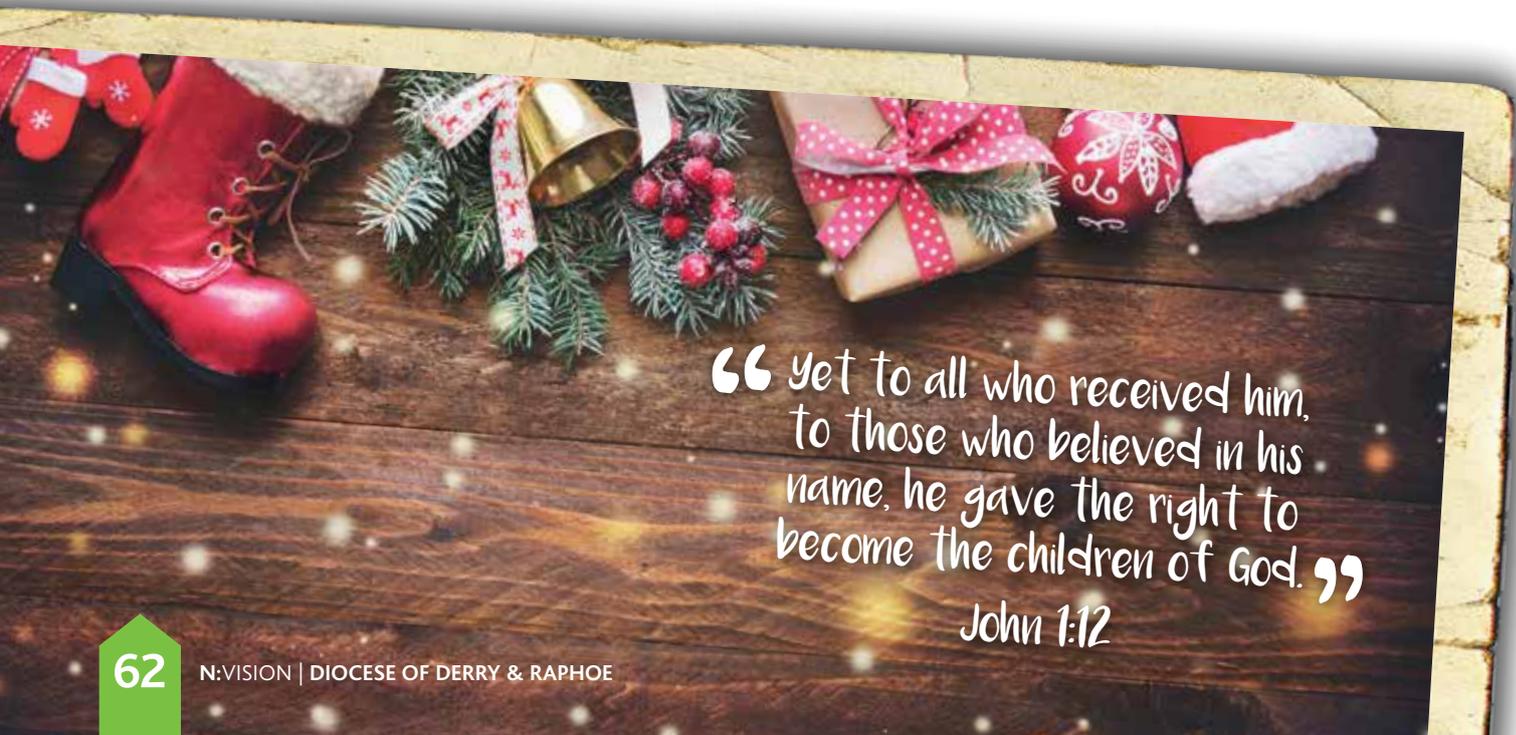
14th December. Due to COVID-19 this event has been postponed until December 2021.

This year, unfortunately, the Candlelight Advent Procession on the evening of Advent Sunday, 29th November, will not be held and the Festival Service of Nine Lessons and Carols will be a low-key service on Sunday 20th December at 11.00 am.

Christmas Day will (DV) be celebrated on Friday 25th December at 11.00 am with

Festival Eucharist (Order Two). The Celebrant and Preacher will (DV) be The Right Reverend Andrew Forster.

The Tutors of St Columb's School of Music will present an online Christmas Concert on Friday 18th December at 7.30 pm. The students will be represented by Ava McGinn, the Roy Adams Memorial Piano Scholar. There will be an online voluntary donation to a charity.



“ yet to all who received him,
to those who believed in his
name, he gave the right to
become the children of God.”
John 1:12

PAUL MCFADDEN
DIOCESAN PRESS OFFICER



And finally...

The strangest thing happened last week; in fact, just like buses, two of them happened right after one another. A couple of friends of mine were so disgusted by the relentless litany of depressing stories in the news recently that they each - quite independently of one another - decided to change their viewing and listening habits. One decided not to watch or listen to any news at all, for a time, while the other opted to restrict his viewing to one news bulletin a day.

I understand how my friends felt. I am an ardent consumer of news - radio, TV, newspapers, online - but even I have felt the 'pressure gauge' in my head rising into the 'red zone', where blood vessels are at imminent risk of bursting.

A number of years ago, while working in BBC radio, my editor and I were challenged by a regular listener - an intelligent, progressive man - to produce a programme featuring nothing but positive stories. It was an interesting proposition, so we agreed. Within an hour, our phone lines were lit up by furious licence fee-payers demanding to know, "Have you no news?"

News is a very subjective thing. How should it be defined? In the BBC, it had to be

'new, true and interesting' (a requirement honoured more in the breach than the observance in many bulletins). I remember reading a definition that worked well for me: 'If a dog bites a man, that's not news; but if a man bites a dog - that's news!'

There has been plenty of news, of late, but very little to raise the spirits: the rejuvenated coronavirus; uncertainty over lockdowns; a toxic US presidential election campaign; the spectre of Islamic terrorism in Europe; difficult trade negotiations; economic concern and climate change anxiety. It's easy to see why people become disheartened.

No matter how discouraging the news, though, this seems to be the way people like it - the more depressing the better. Nobody forces us to read newspapers with lurid front pages, or to watch news programmes with an 'if-it-bleeds-it-leads' approach, but we do. I suspect there is a cost to this. We know anecdotally that even in the best of times relentless bad news affects people's mood and wellbeing. How much worse must it be in our current circumstances?

The constraints on movement and social gatherings during the pandemic have been demoralising, and the restrictions on worship have been a source of anguish. And

chundering away in the background is the incessant, unforgiving, often dispiriting 24-hour news cycle.

So, what's to be done about this? Should we run up the white flag? Should we draw the curtains, stay in bed, pull the duvet up over our heads? Should we wander the streets and supermarket corridors with fingers in our ears and gazes averted?

The time has come to fight fire with fire, or rather bad news with 'Good News'. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus says: "**Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.**" After eight months of COVID, people are weary, they are burdened. It has never been more necessary for them to hear the Good News.

This is not just the responsibility of clergy. Everyone who considers himself or herself a Christian has a role to play. Do you remember our diocesan vision - **Transforming Community, Radiating Christ?** We can all play our part by doing the right thing, wearing our masks, keeping our distance, following the rules, showing concern for one another, and loving our neighbour. That's real communication. That's radiating Christ. That is the real **Good News**.



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THE DEADLINE IS NON-NEGOTIABLE

Magazines will be available for collection on **26th March 2021**.
(depending on Government and Diocesan guidelines at the time)

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