

Issue 67 / Christmas 2021

n:vision

Transforming Community, Radiating Christ



All I want
for Christmas



“

Today in the town
of David a Saviour has
been born to you; he is
the Messiah, the Lord.”

LUKE 2:11


Diocese of
Derry +
Raphoe

All I want for Christmas is...

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Editor...

"I wants don't get". A phrase known to many children who have not asked nicely!

This Christmas issue of n:vision is an edition, not of optional extras (**wants**), but of **needs** for life - God knows our wants and our needs.

God's first gift to humanity is our inclusion in creation. Even though creation and the relationship with the Creator has been seriously damaged by human wants overriding human needs, we celebrate each Christmas that God gives the world what is really needed to reverse that damage - Jesus, Immanuel, God's ultimate gift to humanity.

Recently Glasgow COP26 has highlighted, and our articles emphasise, that all we need for Christmas is **LESS** - less climate change, less plastic in the oceans, less CO₂, less poverty, less loneliness, less gender violence, less discrimination, less use of fossil fuels, less Covid-19 infection.

As Christians we embrace this need for less, but we also acknowledge our need for **MORE** - more seasonal joy, more inclusion, more peace and harmony, more prayer, more security, more selfless giving, more missionary outreach.

But first and foremost all we **NEED** for Christmas is to hear the message - God is with us.

Happy Christmas!

Rev Canon Katie McAteer, the Editor
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Joy to the world

*A reflection on
Hebrews 12:2*

As we enter into Advent and approach Christmas time once more, let's take a few moments to consider what it is to experience JOY.

A dictionary definition for the word 'Joy' is: the emotion of great delight or happiness caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying; keen pleasure; elation. I'm sure we have all had times in our lives when we've experienced, what I'd call, 'worldly' joy. For example: when our football team scores the winning goal in the cup final with only 2 minutes to play; or when we get our exam results and we've achieved an A*; or, if you're a parent, you'll remember the elation you felt when your child was born.

However, isn't it true that joy, as we experience it, can often be short-lived, temporary and fleeting? Even the joy that many experience at Christmas time can very often be followed by a time of deflation, when we are anything but joy-filled. On the other hand, 'Godly' Joy, I would suggest, is a different matter altogether. It must be or the writer of Hebrews wouldn't have brought it to our attention.

Hebrews 12:2 "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Jesus suffered in order to know the 'joy' of returning to be with the Father. With his Father was, and is, the place where true joy is

found, but before he was going to be able to come to that point he was going to suffer the pain, agony and shame of the cross.

From a human point of view it really doesn't make a lot of sense for someone to suffer in order to ultimately experience **pure joy**. It's a real paradox. The definition of a paradox is - 'a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that may in fact be true'. In the case of Christ this is true but nevertheless the two words, 'suffering' and 'joy' shouldn't really go together, should they?

The Psalmist writes in Psalm 30:5 'For his anger is but for a moment, and his favour is for a lifetime. ***'Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.'***

I wonder was Jesus thinking on these words when he approached the cross, looking beyond the suffering to his mighty resurrection and his glorious ascension to be with His Father. Could this be the 'joy that was set before him' of which the writer of Hebrews speaks.

Well, paradoxically, this joy is an unspeakable joy, a joy that we can't possibly know on this earth because all worldly joy, which is temporary, cannot compare. However, the joy that God gives us, as believers, when we come into a living relationship with Jesus, offers us a sample of the complete joy that all God's faithful servants will know for all eternity in Heaven, but first we may well also have to share in his suffering. Scripture

confirms this, (Mark 10:38) This paradox was true for Jesus. He couldn't have one without the other and the reality is, nor can we.

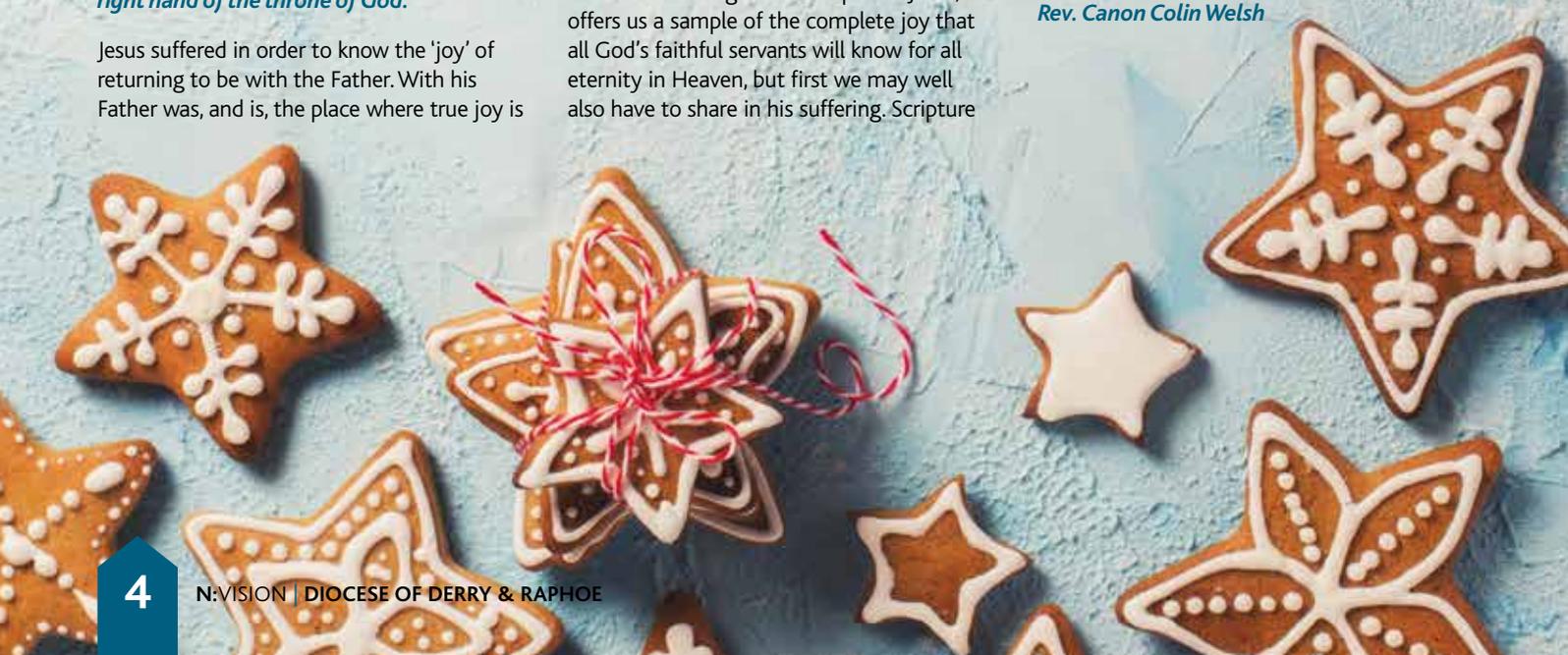
We are called to 'take up our cross' and follow Jesus, whatever that may mean for each of us, remembering that for every follower of Jesus, 'true joy' awaits. Yes, we have times in our lives when we experience 'worldly' joy which lasts for a brief moment. However, we have the joy of knowing Christ as our Lord and Saviour and paradoxically being able to share in his sufferings. When our Lord was on earth he lived by faith, put his trust in His Father, endured much opposition, rejection, temptation, beatings, conflict, and much more culminating in the cross. Jesus' willingness to carry out the Father's will was unstinting but I want to suggest that this willingness was founded in the 'future hope' Jesus had of knowing again the joy of being with the Father.

I wonder if part of that joy to which Jesus looked forward was the delight of presenting believers to his Father as his faithful ones who have likewise 'endured'.

May we all stand in expectation knowing, as Jesus did, that *"the joy of the LORD is our strength."* (Nehemiah 8:10)

'Joy to the World'

Rev. Canon Colin Welsh



Bishop Andrew writes...



Dear friends,

Recently I was talking to someone who had been in Australia, three years earlier, and who had spent that Christmas Day, 2018, with family there.

Christmas Day is a special day wherever you are in the world, and Australia is no exception, but it's very different 'down under'. For starters, Christmas falls during the summer - not the winter - so my friend found himself on a beach near Melbourne, in sweltering 35° heat, tucking into turkey and ham, with all the trimmings.

It could hardly have been more different from the way we do Christmas back home. Here, most of us have fairly fixed ideas of how Christmas should be: family coming home for the holiday, a cosy fire, Christmas worship, the exchange of gifts, the Christmas feast and the Queen's Speech.

The pandemic did its level best to spoil last Christmas. We had to endure fairly severe restrictions which put an end to work parties and much of our socialising. We all went along with them, of course, because it was the right thing to do. I hope that this Advent,

though, we'll be able to enjoy a Christmas that will build happy memories, again, for the future.

Every family has its own festive traditions. Pride of place, perhaps, on the Christmas tree for decorations which were made years ago, when children were at school; different family members playing a particular part in preparing the Christmas dinner. Presents will be bought, in some cases after much planning and forethought, while others, I'm afraid, will be fairly last minute! Here at The See House, we're really looking forward to our daughters coming home from London for the holiday.

As we look back over these last two years, we realise we have lived with uncertainty, insecurity and fear, emotions very similar to those felt by Mary and Joseph as they made their lonely journey to Bethlehem. However, the trials of that moment were to be transformed with the birth of Jesus.

One of the names given to Jesus is Emmanuel, which means 'God with us.' It's a name which provides us with the very



foundation stone of our faith: unshakeable hope. May I suggest that this Christmas we take a little time to reflect on the last couple of years - on our own difficult journeys - and recognise that we have known and experienced 'God with us' during some very dark days. It is my hope and prayer that, even if the days ahead are uncertain, we will still know the unshakable hope that the presence of Jesus brings.

"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12)

I wish you all a very happy Christmas.

+Andrew Derry & Raphoe



Mary Peters *chats*

With Vicki Caddy, Head of Communications & Marketing, Age NI

Hello, I'm Mary Peters and I'm delighted to be talking to people from the Derry and Raphoe area, because I've visited there on a number of occasions

When I won my Olympic medal in 1972, I was lucky enough to be invited to say what I would like to commemorate my success. Foolishly I said a running track. I had not anticipated that I would spend the next three years raising the money for it! With the help of the Belfast Telegraph and a group of friends, Queen's University gave me the track that they had at Upper Malone Road. I had collected enough money so that by 1976 we had a state-of-the-art synthetic track. My aim was to encourage the next generation to enjoy sport, because the track that I had trained on had been full of potholes! The track was upgraded in 2013, because we hosted the World Police and Fire Games there. Belfast City Council invested £3million, and we not only enlarged the track to international standard, but put up a stand so that the visitors from all over the world were able to enjoy the athletics. I don't live very far away from the track and I love to take visitors down to see it. It's in such a natural amphitheatre, it's just glorious. I went down to present medals one day to a group of young athletes with disabilities. There was a group from Cookstown and the parents wanted a photograph of me with the children because they had no idea who I was.

A little girl said to her mummy, "Is she named after this track?" I was with our Minister of State last Friday, and we took him to see the track for the first time. He said, "This legacy is better than any politician has left." That was a big statement wasn't? Next year we're celebrating the 50th anniversary of my Olympic success. We're going to do a lot of renovations at the track and we're going to have a spectacular on 28th May to encourage young people to get involved in sport.

After my Olympic success, I came back and began another chapter of my life

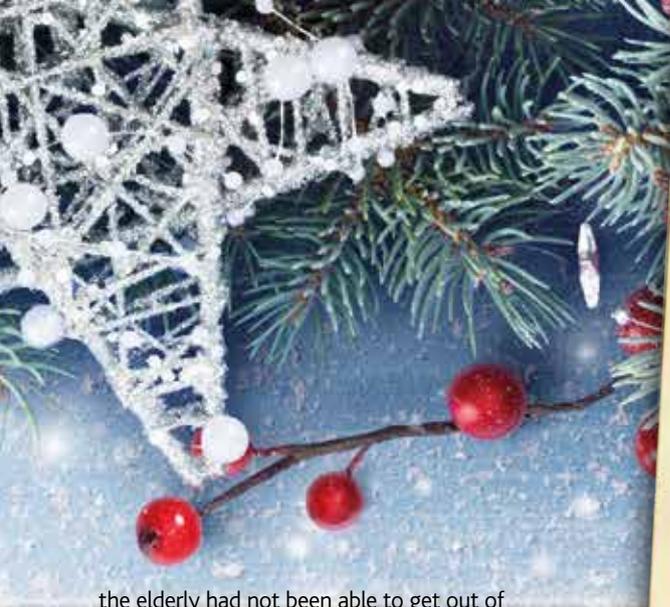
I met Buster McShane in 1958 at the Commonwealth Games, and he encouraged the athletes to go and do some weight-training as part of their preparation for their own sport. Buster was an entrepreneur who had opened a gym originally in East Belfast and then he moved into Belfast city centre. He was a very inspirational character and recognised in me more talent than I was showing. So he started coaching me and advising me. And then eventually I went to work for him in his health club in Belfast. I had been a domestic science teacher but it was hard to be a full-time teacher along with all the training and competing all over the world. So I decided to follow my dream of sport. I worked with Buster and then six months after my Olympic success, sadly, he was killed in a car accident. Life was very difficult: I'd lost my coach and mentor. I'd lost my boss. I looked around for a gym of my own. It took me a couple of years. Then I found the ideal place in Lisburn, and for 25 years I ran a health club there. It was 12 hours a day, every day. I was also involved in work for my 16 charities. It was an amazing 25 years.

But I must tell you about my connection with Derry and Raphoe

I first met Bishop Jim Mehaffey in the days before he was a bishop when he came to Buster's gym, along with his wife Thelma and I knew them both quite well. When he moved to Derry, he came to me for some advice to see if I would give him an exercise schedule that he could do in his own home and he bought some gym equipment. But if he was coming to a meeting in Belfast, he would come to my gym and do a workout there. I just loved them both. They were so open and warm. It was the fun of coming and working out with other people that I think he enjoyed. A funny story though: the young lady who was on reception at my gym, said to Jim one day, "I love your ring." And he said, "It comes with the job." And she said to me "What kind of a job gives you a ring like that?" He was completely unassuming. So I was very sad when I had to attend his funeral. But he had brought the people of Derry and Raphoe together in the most positive way and was a really Christian man and I loved him and his wife.

I'm very privileged to enjoy good health myself and still keep myself reasonably fit

I loved to be able to help rehabilitate people who came to my gym struggling with medical problems or post-operative needs. I loved helping people who were down or needed somebody to put an arm around their shoulder. I hadn't realised in the days that I had the health club, how important mental health was, and how many people suffer from mental ill health. We know, of course, that because of COVID, mental ill health has escalated in the older population, because



the elderly had not been able to get out of their homes. And it's a long day, if you're not having any communication with people. So that's why I love what **Age NI** do. They have a core of people who phone the lonely on a regular basis. I admire that core of people who give their time. It doesn't take long to make a phone call. Sometimes the elderly need to be encouraged to make their own phone calls and keep in touch with family and friends. I was privileged to be asked to do the **Move with Mary** exercise videos with Age NI in Spring 2020. It went into so many homes and people were inspired. I've even heard of people in Australia and Germany following the programme. That was so positive for me, because I could have been lonely and depressed. I've benefited enormously from that programme, and I'm grateful for it. Generally, I have found that people who had not looked after their physical health, tend to feel less good within themselves. As soon as you get them exercising, they're stimulating their brain, they are mixing with other people and doing something for themselves. I loved seeing people benefit. Exercise is important at any age. I'm 82. I walk regularly, often with friends. I went up to Portstewart at the weekend and I walked on the beach and it was windy and it was oh so stimulating. I have set myself a target to get really fit for next year because it's going to be a strenuous year with the 50th anniversary and all the events associated with that. So I'm going to start going to the gym again. I feel I need to set myself targets so that I feel well enough to be able to do what I want to do.

My life isn't all sport and exercise!

I have too big a garden really, for my age, but I love it. I love to see the change of seasons.

I've been made an ambassador for Northern Ireland for the **Green Canopy** for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee next year. I've recently been to a school and I had some conkers. I was showing five-year-olds how to plant them. I said to one little girl sitting underneath a big chestnut tree, "how long do you think it will take that conker to grow into a big tree like that?" She looked at me and said, "10 minutes?" I told them how important it is to watch the trees grow. Then when those trees are big, they will be able to come back and show their grandchildren and tell them that they planted them. So, the aim of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee is that everybody will grow a tree.

Like everyone I've faced challenges over the last 20 months

As I don't have family around, friends are vital. I had a friend who I was able to walk with socially distanced because I have some parks around here. However for people living in cities and in streets of houses, it must have been very difficult. I feel a slight resentment because I've missed 18 months of my adult life. I know that time's running down, and I still want to fulfil so many things. I love life. I love doing unusual things. I'm just back from Germany, where I was involved with a programme that they're doing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Munich Olympics. It was joyous reliving those moments, and

I hope going back next year on the 50th anniversary itself will be very joyful.

Although I have family in Australia, Northern Ireland is home

I love the people. I really find the humour wonderful and the friendship base I have here. I love the countryside. We came here from Liverpool when I was 11. My dad took us out every Sunday for a drive and he would just head off through country roads and I got to know the place just by exploring. I just love getting out and about and showing people around. I would never leave here. My family live in Australia so they're a long way away. They have a lovely climate and lovely lifestyle. But it's not for me. I'm comfortable and happy here and have so many friends. Living here I believe we have to have hope for the future. I think Brexit has been very painful. And I think Covid-19 has created even more problems for people. It's been a very difficult time, particularly for health and education. But we've got to keep going and keep smiling.

I hope everyone in Derry and Raphoe enjoys Christmas this year

For the last probably 20 years I've never been at home at Christmas until last year. Then I was home alone. I put up a Christmas tree for the first time in 20 years and loved it. I put an angel at the top of my tree.

All I want for Christmas

When Poverty Makes a Joyful Season Sad



I often reflect on the Christmases of my youth, and they give me a warm fuzzy feeling. Growing up in Sligo where it always seemed to be raining, except for a memorable summer in 1967, the inclement weather just seemed to make December cosier, especially so as we huddled by blazing open fires on winter evenings, attempting to decipher that black & white snowstorm in the corner of the room, called a television.

The house was draughty, and we ran from one warm room to another, but not before we had encountered several cold rooms in between. Putting up the Christmas Tree was a treat shared by all the family, with heavy decorations and large lightbulbs in the shape of Santa and plum puddings emitting a soft and gentle glow. I often used to sit by myself in a darkened room, lit only by the soothing light of those blushing bulbs, with my eyes gazing down towards the vast array of presents in every shape and size, each one destined to be well handled by Christmas, as we endeavoured with excitement to guess their contents.

On Christmas Eve, my bachelor uncle would arrive in his Ford Cortina, laden down with presents, chocolates, and assorted gifts. I was his 'golden haired boy' and one of his first acts was to press an orange 10-shilling note into my hand with accompanying advice that I should 'save it for a rainy day'. His arrival was followed by that of my grandparents in their Morris Minor - one where the indicators shot out at the side of the car to denote a

turn in direction. They were kindness itself, and again presents would materialise under the tree with a promise of certain delight on the wonderful day itself - Christmas. Because this was my experience, I thought it was everybody's experience - but it wasn't. I remember talking with the UK National Sales Manager of a company I worked for some years ago, being aghast as he told me of his Christmas presents on more than one year - a bag of balloons and a mandarin orange. Another former colleague told me of his intense dislike of Christmas, as he shared memories of his angry and aggressive parents drinking themselves to oblivion with alcohol purchased using borrowed money. I guess Christmas wasn't the same for everyone. My happy childhood memories of gifts and generous tables of food are nothing but a distant dream for many, with the spectre of rising inflation adding to the concerns of many hard-pressed families.

All lives have been affected by Covid but for the more vulnerable in our society, the effect has been even more devastating, with Food Banks around Ireland reporting increasing numbers each week. We can often be tempted to ascribe some blame to these families for being in this predicament, secretly (or not so secretly) believing that they are lazy, incompetent, or somehow at fault. Such views merely assist in steering people into a downward spiral. In Protestant Aid, we see first-hand the despair and poverty that bear their ugly teeth throughout the year, and at Christmas in particular, made worse by a media marketing frenzy

that merely reminds many families of what they cannot have, as opposed to what they will have. During the Christmas period the **Protestant Aid Grants Team** meet twice as often to deal with the requests for assistance. These requests are less about x-boxes and more often about food and heat. I'll be honest - when I read of the despair in some of the cases, I want to jump in my car and bring help straightaway. I want to reassure them and tell them everything will be ok. Unfortunately, this is not possible.

What is possible and what does happen, is that we grant almost €400,000 in General Grants over a year, much of it around Christmas, bringing some degree of comfort and assistance to those who need our help, made possible by your generosity.

We cannot solve every problem, but an outstretched hand of assistance at Christmas or indeed at any time during the year is what can be effective. Facilitating dignity and giving empathy with care and compassion, is our calling and we are privileged and grateful to be able to assist. We are grateful also to our many donors who give generously each year, allowing our work to continue.

We will not solve every problem and we won't meet every need, but we will try our best, on Christmas day and **every** day of the year. That's a promise.

Geoff Scargill
Head of Charitable Services - Protestant Aid
www.protestantaid.org

Derry & Raphoe Ministry of Healing

'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life?'

John 3v16

With the Christmas season fast approaching it is helpful to take a few moments to remind ourselves of the Christmas message and how it influences us. God loved (and still loves) the world and everyone in it so much that he gave his precious Son so we could know the blessing of eternal life! The Christmas message could be summed up in three verbs: **God loved, God gave and the world shall have!**

In the Ministry of Healing our plans for 2022 have been influenced by the same three verbs, to love, to give and to have.

At a recent Ministry of Healing planning meeting we discussed how best we could pray for healing in our diocese. Helping us to answer this question was the observation that 4000+ people viewed the four online healing services in 2020 and 2021. This shows people want prayer and enjoyed the services. Yet, we feel being **physically present with people** when we pray is a priority in the future.

After some discussion the committee agreed to contact the Diocesan Rural Deans and **offer to preach and pray for people at a healing service in 2022 in each Rural Deanery**. It will be a new initiative and step in faith for the ministry of healing!

We hope this vision will enable us:

1. To **pray** for more people.
2. To **assist** clergy in their ministry to the sick.
3. To **help** build relationships amongst rural deanery clergy as they plan the service together.

The Rural Dean and the deanery clergy will pick a hosting church, day/time of service and type of service. The diocesan healing committee will work alongside those hosting and leading the service. The initial response from the Rural Deans has been very encouraging. When the services have been arranged the clergy in each deanery will let their parishioners know the details.

In going out to the rural deaneries throughout our diocese, the ministry of healing committee seeks to follow the Lord's example: to love those who are sick and troubled, and to give our time and talents that those receiving prayer may know God's grace and healing.

*To God be the glory, Rev Paul Lyons
Chair Derry & Raphoe Diocesan
Ministry of Healing*

BLACK | HISTORY MONTH Summit

Churches here have been urged to "create space" so that they can reach out to members of the community who are perceived to be different - for example because of their ethnicity. The call was made by a leading member of the Moravian Church who joined other faith leaders, including the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster, at Londonderry's first 'Black History Month' summit, last month.

Bishop Andrew co-hosted the event with the Bishop of Derry, Dr Donal McKeown. The faith leaders' line-up was completed by the chairperson of the Irish Muslim

Peace and Integration Council, Shaykh Dr Umar al Qadri.

The conference was organised by the North West Migrants Forum to highlight some of the main issues facing Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland; to draw attention to the remarkable, and often tragic, history of the African people; and to celebrate the rich and varied culture of people of African descent living here.

The distinguished cast of speakers included the Chairperson of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, Dominique Day; the author and academic, Professor Verene Shepherd, from the

University of the West Indies; Patrick Corrigan, from Amnesty International; and the North West Migrants Forum's Director of Programmes, Lilian Seenoi-Barr.

Among the politicians there to lend support were the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Alderman Graham Warke, and members of different parties on the Council.

Addressing delegates, Executive Office Junior Minister Gary Middleton said, "Events like this will start a debate and throw out a challenge to everyone. True, meaningful and permanent equality must be our ultimate goal." In a video message, fellow-Junior Minister Declan Kearney said, "The diversity of our multi-ethnic society is something we should all celebrate. And we must all work together to make this a safe, secure and inclusive place for everyone who lives here."

Bishop Andrew told the conference that Senator George Mitchell - the American politician who chaired the peace talks that led to the Good Friday Agreement - said the Irish were very welcoming towards visitors but very suspicious of each other. "I think that was true 20 or so years ago," the Bishop said, "but maybe our welcome towards visitors who are now 'us' - who are now part of 'us', are part of our community, who live with us as equals - maybe we've become suspicious rather than welcoming. Today is a day that helps us break down some of those divisions and helps us celebrate who we are as people made in the image of God. So, I'm thrilled to be part of today."





Bishop Andrew said he was amazed and disappointed that the race equality strategy launched in 2005 had yet to be enacted by Stormont. "We're the only part of these islands that hasn't got a racial equality policy in place," he said, "so, I'm just intrigued as to why it hasn't happened. I hope it is more a case of something that's fallen between the cracks...but we need to have this policy in place."

Human rights activist, Beverly Simpson, who volunteers with the Migrants Forum, welcomed the intervention of faith leaders. "The faith leaders have taken it upon themselves to step up [in raising awareness]," Ms Simpson said. "It is a massive improvement because if the leaders of the Church come forward, then the people listen more."

Dr Livingstone Thompson who, in addition to being a church leader, is also an expert in the field of cultural diversity, said the education system here had to become "intentionally diverse and inclusive". He also said that politicians had to lead by example in speaking and modelling "what we call best practice in terms of anti-racism posture because, in the end, what we want to ensure is that Northern Ireland is a place where we can say racism is not tolerated at all".



The Moravian Church minister had some words of advice, too, for churches. "I join with the other faith leaders here in recognising the importance of religious affirmation being intentional about its claim to include people who are perceived to be

different. What we find in many churches is that the churches are not inclusive, they do not create space for others to be included in a fair way. The churches are fully white, and they need to be able to reach out to people who are non-white."

"The diversity of our multi-ethnic society is something we should all celebrate. And we must all work together to make this a safe, secure and inclusive place for everyone who lives here."

Just Thinking Outloud Shh! A not so Silent Night



I am not a fan of silence. I prefer noise, be it lots of noise and excitement, or background noise, but as far as possible no silence.

The radio is on in our house constantly, sometimes to keep the dog company, sometimes to keep us up-to-date with current affairs or football scores, but most of the time to fill the silence. However, I am learning that silence can be a good thing. Recently I have completed training in Godly Play, and as we were training and learning together there was a lot of silence. There was often a reason for the silence. People were taking time to reflect on what we had just heard and seen, taking time to put their thoughts into words, or wondering to themselves. The silence was not uncomfortable, as if waiting for someone to interrupt it, but rather it was full of peace and stillness.

As we approach Christmas, I was thinking about Christmas Carols and songs, and I started thinking of Silent Night. One of my favourite Christmas books is the '*Lion Storyteller Christmas Book*' by Bob Hartman which includes Christmas stories from the Bible, stories about Christmas traditions, and Christmas tales and legends. One of the stories included is called '*Father Joseph's Christmas Song*' which explains what happened to Father Joseph Mohr one Christmas Eve. He was asked to visit the woodcutter, his wife, and their new baby. As he walked through the mountain woods

the young priest was distracted as the organ in church was broken, and since it was Christmas Eve there was no time to fix it before the big service on Christmas morning when people would be expecting to sing their favourite Christmas Carols.

People would be so disappointed but there was nothing to be done. Father Joseph kept walking and when he finally got to the woodcutter's cottage, he suddenly forgot all his troubles because when he opened the door, he saw a scene that reminded him of the first Christmas - a young mother bending over a crib, her husband beside her, and a baby wrapped in rough blankets. Father Joseph blessed the child and started to walk home. As he walked, he simply could not forget what he had just seen and tried to think about how he could express the quiet beauty of the scene. Eventually the words formed a poem which the priest wrote down. Later that evening he went to see his friend Franz Gruber and, even though it was very late, Franz heard the story and the poem, and knew that he had to turn the words into a song. The next morning Father Joseph was not so worried about the organ being broken as he had a new song for them to sing, and the two men sang *Silent Night*, *Holy Night* for the first time.

This is a story you may be familiar with, and I am sure you are familiar with the carol. As I sing it, I often wonder how silent the night really was? When Mary gave birth, it would not have been silent. There would

have been plenty of noise. The animals would not have been silent, and baby Jesus would not have been silent. I am sure he cried once or twice. In the fields the sheep would not have been silent, and we know the shepherds were not silent as they were terrified, and then full of joy. Even the Magi would have had to consult with one another to discuss the stars, so there would not have been silence. Does this mean Father Joseph was wrong when he wrote his poem? I don't think so. I think we like the Christmas card images of *Silent Night*, and it was most definitely a Holy Night. The reality would have been a lot noisier and a lot messier than the carol we sing - just like our Christmas realities today.

We may strive for the perfect Hallmark Christmas, but the reality is often noisier, messier, and busier than we imagined - especially if there are children involved. For me as a person who doesn't enjoy silence, this is not a bad thing, but I often wonder if I miss something by not having that 'silent night'. This year I am going to strive to have some silence over Christmas, at least turn the volume down a little to take some time to wonder about the true miracle of Christmas. I hope you and your family are able to do the same.

**Kirsty, Children's Ministry Officer,
Diocese of Derry and Raphoe**

Welcome to MINDMATTERS COI

The Church of Ireland Mental Health Promotion Initiative



The Church of Ireland began a three-year mental health promotion initiative in October 2020. This initiative aims to raise awareness of, and respond to, the mental health needs of communities across the island of Ireland.

The project was made possible by a significant grant from one of the UK and Ireland's largest grant-making charities, Allchurches Trust, and is fully supported by the Representative Church Body of the Church of Ireland and the Church of Ireland's House of Bishops.

The Chairperson of the MindMattersCOI advisory group, Bishop Pat Storey, is urging people with an interest in mental health, whether personal or professional, to become involved in the project. She commented: "Improving mental health literacy is so important for us all. We need to understand how to maintain and support positive mental health amongst our friends, community and, in particular, our younger people. Recognising issues and talking about mental health helps to decrease stigma and remove barriers to seeking help. We are now looking for mental health champions/advocates as part of our MindMatters COI project. The volunteers will help promote positive mental health in the Church of Ireland and in communities across the island of Ireland.

Our plan is to match your skills, interests and time availability to the countless opportunities that exist to promote positive mental health in the Church of Ireland and the wider community. Anyone can be a mental health champion whether or not you have personal or professional experience in the area of mental health. If you are interested in taking part, please contact us by emailing the project at mhp@rcbdub.org."

Diocesan Initiatives

In early 2022 Dioceses and Parishes will be invited to submit applications for seed funding for local mental health promotion initiatives. Key criteria that will be considered in these applications will be the sustainability of the initiatives.

There is a significant body of evidence highlighting the contribution a Church can make in mental health promotion. Clergy and pastoral carers are often the first people approached by those experiencing mental health difficulties, and their day-to-day activity brings them in contact with people experiencing anxiety, illness, bereavement, the search for meaning, and suicide or self-harm. The Church is an integral part of the community, in the unique position to reach even the most remote cohort of the population.

This project underlines and reaffirms the Church's commitment to the community. It will serve as a concrete expression of our desire to make the Church a welcoming and inclusive environment, and it provides a practical demonstration of the Christian values of love and understanding.

"The Church of Ireland is a church that seeks to serve the whole community and to engender hope at a very difficult time for everyone who lives on this island. That hope is based on our understanding of the generous gospel of Jesus Christ through sharing whatever resources and gifts we possess, as open-handedly as possible. My hope and prayer for this initiative is that, as a serving church, we will be able to be more effective in our ministry of comfort, of practical help and of hope, and in doing so to benefit those most in need within our communities and beyond." said Most Revd John McDowell Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland.

James Lucey, Consultant Psychiatrist and Clinical Professor at Trinity College Dublin commented, "I am really encouraged by the understanding and recognition of the pivotal role the Church plays in mental health promotion..."

COPING WITH CLIMATE CHAOS

Christian Aid Ireland



Left: Adut with her three children Maria (6), Simon (4) and Charles (1) in Biet village, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan. With the new borehole, Adut can give her children clean water to drink.

Right: Adut demonstrates how she used to collect water from the river before the Irish Aid funded borehole brought clean water to her village. Credit: Christian Aid/Silvano Yokwe

For a long time, 27-year-old Adut Mariu had no choice but to give her children water that she knew wasn't safe.

'We were in desperate need,' Adut said. 'To look after my children, they had to drink the dirty river water.' People were frequently ill from drinking the water but the river closest to the village of Biet in the north-west of South Sudan was the community's only water source.

To make matters worse, Adut is also on the frontline of the climate crisis. South Sudan suffers with drought and flooding and many areas have been badly hit for three years in a row. Locust swarms have also devastated crops. The river near Adut's village dries up during periods of drought, forcing people to walk long distances in search of water. And it floods during the rainy season, polluting fragile water sources, killing crops and destroying homes.

But with support from Irish Aid, the Irish Government's overseas development programme, Christian Aid's local partner sank a borehole in Adut's village, bringing clean water for her children to drink, whatever the

weather. 'The water from the hand pump is very good. It's free from disease. We drink it with peace of mind.'

It means no more upset tummies from drinking dirty water. Thanks to this borehole, Adut's family was safe the last time the river flooded. 'In the autumn it flooded but we were not going to the river. We drank the clean water,' Adut said proudly. The borehole is life-changing but clean water is in short supply across the region and the borehole is being used by three times more people than it should be.

Mums living in poverty face impossible choices every day. But our decision to stand with them is an easy one.

Your gifts this Christmas could help to build more boreholes, provide seeds and farming tools, and give mums the chance to set up small businesses to take care of their families. With clean water, nutritious food and ways to earn money, mums like Adut won't have to make such impossible choices.

Life for Adut has been tough, but so is she. She's lived through displacement, conflict,

loss and now the climate crisis. But she is still full of hope for her children's futures. We all do what we can for the children in our lives, especially at Christmas. To find out more and to donate, please visit caid.ie/Christmas or you can make a telephone donation by calling 028 9064 8133 (Belfast) or 01 496 7040 (Dublin).

Please stand with mums this Christmas and help the next generation grow...

- £48/€56 could provide a hygiene kit (jerry cans, water purification tablets, hand soap, detergent, nappies, sanitary items) for eight families displaced by floods, giving them dignity and clean drinking water.
- £100/€117 could provide food such as lentils, grains, cooking oil and salt for a family of five for four months.
- £300/€351 could support three women's groups to start up a tea stall or bread-making business, so they can earn extra income for their families.

Good news from Bethlehem

Praise God for keeping Bethlehem school through Covid-19 crisis.

Challenges overcome thanks to prayer and help of staff, students and Barnabas supporters.

"The challenges are great, but with God's grace and the loving care of Barnabas Fund we shall survive them all," said Miss Amal Behnam, the head teacher of a Christian school in Bethlehem supported by Barnabas Fund.

Covid-19 lockdown has severely affected Bethlehem, a city whose people (especially the Christian minority) are very dependent on tourism. The parents of the school's pupils have been finding it extremely difficult to earn a living and are "struggling for daily supply of food and most urgent needs, not to mention the urgent need for medication in case of illness", wrote Miss Amal to Barnabas Fund. Many parents have not been able to afford to pay the school fees for their children. When local benefactors occasionally provided aid for schools during lockdown, it never went to this school, which is unique in the area because nearly all its students are from Christian families.

But, praise God, with the help of donations from Barnabas Fund supporters, the school has survived. Everyone played their part. The teachers and other staff took a 50% cut in their salaries. Twelve-year-old Emily, from one of the better-off families, saved up her pocket money and then brought into school a package of coins, which she asked to be used to help pay the fees of needier children. Above all, they were fervent in prayer.

Children given an excellent start in life

Christian children in Bethlehem face harassment and discrimination in their daily lives, and non-Christian schools can be hostile places for them. St Aphrem's, which was built mainly with funds from Barnabas, has been providing Christian children with an outstanding education in a loving Christian environment for 18 years. With the support of Barnabas, it can offer minimal fees to needy families so that even the poorest Christian children can attend. This excellent start in life will enable students to get better jobs and, in turn, support their families and strengthen the whole Christian community.

St Aphrem's is currently ranked fourth among all schools in the District of Bethlehem with 88.8% of the school's graduates getting averages above 90 in government exams. Some of its students have won scholarships for further studies elsewhere. There are 58 employees (full-time or part-time) including 46 teachers, four administrators, one accountant, one secretary, five cleaners and one security guard. These provide much-needed income for Christian families in Bethlehem.

Following lockdown disruptions, the 2021/2022 academic year began in early August with 660 students. First back in class

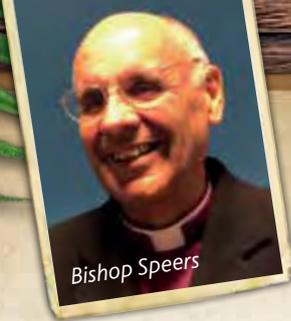
Emily's teachers told her that a little support can make big things happen, so she saved up her pocket money to help pay the school fees of needier children at her beloved school

were the Grade 12 students, getting ready for their final year in school; other students from 1st Grade to 11th returned to their desks a fortnight later. The kindergarten children had their own start date two days after that. Classes meet five days a week from 7.45am to 1.30pm or 2pm depending on grade level. Strict hygiene rules to guard against Covid-19 remain in place. Students were happy to be back at school, but teachers noticed that their behaviour had deteriorated after 18 months of irregular attendance, and levels of aggression had risen. They were restive and needed a lot of attention from their teachers.

The head teacher met with a child behavioural specialist and arranged psycho-social and drama sessions and workshops to ease the levels of pupil stress. Morning devotions, prayers, Bible readings and spiritual talks for the children were also dedicated to the same purpose.

Article courtesy of Barnabas Aid


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hope and relief for the persecuted church



Bishop Speers

Our Mad Life

After the excitement of being away with the Youth and the festivities surrounding the dedication of the new St. Andrew's Church the following weekend away with the Men's Society promised a quieter time.

Accordingly my friendly bank manager was roped in to collecting me at Bishop's House and taking me in his car on the Saturday morning. Unfortunately the bank manager and various others were not able to go, so could I go at an early hour to the taxi-brousse station where a front seat, "devant", was booked for me and we were guaranteed to leave on time. Regular readers will know that a 'guaranteed time in a taxi-brousse' is a contradiction in terms.

Our destination was Marovoay. The local clergyman gave an uplifting Bible study and exhorted the men to have greater faith: instead of 9 being present from a church pray that it be 90 next time. I emphasised that I too believed that faith was essential. But I also believed we had to use our common sense and work for achievable goals. If we set targets that we know are unachievable nobody will try to achieve anything. My target for them was to recruit one new member each. Could they do that?

In the afternoon Revd Gaston whisked me away to see the repairs to the church building and its refurbishment as a school on weekdays at Morarano, a nearby village. Two taxi-motorbikes were hired and off we went. I am getting slightly more relaxed about hanging on but still dare not take a hand off to wave, etc. Yet again I was taken by surprise how we veered off the road, without slowing down, through a village where the houses were only a few yards apart scattering poultry and children as we went.

I duly inspected the work which you paid for and asked where the children's toilets were. "Forgotten about that." Really? Luckily my grasp on the language is not up to the sarcasm I had in mind. I expressed my displeasure at the lack of sanitation and suggested a possible place for the loos. This is part of a diocesan project to get girls educated to at least primary school ability to read and write, and generally get children back to school whose parents had withdrawn them because of the sudden rise in costs due to the pandemic. Later I got an SOS from Revd Gaston to say the medical authorities had been to inspect the school at Morarano and it had failed. It had no sanitation. I sent the now much increased money needed to fulfil the required item.

On Tuesday afternoon, in the heat of the day, it was time to go to the taxi-brousse station to start my journey to Mandritsara in the mountains in the far north east of the diocese. On the Sunday I was due at Ambario, travelling on the back of the rural dean's motorbike. It was decided we would share the crash helmet; he would wear it going and I would wear it coming back. We travelled on the road to St Andrew's, Ampambibitika, and then across country bouncing along making sure my crozier didn't cut into my back.

The local church is run by an incredibly energetic and dynamic lady called Mme. Angéline. With her own hands she helped the men build the present temporary mud and thatch church. There was the most wonderful atmosphere of both reverence and celebration as we worshipped. It had been an exhausting visit but also exhilarating and encouraging after the downer of the toilet debacle and the problems of why the 21 churches in Mandritsara had not paid their priest and land bought for a new clergy house and church was useless (but that's another story!)

And so back on the taxi-brousse on Monday morning at an early hour and back to Mahajanga in the early evening. Great to be home - except the workmen I had left at Bishop's House had fused the electricity knocking out my precious WiFi and the water system wasn't working! Since getting back a lot of my time has been spent allocating money to education, sorting out registration fees for needy children and looking at the costs of those we are supporting at university. We are sponsoring Maria and Jocelyn at the state university at Fianarantsoa. I am delighted to report that they are now commencing the third and final year of their undergraduate course.



The church at Morarano and our taxi drivers and their machines



Maria and Jocelyn

There was great excitement at my arrival
It was thought to be the first ever visit by a bishop



This term we have selected ten children from the poorest backgrounds for free tuition in each of our primary schools. A huge thank you to all of you who have sent donations towards education. We are currently directly supporting seven university students and about 40 primary school children and 20 secondary school students. A drop in the ocean of need but yet a lifeline to many as the poor get poorer in our very wrong global economics. Once more thank you for financing all this. I only wish I could convey the sincere gratitude of Maria, Jocelyn and many of the others to you. It would truly warm your hearts.

30th October 2021

I'm writing this from Maintirano in the far south west of the diocese. My alarm was set for 3 am on Monday morning as I had agreed that the tuctuc would collect Evariste, the Archdeacon's son, and myself at 4 am to take us to Mahajanga docks.

At about 4.30 am things began to happen. My ticket was requested. It had 'No 1. VIP' in large red letters across it and I was told to go to the head of the queue while my luggage was taken on board. I was confronted by a ship's rail of a height that was designed to minimise the possibility of falling overboard. Brawny men were on hand with one foot on the quay and the other in the ship spanning a narrow but deep drop to the water. Each passenger was helped to vault the rail. Some did this with gymnastic ease while types like myself got one leg over with no problem but needed a helping hand with the other! All was very good natured. And so I arrived on the top deck which was the first class area. I had suspected that this 'new' ship, the Arianne Express, would turn out to be 'new to Madagascar' like our taxi-brousses, not newly constructed. It was immediately obvious this was the case. The sunken lights in the cabin roof didn't function but a couple had wires connecting them to makeshift little fluorescent tubes. These were switched on by simply joining the wires and switched off by pulling them apart. Crowded and heavily laden we left Mahajanga just after dawn and were able to enjoy sunrise across the sea.

Soon the sun was high in the sky and a blistering 36C which I thought would be OK at sea with the breeze. I was wrong. Some passengers took the initiative and tied lengths of material together to form a makeshift awning and lay down. The night seemed long and sleep hard to come by as my bench seat didn't have a head rest or recline and everyone else was squirming around. A trip downstairs to the loo

was something I had no desire to repeat except in the most dire circumstances... Dawn was a welcome sight. As the quay hove into sight I could discern a small group eagerly waving their homemade flags welcoming the bishop! Exhausted and grubby I was kissed and hugged and bundled into a pickup, the back packed with well-wishers who had been waiting on the quay for nearly two hours, and off we went triumphantly to church for a service of thanksgiving for the safe arrival of the bishop.

This was followed by breakfast in the vestry, tea and mofo gasy - a sort of doughnut. I explained that I really needed to wash and so was taken to my hotel where I was delighted to find a really clean room with working en suite facilities. After this began a relentless round of visites de courtoisie. I couldn't help thinking that the great and good of Maintirano had more pressing things to do than welcome the bishop, but we were received with due pomp and circumstance. In the midst of all this I am trying to advise on the repair of our derelict church - no services had been held for some years prior to my arrival in the diocese - and the building of a house for the clergyman and his family. You would hesitate to use his present abode as a bicycle shed.

Meanwhile there has been a terrible storm at Ampombitika, St Andrew's church and the house of our new catechist completely destroyed and his wife injured. All this and the Confirmation that I have come for has still to take place. It will start with a procession from my hotel across town to the church with the various civil dignitaries invited. So your support and prayers must be, by the grace of God, what is keeping me going. Thank you. God bless.

Yours +Hall

Note from the Diocesan Board of Mission and Unity:

As of mid-September 2021, we know that in excess of £20,000 has been raised for this project, most of which has been channelled via the Diocesan Office. In spite of enormous challenges, Bishop Hall is pressing on with the purchase of rice fields to benefit local communities, and the building of suitable accommodation for clergy. On behalf of Bishop Hall and his people we express sincere thanks to those parishes and individuals who have contributed. Donations will still be accepted and can be sent to the Diocesan Centre.

Editor's note:

Madagascar is on brink of world's "first climatechange-induced famine". In the north west where Hall is living people are very anxious about water supplies in the long term.



DRY

Report



Hello!

I'd like to start by introducing myself - my name is Claire Hinchliff and I have the honour of being appointed as the new Diocesan Youth Officer for the Diocese of Derry & Raphoe. I'm so excited to start and meet everyone across the diocese.

My vision for our youth ministry falls under two headings - **CONNECT** and **COMMIT**. It is my hope that working towards these two objectives we can achieve a growth in our youth ministry and a deepening of faith amongst our young people. Connect is all about how we as churches work with each other, our leaders and young people. I want to see growth through these connections. Once we connect, we can commit. We want to see stronger commitment to faith, to our young people and to each other.

There are a lot of ways that I can support a parish in working with their young people. I would love to come and meet as many of you over the next while - at Youth Fellowships, Bible Studies, Confirmation Classes or Sunday Services. As a Diocese we will have a calendar of events for all of our young people to come together, but a local parish connection is so important.

If you are a leader who works with young people in your parish, there are many ways that we can offer you support. We are starting a resource library for the diocese, where you can borrow equipment or try out a programme to see if it will be the



right fit for your group. We will have training throughout the year to help you grow so you can keep confident in your work. I want to create a database of leaders so you can hear relevant information directly. If you would be interested in that, please scan the QR code and fill in the form or email me!

We've been partnering with Exodus NW and SU NW to create our **Freedom** youth event in the Waterside in Derry. This is a monthly gathering for young people of any background where we can have some games, listen to a speaker and enjoy some snacks. It's been fun so far and we invite anyone who would like to come along. It would be wonderful to see new faces. We meet on the second Saturday of the month (except January) from October through to April at Richill Park Baptist Church from 7.30pm to 9pm. Come as a car load of friends from church or on your own - you will be welcomed! We hope this will be a chance for friendships to grow as you keep coming back. Our Derry & Raphoe Youth Board have been

busy planning a calendar of events which should have something for everyone in it! Keep an eye out on our social media pages for the latest information.

Continuing prayer for all youth ministry across the diocese would be greatly welcomed. Everyone is figuring out how to run fun and safe youth programmes. Pray that leaders feel supported, resourced and excited about opening their door to young people. Pray for the young people as they come back to church and youth groups in person after the break, realising that face-to-face is so important for their faith and friendships.

If anyone ever wants to contact me about a visit, ideas, support or anything else - please feel free to reach out to me.

Claire
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📷 [@derryraphoeyouth](https://www.instagram.com/derryraphoeyouth)



MICA - The 'other' pandemic...

We have all had experience over the past 18 months and more of the Covid-19 pandemic. The word pandemic is usually used in relation to a disease over a whole country or the world.

There is another pandemic that is raging in County Donegal and beyond across the counties of Mayo, Sligo, Tipperary, Clare and Limerick - the issue of Mica. This may not be a disease in humans but it will have the potential of adversely affecting thousands of people across these counties - and beyond. As human beings created by God we have needs. These have been described by Maslow in his hierarchy of need. The most basic need is physiological - food, water etc. Then come safety needs such as security of property and body, and thirdly the need to belong - that relates to family and community. It is likely that hundreds, if not thousands, of people across Donegal will be affected by the Mica pandemic - personally, financially, and emotionally. There are individuals and families and communities who will be affected when community buildings are also found to be affected by this issue. People of all ages, of all faiths and none, of all socioeconomic groups will be affected. There are also issues of fairness and justice for all involved. This problem is huge - this problem is multifaceted and multi-layered and whatever we do with, and for, those affected will be a marathon and not a sprint. Our Bishop - along with other Christian leaders have already made a very powerful statement about this issue. Now it is time for us all to think how we as a diocese are going to put meat on the bones of that statement and act. In Inishowen we have begun by forming an Inishowen Christian Leaders Group to begin to think about how we as church leaders can run this marathon WITH the people who are, and will be, affected as this pandemic unfolds and people feel the effects on their mental health, their finances, their relationships, their security. We have begun by developing a prayer that can be prayed by us all and we will continue working on other things such as events and practical tips as well as putting out requests for help of various kinds over the next months and

years. Many people have stories about how they are affected. A lady in this diocese who lost her husband to Covid-19 over the past year is now about to have the house that they built together demolished - a loss not only of her husband - but now a loss of security and memories too. I heard of a 6 year old who asked his mum recently when he saw a small crack in the wall of his bedroom - "Is our house falling down too?" People in Buncrana, who had horrific damage from floods a few years ago are now facing Mica damage in their houses too.

Here are 2 stories written by 2 people directly affected by the crisis. They tell of so many emotions!

"Firstly we had the shock of having all the symptoms. Those cracks that we would fill and paint over have a new meaning and it's hard not to take a closer look and wonder 'where next?' In the night, usually when we're in bed, we listen to the loud crack. With the way the government is dragging it out and making it so difficult to get on the scheme, we can't even get an engineer. So it's a waiting game and hopefully our house will hold out. Everything is on hold and there's no point in doing any improvements - that would be a real waste of money. We're lucky our case isn't as bad as some and we have been in our house 23 years. But it's a crazy situation and unbelievable how the authorities could let this happen and be so irresponsible. But I'm sure we'll get there eventually!"

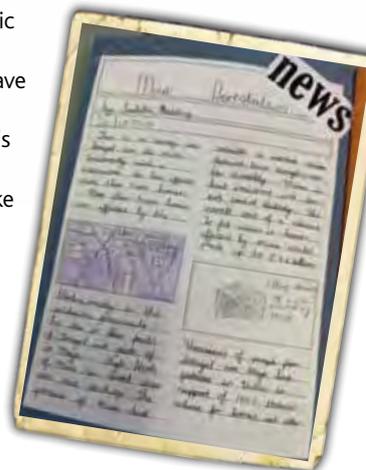
"I saved for a long time to build my house and I thought it would be my home for life. A couple of years ago I noticed a few hairline cracks but it never occurred to me that it might be anything other than settlement. With the heightened awareness of Mica on social media in 2021, I began to compare the pictures of houses confirmed as having Mica to my own and realised that I too had the same problem. The reality of this was hard to accept, knowing what lay down the line. While I am conscious of the fact that it's not a life-threatening issue and I know my family will not allow me to become homeless, I am not as young and able as I was when I first built the house almost twenty years ago, so it's

causing me considerable stress and anxiety. Although Mica has been visually confirmed by an engineer, due to their workload I am still unable to engage an engineer approved by Donegal County Council. I need confirmation from an approved engineer to access the Mica Redress Scheme. Naturally this is causing me a lot of stress because the sheer number of houses involved and the lack of approved engineers and builders may well mean that it could be years before this whole situation is resolved. My family are very supportive and have helped with repairs to delay the inevitable deterioration of the structure, even though we know it's futile. At the moment I'm living in limbo and have lost all heart in my home. There seems no point in redecorating or carrying out any refurbishments. I check daily for new cracks. All families affected with Mica will need accommodation, storage facilities and help with removals. We have been told that all fixtures and fittings i.e windows, doors, kitchen units and sanitary ware will have to be reused."

The Students at St Mura's National School Buncrana are "reporting" on various current issues and this was written by one of them.

This Mica pandemic is everybody's business. We all have a responsibility to care for all of God's children. We can and should all make a contribution in caring for our neighbours. The time I feel is right to deliver, not just words, but actions too. Let us each take the responsibility to consider how, as an individual and as part of a faith community, we can walk with our neighbours and reach out practically, prayerfully and pastorally in a planned and even passionate way to our neighbours!

Rev Canon Judi McGaffin



A day in the life of a... **Donegal G.P.**

Dr. Bev Huss



As for so many people, the working life of a GP has changed dramatically over the past 18 months since the Covid-19 pandemic began.

Initially, the uncertainty of what Covid-19 would bring - lockdown and a dramatic reduction in demand for services for a few weeks, the introduction of PPE, increasing use of telephone and sometimes video consultations, the disappearance of the usual childhood fevers and infections, and adults with chronic chest complaints, as everyone limited their movements, learned to shop with masks on and greet each other without shaking hands anymore. Then came the easing of restrictions last winter and the surge in Covid-19 infections. Some of our patients lost to Covid-19 and anxious phone calls supporting those who had tested positive and then waiting to see how they would fare. Then the frantic rollout of the vaccine programme. It was such a relief to be given the vaccine myself. Then I was holding the first precious vial of vaccine for our first vaccine clinic, almost trembling and diligently following the preparation instructions. We arranged clinics on top of normal surgeries and saw the relief and smiles of those first in line for the vaccines - a lady in her 90s punching the air with joy!

Week by week came constantly changing guidelines: who should be tested, who should be isolated, who can be vaccinated and with which vaccine; what about side effects? Weekly Wednesday night webinars from the Irish College of GPs with updates and guidelines have become a routine and a very welcome update service.

The spring and the HSE cyber-attack resulted in loss of hospital notes, delays in

appointments, lost results, no blood clinics for weeks. We really felt for our hospital colleagues and especially laboratory staff, as they resorted to pen and paper to try and keep essential services running. Over the summer, as things calmed, we started to see some of our older patients for their chronic disease check-ups. Some had been so isolated by the restrictions and one lady was so relieved just to be out for an appointment. She only had a carer at home and had had no access to the usual relief of day hospital services. There was a moment to ask about her faith and how she sustained herself day to day.

Into autumn this year and easing of restrictions has brought a return of childhood illnesses again and anxious parents. Preschool children who experienced no infections last year, presented with fevers, runny noses, coughs, croup, tonsillitis - things we had seen little of for many months - coming back as social distancing and the emergence of a more "normal" life with the return of parents to work and older siblings to school.

Each day as I travel to work I ask the Lord for his help - for wisdom to know who to see, who to admit, who to refer, not to forget anything in the busyness of the day and to give me the right words for each patient and each member of staff. I use the app BibleGateway on my phone and each day it gives a verse for the day - an encouragement as I wonder what each day will bring. Today "Wait on the Lord, be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord" Ps 27v4, a reminder that no matter how uncertain the day ahead might seem the Lord is in control. I am thankful to the Lord for the small team in which he has placed me to work here in Donegal -

I have some excellent colleagues. Each day as I wonder what the next challenge will be, I am grateful for the patients I have known for some years now - the significant moments we've shared together - supporting them through difficult diagnoses, illness and bereavement for loved ones.

Knowing them over time is a privilege. I have had some very privileged end of life moments with patients and their families over the past year - a moment of calm and reflection with a family reminiscing about their mother, praying with a patient as she faces her last days, knowing she knows the Lord and a bright and secure future with Him awaits. The quote from medical school days "To cure sometimes, to relieve often and to comfort always" has been a helpful one and a challenge over the years.

I enjoy the variety of general practice - chronic diseases, acute illnesses, minor injuries and I love a good diagnostic challenge! Keeping up to date is a constant imperative too as guidelines change and treatments and investigations move on and the learning points have to be counted towards earning registration again for the next year. It's a good job I enjoy learning!

I am thankful for a supportive husband and family. When we're short of staff at work and balancing home-schooling during lockdown, trying to juggle work and home has been challenging at times. I am thankful too for our Wednesday fellowship group at church where I can share struggles and prayer requests. They have been faithful friends over zoom and now back in person and I value their fellowship and encouragement week by week. Do pray for and encourage your local GPs and their staff too!

Baked Cod with Creamy Risotto

Risotto (serves 4)

50g butter; 1 shallot or white onion finely chopped; 1 carrot finely chopped; 300g arborio risotto rice; 150 ml white wine; 1.4 litre fish or vegetable stock; 50g grated Parmesan cheese; 50ml double cream (optional); seasoning salt & cracked black pepper.

Method:

1. Sauté onions & carrots in butter until light in colour, and rice sautéed until translucent colour.
2. Add white wine, cook for few minutes, slowly add stock, stirring frequently. Turn down temperature - this will take 30-40 mins to cook.
3. Add cheese, cream and seasoning, stir in all ingredients and cook for few minutes.

Baked Cod

150g - 200g fish per portion/person; seasoning salt & cracked black pepper; lemon juice & zest; Knob of butter; Herbs - freshly chopped parsley or chives.

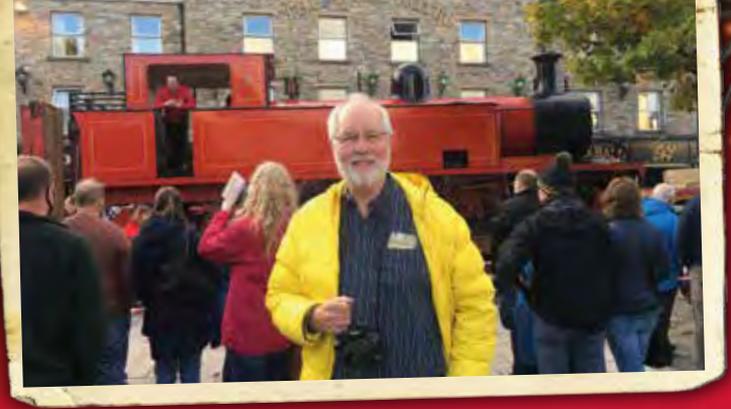
Method

1. Put Cod on a oven suitable tray/ dish, season with salt & pepper, sprinkle some lemon zest over fish and squeeze juice over it. Place knob of butter on top of fish.
2. Put the fish in a hot oven for 8-12 mins when risotto is almost ready.
3. Divide risotto into plates/ bowls, place the cooked cod on top and sprinkle with freshly chopped herbs.

Bon appetite!

Lorna-Lee Curran





From a train set from Santa to Drumboe in Donegal!



I've never forgotten the Christmas of 1955 for that was the year Santa gave me my first electric train set! I was one very happy little eight-year-old boy as I prised open the large red box marked Tri-ang Railways and finding inside a black Princess Elizabeth locomotive, two maroon coaches, an oval of grey track and a large battery box.

There were a few other boxes with some accessories too and it was still early morning when I had it up and running. I gazed at the picture on the box which showed a huge layout with many trains and began to dream about what I might have - one day! I wonder how many other children have had an interest in railways kindled thanks to a train set received as a welcome Christmas present?

I seem to have been born with a love of railways. I thrilled to see Lough Swilly trains tootling along beside the beach at Fahan or glimpsed from Strand Road in my native Derry; it was equally thrilling to see the railbuses of the County Donegal Railways clinging to a ledge as they made their way through Barnesmore Gap and, of course, there was the annual pleasure of the Sunday School excursion by special train from the

Waterside Station to Portrush. A very special memory was when my mother took me across Craigavon Bridge to Victoria Road Station, just before it was closed, where I was over the moon to get a short ride on a County Donegal locomotive when it did a shunt of the train it had pulled from Strabane along the East Bank of the Foyle. Sadly, my memory doesn't include the name of that engine but I like to think it might have been called 'Drumboe' - it could well have been!

The years rolled on through ordination, marriage, parenthood, bereavement and ultimately retirement eight years ago from Armagh where, for twenty-three years, I had been rector of St. Mark's, the city's Parish Church and more recently a Canon of the Cathedral. *(As an aside I remember the first time I was addressed as 'Canon McKegney' I looked round to see where my late father was!)*

In retirement my railway interests, which had never left me, were noted and about four years ago I was 'nobbled' into becoming Chairman of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland (RPSI). I was told that, if I could chair a Select Vestry, I could chair the RPSI Board; that is a matter for considerable debate! The RPSI is based at Whitehead where we have a first-class Railway Museum



A personal odyssey by Canon John W McKegney

and workshops for restoring locomotives and carriages both for display and mainline operation for ourselves and other kindred bodies. One such is the County Donegal Railway Heritage Centre based in Donegal town. It had acquired the very forlorn and rusted remains of 'Drumboe' - the very last CDR locomotive to operate. It could become the Centre's prize exhibit, if it was restored, and that was its aim. But it would take massive fund-raising efforts on their behalf which they have managed successfully.

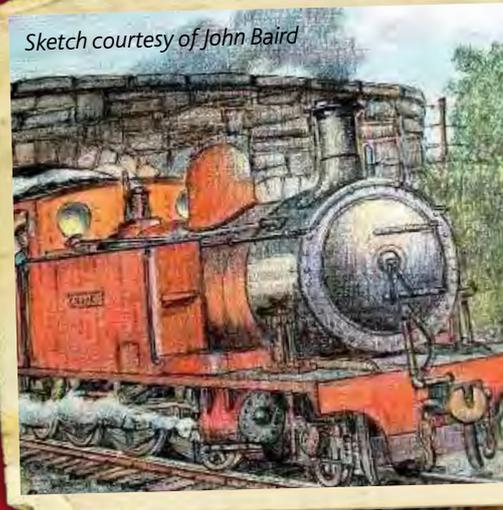
It would also need the considerable design and engineering expertise of the RPSI volunteers at Whitehead to achieve it. Happily, after 14 years, the great day dawned and a pristine looking, restored 'Drumboe' was ready to go home to Donegal.

That brings me full circle and back to Drumboe for, on Saturday 9th October this year, she made a triumphant return to Donegal and to her new home in the excellent Donegal Railway Heritage Centre which is based in the old Donegal Town Station. I took the opportunity of leapfrogging it as it was conveyed by low-loader from Whitehead over the Glenshane Pass, past the old Victoria Road Station in Derry and on to a stop at the site of the

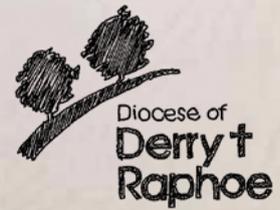
GNR/CDR station at Strabane which is today marked by the 'Tin Men' sculptures. From there it was across the border and an amazing journey through the county for in every village and town people turned out to cheer the loco as she passed. It was like the visit of a celebrity - but then in Donegal, Drumboe IS a celebrity! She was cheered and clapped through Stranorlor, she looked marvellous passing through Barnesmore Gap just below the route of the old railway line but the highlight was her arrival, complete with Garda escort, in the Diamond of Donegal Town. The excitement was palpable - the conquering hero had returned and the people of Donegal were delighted including the Rector of Donegal and Archdeacon of Raphoe, the Ven David Huss. It was a truly memorable day.

You can now see it for yourself at the Heritage Centre which also contains a wealth of fascinating information and artefacts about the much lamented railway which closed on 31st December 1959, but whose memory lives on in those who cherish the transport of delight from times past.

*John McKegney
Portrush, 29th October 2021*



Diocesan noticeboard!



Ordained Local Ministry

At the recent Diocesan Synod Bishop Andrew stated that he would be introducing this exciting new form of ministry as an extra tool to ministry within the Diocese. This ministry has been around for some time, but the Diocese has reflected on how best it may be used locally here in this part of God's Kingdom.

The name of this new model, Ordained Local Ministry, tells us what lies at its heart.

Ordained: those who are selected and trained are ordained as deacon then priest/presbyter. As such, the church invests in them the authority to lead worship and care for God's people. Like all who are ordained, they are to be leaders in mission and to minister in word and sacrament.

Local: the unique feature of this new model of ministry is that it is based locally in parish or parish groups. Vocation is first born and nurtured locally, and this form of ministry is lived out locally.

Ministry: in Derry and Raphoe, we have placed serving in teams as one of our priorities. Those ordained as 'OLMs' will minister in teams. They will know both the joys and the challenges of ministry as they serve the Good Shepherd.

In 2 Timothy 1, verse 9 says "He has saved us and called us to a holy life". We are first of all called to a holy life, a life of obedience, service and witness for God's glory. It is the living out of that call which we sometimes hear as a voice which calls us to a particular ministry, in which we may use our God-given talents. As followers of Christ we need to discern where that particular ministry lies.

Those who may wish to explore this new challenging ministry within the Diocese, should speak to their Rector and to the Diocesan Director of Ordinands - Rev. Canon Robert Boyd, who will help you discern the call of God upon your life.



Congratulations, Paul!

*The waiting is over and the mystery is ended.
Congratulations, Paul. Your honour - presented
by the Prince of Wales - is richly deserved.
We are thrilled for you.*

Looking for a stocking filler for Christmas?

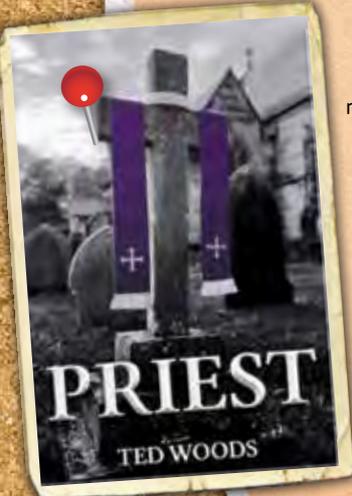
Why not try Ted Woods' new novel about The Revd Wendy Morris who is rector of St Olaf's Church in the diocese of Daneford.

Being single and ordained and in sole charge of a parish can often be lonely, especially as she deals with criticism and conflict. A situation not helped by having an egotistical and ambitious archdeacon.

Following the resignation of her crabby and disgruntled organist, Wendy appoints an ex-RUC officer to succeed him and a new era of cooperation begins.

Things look up further for Wendy with the arrival of a new clerical neighbour and his family. But then the unexpected happens and a story of revenge and murder begins to unfold.

Published by Beaten Track - beatentrackpublishing.com. Many of the characters will be familiar to readers of Bishop, Ted's first novel, also available from Beaten Track Publishing.



New 2022 calendar on sale in aid of Conwal Parish

Lovely Christmas gift for family & friends.
€10 each in aid of Conwal church funds.

Contact Jean or Cynthia with your orders:

alcorn.jean1@gmail.com

cynthiafuery@gmail.com



NEW HOUSE OF WORSHIP IN MAGILLIGAN PRISON...

The Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster, was among church leaders who attended the official opening of a new House of Worship in Magilligan Prison by the Justice Minister, Naomi Long.

Unveiling a plaque to officially open the new House of Worship, Ms Long said: *"The work of prison chaplains at Magilligan, and indeed across all the prisons, takes place without fanfare and without the knowledge of many people outside of prisons. However, they are an essential part of the prison community."*

Justice Minister Naomi Long is pictured at the official opening of the new House of Worship at Magilligan Prison with (front row, l-r) Gary Milling, Governor of Magilligan Prison, and Ronnie Armour, Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service, and (back row, l-r) Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu, President of the Methodist Church, Fr Michael Canny, Vicar General of Derry Diocese, Rev Andrew Forster, Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, and Rev David Bruce, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church.

Director General Ronnie Armour said, *"The opening of this new church facility is significant as it provides a focal point for chaplaincy and this important work, and sends out a clear signal of our commitment to having a prison here in the North West. I have no doubt this building will become an important part of the fabric here at Magilligan."*



Roberta Merrick asks

“How about Your Christmas?”

One in three women globally is affected by domestic abuse at some point in their lives. With the increase in domestic violence, now classified as a shadow pandemic, we catch up with the latest challenges at Donegal Domestic Violence Services (DDVS).

Mary, can I ask you first of all to introduce yourself and share a little bit about your role within the Donegal Domestic Violence Service?

My name is Mary McKenna and I have been employed by DDVS for 23 years in a variety of positions mainly as a support worker in both the Refuge and in the Outreach Services. I also co-ordinate the 16 Days of Action art and poetry campaign, deliver training and awareness, facilitate support groups, have been a student placement supervisor for many years and was Team Leader for 7 years.

You have worked for many years with this essential service. What in your opinion has changed the most over those years?

Without a doubt **updated legislation** allows more women to access Domestic Violence Orders and is a positive move. We have

awareness within Services/Media on the dynamics of Domestic Violence and its impact on families. Unfortunately, **rent** has become more expensive in recent years and rent allowance has not kept up with this, so suitable affordable housing is becoming more difficult to source. In cases where Domestic Violence is identified, and concerns are brought before the court by the non-abusive parent, an **in-depth assessment** should always take place before access is granted.

The population of the North West has become increasingly multinational. Has this raised more issues for you and your team? How do you overcome these barriers in order to help these migrant families with regard to Domestic Violence?

The biggest change has been the need to access translation services especially as women tend to have a lower level of English than their partners (leading to partners often acting as translators with other services). A major impact as well is the immigration status and legal entitlements, which vary according to the type of status. This has been a new and challenging piece of work trying to keep up with changes.



How has Covid-19 affected the day-to-day running of your service and what have been the implications for you and your colleagues?

Covid-19 has impacted in a number of different ways:

For the organisation - for outreach staff the face-to-face contacts have been considerably reduced and we no longer undertake home visits. For helpline staff they have continued to work on site and support residents living in the building but obviously greater distancing, wearing of masks and again avoiding, where possible, actually going into client's apartments. Our admin service and outreach staff are all working from home and the Manager sometimes from home.

For the clients - there has been a significant increase in helpline requests for accommodation which we have had to source and with which we maintain contact. We are



Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

working overall with more clients approx., 70 a week in outreach and often 6 - 8 new clients coming through the helpline every week.

According to the media the last 18 months have shown a major increase in Domestic Violence especially during the lockdown periods. Has the Government stepped up to the mark by providing rent allowance and or extra housing to alleviate this crisis?

As a temporary measure TUSLA (The Child and Family Agency) have funded the additional accommodation support required, however this is due to cease at the end of the year. So far this year that has amounted to more than €25,000 in Donegal alone.

In your experience does the season of Christmas put an added pressure on the services provided by the Centre?

It's more the winter period generally that puts pressure on the service due to increased costs associated with fuel in particular. Christmas can often be a time when families feel the pressure to stay together and then afterwards, we can see an increase in access to the service.

As we end this interview, we remind ourselves that there is never anything so dark that cannot be overcome by the light of Christ. We pray for an end to domestic abuse, for no more 1 in 3. May we shine Christ's light, with courage and purpose, as we each step back and reflect on nurturing hope, faith, peace, love and joy as we journey from Advent to Epiphany.

If you are affected by this issue keep yourself safe:

Northern Ireland: 24 hour Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline Freephone 0808 802 1414;

Foyle Women's Aid 028 7141 6800;

Omagh Women's Aid 028 8224 1414;

Foyle Men's Advisory Project

028 7116 0001; If you are in an emergency contact the **PSNI** on 999.

Ireland: National Helpline Freephone 1800 341 900; **Donegal Domestic**

Violence Services 1800 262677;

Men's Aid Ireland 01 5543811;

Garda: In an emergency always call 999/112 Garda Confidential Freephone Line: 1800 555 222.

Christmas Fears by Mary McKenna

*It's the night before Christmas, I lie in my bed
But there are no thoughts of Santa here in my head.
Instead, I lie whimpering and covering with fear
From the noise down below, that they think I don't hear*

*My dad's abusing my mum for no reason at all
Except to show her who's boss and the one in control
He shouts that she's useless and deserves every slap
She should learn not to question where he's been at.
The money is his to spend as he sees fit
It's just tough if no presents have been bought for the kids*

*He rants and he raves for most of the night
Mum tries to calm him, but he just wants to fight
Eventually he finally falls into bed
But we're all awake now, our hearts filled with dread
It's been the same every week, for as long as I can recall
I just wish mum, me and the family could escape from it all*

*So Santa, if you can hear me on this late Christmas eve
There's only one present I want you to leave
A daddy who's cheerful who's kind and who's nice
'Cos the daddy downstairs is just destroying our lives.*

Diocesan Manoeuvres!

Rev Canon Aonghus Mayes

Rev Canon Aonghus Mayes, welcome to Derry and Raphoe. n:vision readers would like you to tell us a little bit about yourself.

1. Can you tell us a little about your Christian journey to this point?

First of all, can I say how much I'm looking forward to moving to Drumachose in the new year and getting to know everyone. In terms of my Christian journey, something a predecessor as rector of Moy said to a Sunday School teacher comes to mind. The teacher concerned was rather despondent that his class didn't seem to be paying any attention, but he was told, 'they won't ever remember much of what you said, but they will remember the kind of person you are.'

Growing up in a rectory family, faith and church have always been part of my life, and Christian teaching was inevitably formative in my development, but probably like all children, even if at a subconscious level, it was the character of those around me who professed Christian beliefs that made the most indelible impression on me. As I got older, I was able to look at Christianity from a more academic perspective and, through my own prayer and Bible study, I began to internalize the truths I had been taught as a child, but the foundation was laid by countless faithful people, past and present - parents, family, church family - whose quiet Christian witness continues to inspire.

2. You are currently a Canon. Will you still be a Canon when you arrive in Drumachose?

Yes, I will still be a Canon - 'Canon Mayes' is nothing if not a reminder I've hit middle age. I was elected a prebendary of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin back in January and, as it's the National Cathedral, I keep that particular title wherever I go.

3. How do you wind down and relax?

I play a bit of golf (extremely badly). I enjoy reading and I have to say I love television, but most of all catching up with family and friends.

4. What is your favourite book/movie?

I'm a bit of a Bond aficionado. As it happens, I'll be going to see the new Bond film with the B.B. Company. In terms of books, I love history, particularly nineteenth century and I enjoy biographies as well.

5. Can you tell us a Bible verse you particularly like, and why?

Different Bible verses speak more to me at different times, but one of my favourite



readings has always been that one from Matthew 6. I don't know whether it's the striking language of different translations or the simple imagery of things like birds of the air and flowers of the field and so on, or the fact that it comes as a firm but gentle answer to worry and anxiety, telling us in a very simple way not to get things out of perspective, but to put God and His purposes first and then everything else will find its proper place.

6. What is your favourite and most challenging thing about the Church?

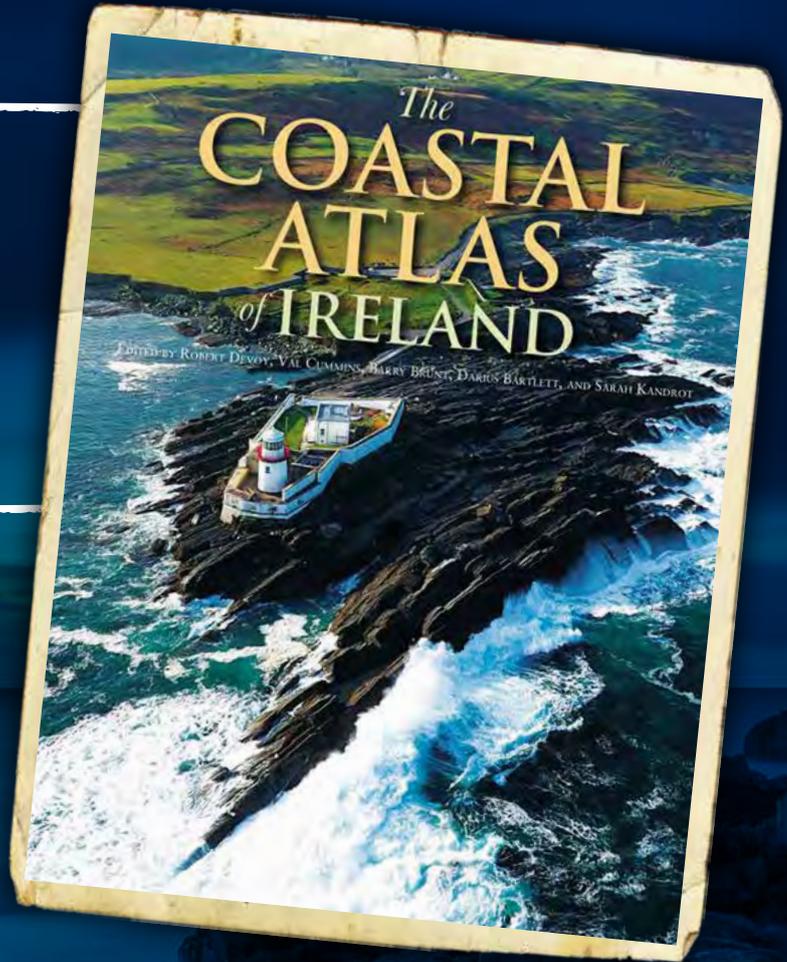
My favourite thing is visiting parishioners in their own homes. It's what I try to spend most of my time doing and the thing I enjoy most about what I do. As for the most challenging thing, well for any pastor, there is nothing more encouraging than a faithful congregation who worship regularly and there is nothing more challenging and disheartening than those who have become lax about such things.

Book Review:

The Coastal Atlas of Ireland

Robert Devoy (editor), Val Cummins (editor),
Barry Brunt (editor), Darius Bartlett (editor),
Sarah Kandrot (editor)

Publisher: Cork University Press
ISBN: 9781782054511



THE COASTAL ATLAS OF IRELAND - not a review!

As my husband, Robert Devoy, is an editor of this amazing book - this is clearly NOT a review! It's just my personal view of our part of the story behind the book. I heard the ideas begin and have watched them develop and grow. Sometimes it seemed impossible that the end would ever come, and a book be published!

If you've seen this Atlas, you'll know it's enormous - nearly 900 pages. The post lady delivered my Mum's birthday copy to her... carefully placing it inside the door on a chair, so Mum didn't have to reach down and pick it up from the floor! It is very heavy: a book to read comfortably at a table or desk. One of our grandsons has announced that he's started reading it - from the beginning! But most people will, I'm sure, dip in and out - exploring the sections that attract them at first, discovering more and more as they go. It's also very beautiful - with so many gorgeous photos and illustrations.

It has taken seven whole years of devoted and dogged work from Robert and the other four editors who joined with him in the project. It was a delight to hear the other day, following the Cork launch, that this core team can honestly say they hadn't had a cross word between them for the whole project! They were united in their vision - and supported each other as they worked. Rob grew up on the Isle of Wight... surrounded by coastline. He studied

Geography at Durham and then, for his PhD in Cambridge (when I met him back in 1975) he was already working on sea-levels, particularly in the Thames Estuary.

We moved to Ireland in 1977 and his interest in coasts and sea-levels and his deep concern about climate change have been at the core of much of his work. He retired from University College, Cork ten years ago - so this Coastal Atlas of Ireland has been a real labour of love. Editors of such a volume don't expect to be on the receiving end of many royalties! I'd say it has taken up at least as much time as a fairly sizeable part-time job! I'm writing this very close to the editor's deadline - and, as it happens, it's the day the United Nations Climate Change conference (COP26) has opened in Glasgow. Robert was part of the huge team of people who put together the definitive and Nobel Prize winning fourth Intergovernmental Panel on

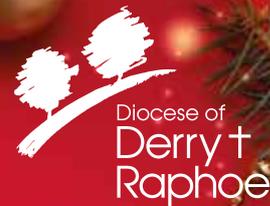
Climate Change in 2007 so I've heard him speaking on the subject for many years. The editors of this Atlas clearly care very much for the future of the planet on which we live. With all the wonderful range of contributions from around 100 people we can look back to see the development, history and people of the Irish coast - and we can look forward, to see the importance of the way we manage things for the generations to come.

Patsy Devoy

Editor's note: The Coastal Atlas of Ireland is short-listed for 'Best Irish Published Book of the Year 2021' (An Post Irish Book Awards).

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. @cccmstp into your search engine on smart phone or laptop/tablet etc and click on the parish page.



Templemore, Derry Cathedral

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



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



Evensong in the Cathedral

I am very pleased to announce that, after an absence of almost 20 months, The Service of Evensong was re-introduced in Saint Columb's Cathedral on Sunday 7th November 2021. The Service of Evensong will be read or sung each Sunday at 4.00pm.

Advent Procession

We are very much looking forward to the Advent Procession on Advent Sunday, 28th November at 7.30pm. This well established and much-loved service of readings and music for Advent on the theme 'Darkness into Light' is extremely moving and inspirational. Covid-19 protocols will be observed.

A Celebration of Carols and Music

Will be held in Saint Columb's Cathedral on Thursday 9th December at 7.30pm. Tickets £10.00 are available from Cathedral Youth Club. All proceeds to the Cathedral.

Festival Fayre

This fundraising event will be held in Saint Columb's Cathedral on Saturday 11th December.

Stalls will include cake stall, craft stall, book stall, parcel stall, plant stall. Teas will be served.

St Columb's School of Music Christmas Concert

Will be held in Saint Columb's Cathedral on Friday 17th December at 7.30pm.

The Festival Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

This Service, which is the traditional celebration of the Nativity of our Lord in words and music, will be held on Sunday 19th December at 7.30pm. Covid-19 protocols will be observed.

Christmas Day, Saturday 25th December

Festival Choral Eucharist at 11.00am. The Celebrant and Preacher will be The Right Reverend Andrew Forster, Bishop of Derry and Raphoe.

Glendermott & New Buildings

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



Curate Assistant:
Rev Iain McAleavey



The time has just changed, and the evenings are darker earlier than many would like. Like the world around there is much talk of darkness at the present

time. But there are brighter days ahead! As we approach the Advent Season, we recall once again the hope the people of Israel had for many years of the coming Messiah. A

coming that had been prophesied by the prophets. The prophet Isaiah said that this Messiah would "not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on the earth. In his

Continued on page 35...

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



Hello to you all and welcome to my Christmas edition of CJ News.



CJ News

NUMBER 29

Over the past few months we have moved through the seasons and we have had much to celebrate. We have witnessed the summer move into autumn and the colours of nature around us change. I am sure, like me, you give thanks to God for the harvest and the generosity of God we see all around us. I just love seeing the harvest displays in church.



With the season of Harvest behind us now, we have well and truly moved into the cold and crisp winter months and with that we find ourselves in the season of Advent and Christmas.



ADVENT: THE ARRIVAL OF A NOTABLE PERSON OR THING



WHY DO WE HAVE ADVENT CALENDARS?

Many Advent customs involve counting down the days until Christmas begins. Some churches have an advent wreath with five candles, one for each of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas Day and one for Christmas Day. Many people have advent calendars so they can do this. Advent calendars can have pretty much anything hidden behind the doors!



WHAT IS ADVENT?

Advent is an important part of the Christian calendar. It means 'coming' and it's the period before Christmas. It is all about preparing for Christmas Day when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Advent starts on the Sunday nearest to 30 November.



CAN YOU CREATE YOUR OWN ADVENT CALENDAR?

Your challenge is to create a 'Kindness' Advent calendar so that you can share love with your family and friends. It has been said that carrying out acts of kindness not only brings a smile to others, but also has health benefits for you! Amazing! Some ideas have been included to start you off.

WHY DO WE CELEBRATE ADVENT?

Christianity focuses on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who we know is the Son of God. Christmas celebrates Jesus' birth, so the Advent period reminds us to prepare for these celebrations.

Plan some ideas here...



ACTS OF KINDNESS ADVENT CALENDAR

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
		1 Donate a toy to charity	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10 Make a present for a friend	11	12
13 Donate food to a food bank	14	15	16	17	18	19 Pay someone a compliment
20	21	22 Tidy your room without being told	23	24	25	



Good luck with your Advent Calendar. It is very exciting; I can't wait to start mine. It is a bit like being a secret Santa. This will be great!



However, it is very important for us to remember what our countdown in Advent is leading us to, the birth of Jesus, the real reason for our Christian celebrations at Christmas time and God's act of kindness to everyone. God sent his Son to this world for all of us.

In the lead up to events that took place on that very first Christmas so many people were blessed. Mary was God's choice to be the mother of his Son Jesus. The angel appeared to give her this great news. What an honour it was for her.



Joseph supported Mary. They took God's gift to them and trusted in what he wanted them both to do - to bring his Son into the world and take good care of him. Even though it was a tough journey they travelled together to Bethlehem when the birth of Jesus was close.

The Shepherds, out in the fields watching their sheep, were blessed to hear the good news of Jesus' birth when the angels appeared to them. They travelled to the place where Jesus was born. What a wonderful opportunity this was for them.



On that first Christmas day Baby Jesus arrived. What a gift! What an act of kindness!



The three Wise Men arrived to worship the Baby Jesus bringing with them gifts to present to him.



Isn't this the greatest gift ever given, and the greatest story ever told? I hope you enjoy the countdown of the Advent season and all that Christmas brings.

Let's colour!

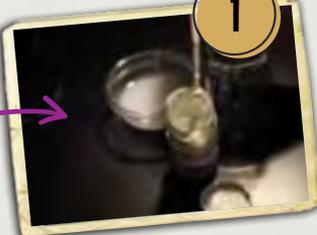


GLOW IN THE DARK JAR...

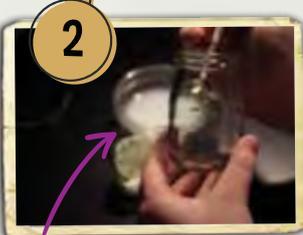


- Materials:
- Glass Jar
 - Glowing/Luminous paint
 - Paintbrush
 - Water

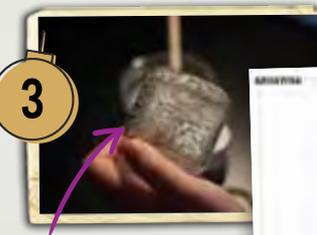
Wash your jars. Mix the paint using the brush to make sure glowing particles are evenly distributed.



1



Make tiny dots inside the jar.



The more dots the better!



Expose your jar to light or sunlight and see it glow in the dark.

4

<https://craft.ideas2live4.com>

CHRISTMAS PUDDING RICE KRISPIE CAKES



INGREDIENTS

- 50g Rice Krispies; 30g chopped raisin; 50g butter;
- 100g milk chocolate; 2 tsp crunchy peanut butter;
- 30g mini marshmallows; 80g white chocolate;
- Ready-made icing holly leaves

METHOD

- 1) Put the Rice Krispies and raisins into a bowl. Put the butter, milk chocolate, peanut butter and marshmallows into a small saucepan. Place on a medium to low heat and stir until the chocolate and butter have melted but the marshmallows are just beginning to melt.
- 2) Pour onto the Rice Krispies and stir until well coated. Line an egg cup with cling film. Press about a tablespoon of the mixture into the egg cup. Press firmly and then remove, peel off the cling film and place the pudding into a cake case, flat-side down. Repeat with the rest of the mixture. Chill until firm.
- 3) Melt the white chocolate in the microwave or in a bowl over a saucepan of barely simmering water. Spoon a little chocolate over the top of each pudding. Top with icing holly leaves.

www.bbcgoodfood.com

THE FINAL PRODUCT



You could use some Christmas colours, it would look great!

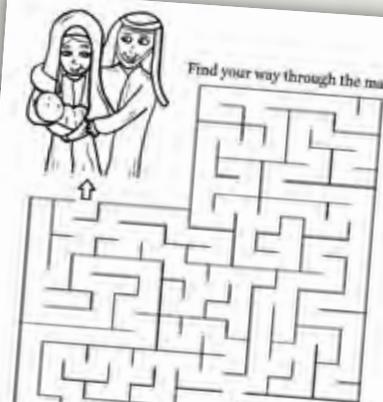


Hidden Pictures



Find 3 stars, 2 bells, 1 angel, 3 crosses, 1 staff, and 2 candles hidden in the manger.

Find your way through the maze.



Merry Christmas

© David Howe Collection

CJ - OUT AND ABOUT...

URNEY PARISH...

It was great to hear from my friends in Urney Parish. They have been working so hard. Take a look...

HEY CJ, We hope you are safe and well. In Urney Parish we have carried on with our Sunday Club at home for the months of September, October and November. We continue to send out packs with activities for the children and then each week we upload videos, music and pictures in correspondence with the folders. For our Harvest display this year we asked the children to take part by crafting a wreath. The parishioners were delighted with the beautiful work they saw as they entered the church. We also had the pleasure of Katherine, one of our Sunday Club members, singing a beautiful solo at our Harvest Service. Each week we encourage and support the children, and their parents, as we help spread the word of God to the homes around the parish.

Isn't this just great!



FAHAN & BUNCRANA...

Isn't this just a marvellous display of work - so colourful and eye-catching? You will find this display at St Mura's National School in Bunclara. The young people are joining in 'Praises Time' each week. Then they create pieces of art and craft related to each service. WOW!



I am so pleased and proud to be able to share all this wonderful work with you in my editions of 'CJ News'.



MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Contact me on email
cj@derryandrapphoe.org



*teaching the islands will put their hope.”
(Isaiah 42:4)*

Many years later one of the priests was given a vision of the coming of his son who would point the way for the coming of the Messiah. Elizabeth and Mary found themselves in the midst of the saving story of God himself because they believed there would be a fulfilment of everything that God had spoken to them. They took God seriously and so they took his word of promise seriously too.

Old Zechariah presents something of a contrast. He was struck dumb for many months. Why? Because he did not believe that God's word spoken to him would be

fulfilled in their time. So he had to learn the hard way to trust God. He had lost sight of the bigness of God, and the nearness of God, and so he had lost sight of the sheer size and scope of God's designs on this universe of ours. Zechariah did not really expect God to do anything extraordinary in his own life and lifetime.

As we approach the season of Christmas and the celebrations to mark the birth of that Messiah, I wonder how many of us realise the extraordinary events of that birth. A birth that brings hope into our lives and world. Perhaps we are a bit like Zechariah and need to have our voice restored to proclaim, *“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people.”*

May we all find our voice and proclaim the hope that came into the world on the first Christmas and may we share that hope with the world around us.

Here within the parish, we are looking forward to the Advent Season and hopefully we will be able to sing out the joy of the season behind those masks! Full details of the various services are detailed in the latest edition of the Parish magazine and hopefully will appear on our social media pages.

May you all have a blessed and peaceful Christmas and may you know the hope of God fulfilled in Christ.

Clooney

Rector: Rev David McBeth

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Facebook: All Saints Clooney



**Curate-Assistant:
Rev Andrea Cotter**



The Advent season is a four-week period before Christmas that celebrates the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. The origin of "advent" is from the Latin word *adventus* which simply translates as "coming" or "arrival". Not only is the Christian meaning for preparation and celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ and his birth at Christmas, but also to celebrate the new life when someone accepts Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and lastly, the anticipation of Jesus returning again in the last days to consummate his eternal kingdom. (Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2). The Church today is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: in exile, waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming of the Messiah. Israel looked back to God's past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus, and on this basis, they called for God once again to act for them. In the same way, the Church, during Advent, celebrates Christ's coming as a baby born in Bethlehem while at the same time looking forward in eager anticipation

to the coming of Christ's kingdom when he returns for his people. In this light, the Advent hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" perfectly represents the Church's cry during the Advent season: Advent like Lent gives us a great opportunity to reflect on our own spiritual lives and our relationship with God and the Church.

During Advent All Saints will be hosting a variety of services

Advent Candlelight Service takes place on Sunday 28th November at 6.30pm.

Mid-week Advent services on Wednesday nights at 7.30pm.

Gift Sundays on Sundays 5th and 12th December. Parishioners are encouraged to bring a small gift marked 'man' or 'women'. These gifts will be distributed to the elderly, housebound and local nursing homes leading up to Christmas.

Christmas Praise Service will take place on Sunday 5th December at 6.30pm. The guest

speaker this month will be Jacqui Armstrong from the Mothers' Union. Jacqui will speak on **#NOMORE1IN3** - and the nature of domestic violence.

A service of remembrance for family members, parishioners and those in the community who died over the past 2 years will be held on Sunday 12th December at 6.30pm. During the service we also remember those who died due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The guest speaker on the night will be Bishop Andrew.

Sunday 19th December at 6.30pm our traditional Carol Service. The Britannia Band, along with the choir, will lead our worship. 'On the Sofa' proved so popular during lockdown that the Rev David has decided to return 'to the Sofa' in the All Saints' Charity shop and Café from 2pm-3pm during Wednesdays in Advent. Why not join him and his guests for tea, coffee and traybakes and ask them to play your favourite songs and requests.

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Dates for 'On the Sofa' Wed 1st, 8th, 15th, and 22nd December which will be a Christmas Carol Singalong.

From Monday 18th October until Sunday 24th October All Saints hosted a Mission Week. The guest speakers included

Archdeacon Robert Miller, Archdeacon David Huss, Rev Mark Lennox, Pastor Oliver Roebuck and Rev John White. Their sermons were all excellent and very challenging. Each evening the praise was led by our own praise band "Beloved" with guest singers including Stephanie Hall, Toni Margaret, Amy Gardiner,

Martin Moore, John Porter and Wired Worship, who were all excellent. It was an excellent week and the team who organised the Mission Week were greatly encouraged by the numbers who attended and by those who listened online.

Faughanvale

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I felt an immense sense of privilege to stand before HRH Prince Charles in the State Rooms of Windsor Castle to receive the MBE I had been awarded. Two thoughts were in my mind: first, I thought of all the people on whose behalf I felt that I was receiving the award - all the volunteers and individuals who had, in any way, been involved in the effort to support those in our local community who had been shielding during the pandemic; and, second, I reflected on

how much greater will be the joy and delight any of us will have when, by the grace of God, we stand in the courts of the King of Kings. That is the hope that Advent puts before us when our faith is anchored in Christ.

Please see our parish magazine and news sheet for a list of the kind of items most needed.

19 December 11am - Service of Lessons and Carols.

25 December 11am - Christmas Day Celebration for all ages (30 minutes) followed by Holy Communion for those who wish to stay.

Thrift Shop

Don't forget to visit St Canice's Thrift Shop at 6 Benbow Estate for your Christmas decorations and gifts. The shop is open Tuesday to Saturday 10-4pm and all profits go to benefit the community with 10% being given to charities that support people living in this area.

AFIA

A warm word of appreciation to our diocesan Mothers' Union for the generous AFIA gifts they have so generously provided for those who were particularly affected by the pandemic. These gifts were much appreciated by those who received them and brought a sense of hope at a time when many were feeling something close to despair.

Outing

The photos are of our parish outing at the start of October to Holywood and Cultra, with an excellent meal together on the way home. We stuck to safety procedures throughout and still managed to have a very enjoyable, fun day out together. We have also started our Tuesday night cinema trips and are planning to get a walking group together. Sticking together is so important in these times. Look out for details in the weekly News Sheet.

And finally...

What did the fireman's wife find in her stocking on Christmas morning? A ladder. Why did the grandmother knit her grandson three socks for Christmas? Because she heard that since she saw him last Christmas, he'd grown another foot.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS to all readers. May the peace of the coming King fill your heart and your home this season.



Christmas Services

12 December 11am - Nativity and Gift Service. We are planning to give any gifts that are given at this service to families who otherwise might struggle to provide their children and young people with presents.



Cumber Upper, Cumber Lower, Banagher and Learmount

Rector: Rev David Slater

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



Dungiven & Bovevagh

Rector: Rev Mark Loney

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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

Buy Now - Pay Later!

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" Romans 6:23

Christmas is coming again. The shops are full of inducements to buy what we want, when we want it, without consideration of the financial consequences of unwise purchasing decisions. We thought Covid-19 would quell our buying patterns. Alas no. The encouragement to 'Buy NOW - Pay Later' rings as live as it ever did from advertisements for all the products which are deemed essential in our consumer driven society. It's a tactic that commercial interests use - because it works!

But it's a tactic that Satan has deployed since the beginning - for the same reason. It works! We humans are still paying for

the Fall! The words 'forbidden fruit' point to the things that carry a hidden price tag. Even though his sin was later forgiven, David spent the rest of his life paying for the consequences of his relationship with Bathsheba. Following through the stories of the Kings of Israel and Judah you read time after time of the personal and national consequences there were of buying into Satan's temptations.

Temptations are always dressed up to be attractive - otherwise we wouldn't stretch out to take hold of such 'forbidden fruit'. Yet there is always a price tag. Sometimes it is very high. Often we have to spend a lot of time on Healing Retreats, helping people to unpack the consequences and impact of wrong choices they have made. We could easily see 'Buy now pay later', in every variant of sin. Have a think.

With Christmas comes GOOD NEWS. Whilst the hidden price of sin is death, God's great gift to sinners is eternal life. Repentance and forgiveness are the doorways to living in the blessing of that eternal life that Jesus came to win for us on the cross.

May we personally, as a province, and as a nation use these weeks of preparation for Christmas to do some heart-searching and turning away from the things for which Satan will exact his price by our *Buying Now - Paying Later!*



Balteagh, Carrick, Tamlaghtard and Aghanloo

Rector: Rev Rhys Jones

Facebook: Aghanloo, Balteagh, Caarrick and Tamlaghtard @TamlaghtardCofI



In his Gospel Saint Luke teaches that the infant Christ child was lovingly wrapped in swaddling clothes to replicate the sanctuary of his mother's womb. (Luke 2:12) It's wonderfully powerful and intimate imagery that has at its very centre a deep sense of compassion and care. Over recent months as our parishes have come together in Harvest thanksgiving, in services of Confirmation with our young people and in services of Remembrance, I have realised afresh how you and I, like the infant Jesus, are swaddled daily in God's provision and love for each of us. Now that Advent and Christmas begin to unfold, the challenge for you and I as disciples might just be to realise that we are to be the swaddling that enwraps a directionless world buffeted by illness, bereavement, and rejection. As we once again prepare to welcome the child in the manger into our churches, homes, and lives - let us rise to the challenge... and in doing so may we be comforted and encouraged by the truth that we too, like the child before us, are swaddled in a love that the darkness cannot ever overcome. My prayer in this season of preparation is that you will reach out and accept the gift of Christ that the Father extends toward you and that you allow yourself now and evermore, to be enwrapped in the Father's love for all. Samantha, Gethin, and I wish you a very merry Christmas indeed and a happy and peace filled New Year. The Lord be with you. *Rev Rhys.*

Harvest

Services of Harvest Thanksgiving were held on Friday the 8th October and on Sunday 24th across each of our parishes. Numbers



attending were excellent and the preparation of the churches and their subsequent decoration beyond all expectation. Guest speakers Eleanor Craig and the recently retired Rev Terry Kerr brought a word of encouragement and challenge and our heartfelt thanks are extended once again to both.



Shoebox

Our chosen Christmas charity for 2021 has been the Samaritans Operation Christmas Child Project. The response from within the parishes has been truly humbling and I have been greatly encouraged by your generosity of spirit. Thank you one and all. "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:40)

Confirmation

Services of confirmation for 16 candidates were held in St Cadan's and Carrick Parish



Churches on October 24th with Bishop Andrew. They were wonderful and affirmative occasions and it was a privilege to have the bishop join us in worship and lead our young people in the next step of their faith journey.



Advent and Christmas Services

Mid-Week services will be held in St Canices's Balteagh on the following Wednesday evenings: 1st December 7.30pm; 8th December 7.30pm; 15th December 7.30pm. Please plan to attend. On the final Wednesday of Advent (22nd December) a special service of Holy Communion for members and friends of our combined parishes will be held by kind permission of the Dean in St Columb's Cathedral Londonderry at 7.30pm. This, on the cusp of Christmas, promises to be a special event in the life and witness of our parishes. Do please plan to attend. Everyone welcome.

9 Lessons and Carols

The traditional service of nine lessons and carols will be held on December 12th @4pm in Drummond Cricket Club. We look forward to welcoming our special guests Hamilton Flute Band from Londonderry who will lead us in our worship

Christmas Eve

Services of Holy Communion will take place in Carrick Parish Church at 6pm and in St Canice's Balteagh at 10.30pm. Everyone Welcome.

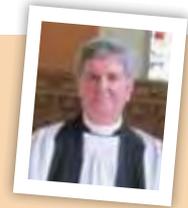
Christmas Day

On Christmas morning itself a short service of reflection will be held in Aghanloo Parish Church at 10.30am. The children of the parishes are encouraged to attend and to

bring with them their gifts from Santa!

Boxing Day

A Service of the Word will be held across all four parishes at their normal times.



Tamlaghtfinlagan & Myroe

Rev Canon Harold Given: Rector and Rural Dean

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Facebook: TAMLAGHTFINLAGAN PARISH CHURCH

Congratulations

Congratulations to the Rev. Canon Aonghus Mayes on his appointment to Christ Church, Limavady. His institution will be on Friday 21st January 22. We look forward to welcoming him to this Rural Deanery and to this beautiful part of the world.

Santa will be working overtime this year as he is hoping to visit a goodly number of our parishioners here in Ballykelly. I have it on good information that his transport has been arranged (we don't want the reindeers to be worn out before the big night so alternative transport will be provided). More information will be provided early in December.

Dogs

I am not a believer in coincidences so having met with a variety of "working dogs" this past week and with Christmas around the corner I recalled that old advert which reminded people that.. "A dog is not just for Christmas". This fact was reinforced every day since by the presence of our own dog which was a rescue dog and of a story. A seemingly insignificant incident occurred in Germany in 1916 which had far-reaching consequences.

Dr. Klaus (Christmas theme again!) Rimmer was looking out of a window, admiring his beautiful garden while speaking on the telephone. As he continued his conversation while gazing out the window he noticed one of his patients, a blind soldier, was hesitantly

making his way across the lawn. The soldier, Captain Fleitel, was going straight towards a tree. Before the doctor could shout out a warning to him, his Alsatian, Frieda, appeared and silently and gently stopped the Captain in his tracks by standing broadside in his path. Dr. Rimmer watched as the dog led the soldier round the tree and in between the flower beds. From this seemingly trivial little event the idea of Guide Dogs for the Blind was born. So I repeat remember "A dog is not just for Christmas."

And this Christmas may we remember the great gift God gave us in His Son.

A happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year to you all.



Drumachose, Limavady

Rector Elect - The Reverend Canon Aonghus Mayes

After an eight-month vacancy, the Parish of Drumachose has a new rector. The Reverend Canon Aonghus Mayes, currently Rector of Moy and Charlemont in the Diocese of Armagh, has been appointed to succeed Canon Sam McVeigh, who retired at the end of January. The appointment means a return to the Diocese of Derry

and Raphoe for the new incumbent. His father, the late Canon John Mayes, was Rector of All Saints, Clooney from 1985-2007 and Aonghus's mother, Alison, still lives in Londonderry.

Canon Mayes says he is "looking forward" to the next phase in his ministry. "I've loved

Moy, but I'm very much looking forward to moving to Limavady, and getting settled in, and getting to know everybody and making it my home."

The former Foyle College pupil, who serves on the Chapter of Saint Patrick's Cathedral,

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Dublin, can expect a warm welcome from his new parishioners. "Canon McVeigh was there [in Limavady] for 32 years," he says. "His predecessor was there for something similar. It says something for a place when clergy stay there that long.

Canon Mayes spent eleven years in Moy. "My parishioners may be delighted [that he is moving] and thinking, 'At last!' 'I've loved it here, though. I couldn't have asked for a more supportive congregation, but the time comes to move."

The new incumbent's Service of Institution is expected to take place on Friday 21st January 2022.

Castlerock, Dunboe and Fermoy

Rector: Rev Chris MacBruithin

Facebook: Parish of Castlerock & Dunboe @CastlerockDunboe



We in Castlerock and Dunboe have always felt blessed to live here, but it's been a spell of particular blessing.

In the Bible, 'blessing', or 'eucharisto' encompasses thanksgiving, dedication, and speaking well of something. Education has been severely interrupted these past two years. So we started the school year with a 'Blessing of the School bags' service, thanking God for the gift of learning and asking him to prosper all the good things that are happening in our schools and colleges, and praying for the safety and wellbeing of all the staff and pupils.

Our 'pet blessing' service in October was an opportunity to thank God for our dogs

(no other four-legged species came), who play a big part in life here on the coast and have provided vital companionship during lockdown. It looks like it may become an annual event.

The Bible word 'eucharisto' also gives us the word Eucharist. On Sunday 10th October, fifteen people were confirmed by Bishop Andrew and received Holy Communion for the first time. It was a day of great joy and celebration, especially because it has been so long in coming!

God has blessed us once again in his loving provision, and we held Services of Harvest Thanksgiving in October. As well as food donations for Causeway Food Bank, we ran a special harvest appeal for our CMSI mission

partners in Shyogwe Diocese, Rwanda. The total raised was £5200!

Looking forward to Advent and Christmas, some highlights will be our Online Advent Calendar where each day there is a one-minute reflection on the different names of Jesus, and Christ Church, Castlerock's well-known 'Carols and Readings by Candlelight' at 4pm on Sunday 19th December.

Have a happy, holy and BLESSED Christmas!

Killowen (Coleraine)

Rector: Rev Donard Collins

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www.killowenparishcoleraine.co.uk

Facebook: Killowen Parish Church @killowenparishchurch



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

Aghadowey

Rector: Rev Louise Crawford-McCafferty
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Facebook: St Guaire's Church Aghadowey

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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. Speculate for a few moments on what hopes and dreams the parents of famous people might have had for their child - a child they would have had no way of knowing would make such a difference in the lives of so many people. The parents of Albert Einstein, for example, or the

parents of... J. S. Bach, Martin Luther, Rosa Parks, Stephen Hawkins, add your own names to this list. As these parents held their baby in their arms, they could not have dreamt of the impact that child would make in the world. Joseph and Mary held Jesus, but really in no way could have known the impact He would have on the world. But God released His Grace that night - grace is the mark of Christmas - grace embodied in the child of the cradle; a child who is marked; a child whose coming was for a purpose. Every Christmas we have glimpse into the future, as we remember Jesus. Christmas tells us what Jesus would do and why Jesus came - it was for our salvation.

We will celebrate Christmas with some of the old traditions that have been passed on to us

- trees, lights, parcels, and hopefully Santa. But this year let us all remember people for whom Christmas will not be the same - they have suffered loss - some have lost loved ones, some have lost jobs because of Covid-19/Brexit/Protocol. Some too have lost their sense of worth. But Jesus has made us all worthy by His love. Let us thank God for His love and let us share this very same love with all we meet this Christmastime.

Services for St. Guaire's in December
19th Carol Service 7pm
22nd Family Carol Service 7pm
Christmas Day 10am
Boxing Day 11am

Camus-Juxta-Bann (Macosquin)

Rector: Rev Paul Lyons
www.camus-juxta-bann.org
Facebook: St Mary's Church @camusjuxtabannconnections



"You are the light of the world. Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Matthew 5v14, 16

St Mary's Parish Church (1622-2022) Celebrating 400 years

Next year we will have the pleasure of celebrating 400 years of Christian worship and witness in St Mary's Parish Church, Macosquin. We've planned four events to mark this very special anniversary.

We'll be **Looking Back** on Friday 25th February 2022 7.30pm in 'A Night of Remembering.' In word and song we'll be recalling the often eventful history of our church and community. Tickets for this event will be available in the New Year.

We'll be **Looking In** on Palm Sunday and Holy Week (10th - 15th April 2022). The aim of this Holy Week programme will be to build up the faith and friendships in our church family.

Sunday 10th April 6pm Family Worship Evening in church with Bishop Andrew preaching.

Tuesday 12th April 7.30pm Family 'Can't Cook, Won't Cook.' Bishop Andrew and the rector will be participating in this evening!

Maunder Thursday 14th April 6.30pm Church Family Agape Meal in the Upper Hall

Good Friday 15th April 7.30pm a reflective service in church.

We'll be **Looking Out** on Saturday 21st May 12noon-4pm as we host the Macosquin 400 Jubilee Fete, an event for the community in

the rectory gardens. The fete will celebrate both the church's 400th anniversary and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Mrs Alison Millar, Lord-Lieutenant of County Londonderry will officially open the fete. There will be a kids, 'Best dressed member of the Royal Family' fancy dress competition as well as the usual stalls, food, music and lots of fun activities for all the family.

We'll be **Looking Forward** on Sunday 11th September 2022 10.30am with a Thanksgiving Service in St Mary's church. We'll again welcome Bishop Andrew who will preach.

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Christmas at St Mary's

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Matt 1v21

Saturday 4th December 6pm

Turning on the Christmas Tree Lights in the church grounds, community carol singing, finishing with hotdogs in the minor hall.

Sunday 12th December 4pm

Kids and parents are invited to 'Food and Fun'. This will be followed by a Christingle Service @ 6pm in church.

Sunday 19th December 10.30am

Young People retell the Christmas Story 6pm Nine Lessons and Carols in church.

Friday 24th December 11.15pm

Christmas Eve Communion Service.

Saturday 25th December 10.30am

Christmas Day Family Celebration.

Kilrea, Tamlaght O'Crilly Upper & Lower

Rector: Rev Gary Millar

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



As we approach Christmas I do hope and pray that it is a time of joy and rest for all of you. Despite everything that has happened over the past couple of years may you still find beauty in the midst of the continuing storm of Covid-19. It was never a storm that anyone planned or anticipated, yet it has challenged us in so many ways. It would be easy to move on and try to forget 'the Covid-19' years, put it all in the past and forget everything. It is much harder to take some time in the

busyness of life to reflect on the past year, the good it has brought, the loss we have experienced and the challenges we have met. 2021 has been difficult for us as a family as well. There have been times when we have been frustrated, times when we have felt overwhelmed, health fears and loved ones lost. Yet despite all of that we can still see beauty in the world around us, experience the love of friends and family and the excitement of new experiences. In all of it we still have sense of peace that no matter

what might happen God is in control. As we head into 2022 I am inviting you to place your hands in God's and to walk with a confidence and peace knowing he is Immanuel, God with you.

Keep an eye out on facebook and the Parish magazine for Advent and Christmas Services/Events along with all the other events and how we can respond to COP26 in becoming a more Eco-Church.

Errigal & Desertoghill (Garvagh)

Rector: Rev Carmen Hayes

Tel: 028 2955 8226

Facebook: St. Pauls Church of Ireland, Garvagh



Recently I read this challenging little quote: "God couldn't have made himself bigger to impress us, so he made himself smaller to attract us." Which reminded me of the following great wee story!

A Stranger at the Door

It was a snowy Christmas Eve. Inside the

warm house, the Christmas tree was cheerfully ablaze with lights and surrounded by dozens of presents. The man's wife and kids were dressed and ready to leave for church. "Come with us," they urged, because they cared for him.

"Not me," he snapped. "I don't believe all that religious rubbish." For many years the man's

wife had been trying to tell him about Jesus Christ and the salvation he offers. How God's Son had become a human being in order to show us the way to heaven. "Nonsense," the man has always said.

The family left for church leaving the man home alone in his cosy country cottage. He

glanced out the window at the cold snowy scene outside, before turning to warm himself by the fire. But as he turned, his eyes caught a movement in the snow outside. He looked again, "Cats!" In fact, three young kittens walking past his window.

"The fools," he thought, "they'll freeze for sure!" So, the man put on his hat and coat and went to the door where the wintery air sent a shiver through his body. "Come here, kittens! Come inside where there's warmth and food. You'll die out there."

But the kittens ran away, frightened by the stranger at the door. He walked outside.



"Come back! Don't be afraid, I want to save you." But the kittens were gone. It was too late.

"What more could I do? I'd have to become a kitten myself in order to reach them and save them. If I became a kitten, I could tell them and show them. They would have to believe me then, unless they were fools."

Just as he reached the door, the church bells rang in the distance. The man paused for a second and listened. Then he went in by the fire, got down on his knees, and wept.

You see folks, that's what the Christmas story is all about. The Creator of the universe loved us so much that he came to earth, to show us how to be saved.

Please don't miss the message that: At Christmas-time, when we receive presents we don't really need, God offers us a 'Gift' we cannot do without!

Maghera & Killelagh

Vacant

www.magheraparish.co.uk

St. Tida's, Parish of Ballyscullion, Bellaghy

NSM in Charge: Rev Brian Hassan



The dark nights and colder weather are upon us again. Thankfully, we are not in lockdown and some sort of normal 'Festive Season' is possible. This time last year there was so much fear and anger in the air as Covid-19-19 destroyed the hopes of many. The Christmas dinner table in many homes were very different but hope is in the air again.

The season of Advent is one of waiting in anticipation and hope, but even in lockdown that hope was still there. Many just didn't see it or feel it. Jesus is the Hope we all need and while He lives in

our hearts it is also wonderful to meet Him in church when we worship Him. Advent is a great time to reflect on the past year and take stock of our Christian journey. The readings of the season are wonderful and so encouraging. The liturgical colours and Advent Wreath, mixed in with the Christmas tree makes our churches really special places to visit. Why not wait this Season with real Hope and pop into church, enjoy the carols, look at the Advent Wreath, feel comfortable beside the tree, share in the Communion and meet Jesus, the real Reason for the Season. A Blessed Advent and Christmas to all.

A big thank you to all who contributed to the Magherafelt Hope Food Bank at our Harvest Thanksgiving Service.

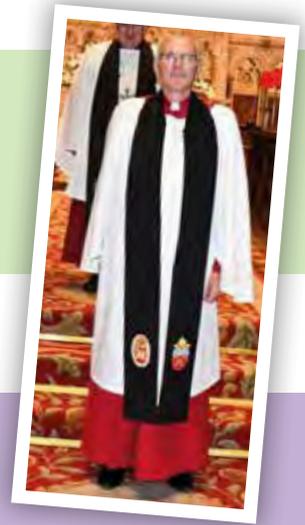
Dates for the Diary

28 Nov Advent Sunday, lighting of the Wreath
29 Nov Confirmation Get Together
1, 8, 15 Dec Time Out In Advent Bible Study
19 Dec Parish Carol Service
24 Dec 2pm prayers and quiet time
25 Dec HC2 at 10am
26 Dec Christmas Celebration at 1130am

Brian Hassan

Christ Church Castledawson

Rev Canon Colin Welsh: Rector and Rural Dean
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Email: colin.welsh@talktalk.net
Facebook: Christ Church Castledawson



Desertmartin and Termoneeny

Vacant
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Kilcronaghan, Ballynascreen Tobermore & Six Towns

Rector: Rev Rosie Diffin
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Web: <http://kilcronaghan.vpweb.co.uk>
Facebook: Kilcronaghan Parish Church @kilcronaghanparishchurch



"Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." Luke 2:11

As the evening sun sets over Mullaghmore Mountain, its rays reflect through the trees around the Old Rectory, transforming their golden-brown leaves into the most amazing autumnal scene. Soon the autumn leaves will fall (mostly in to the Rectory garden) and those same trees will look bare and lifeless. Yet, with the changing seasons comes new beginnings, even as the sap drops, roots are replenished, so that new life has begun. Come Spring, the sap will rise, buds will appear, and the sovereign power of God over all things will be displayed in glorious splendour.

As we enter into the season of Advent, we celebrate God's sovereign power over all things, as revealed to us through the glorious Incarnation of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The birth of the Messiah is a message of hope that reaches beyond Advent and Christmas, for it is a message that offers new life and eternal hope.

Which is why countless hymn writers, both old and new, have focused on this miraculous moment in history, when God came to earth to redeem His people. One such song called 'Mighty to Save' written by Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan, opens with these words:
*Everyone needs compassion
A love that's never failing
Let mercy fall on me
Everyone needs forgiveness
The kindness of a Saviour
The hope of nations
Let mercy fall on me.*

*"Everyone needs forgiveness, the kindness of a Saviour," is the constant theme of Scripture. Yet, for many the need to accept one of the fundamental tenants of faith, that of 'Salvation in Christ Alone' is something to be ignored or pulled against. This failure to recognise the need of redemption however, is nothing new, the prophet Hosea records these words from God in chapter 11:
"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. But the more they were called; the more they went away from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned*

incense to images. It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them".

In complete humility, God the creator became the created one, born into the poverty of a stable in order to redeem the poverty of our souls.

May I invite you, this Advent and Christmas, to consider those tender words from Hosea 11 as you listen to the lyrics of 'Mighty to Save.' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEAcS2B-kNc>)

"I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them."

Yours in Christ
Rev Rosie

Ardstraw, Baronscourt, Badoney Upper & Lower and Greenan

Rector: Rev Ivan Dinsmore

Tel: 028 8166 1342 Facebook: Ardstraw Parish



Congratulations

Congratulations to Alister and Gillian McKelvey on the birth of their son Robbie, a brother for Reuben, and to James and Emma Warnock on the birth of their first child.

Marriage

Charlotte Hassard and Lee Ross were married in Ardstraw Parish Church on October 23rd. We wish the new Mr. and Mrs. Ross every blessing as the begin married life together.

Dedication

Baronscourt Parish Church was the venue on Sunday October 17th for a service of Dedication of a memorial in memory of Her Grace, the Duchess of Abercorn. We welcomed Bishop Andrew back to the parish again, for the occasion as Preacher at the service. Joining us also was the Omagh Community Youth Choir, with their Organist, Celtic Tenor, Daryl Simpson. Rev Jane Nelson (First Omagh) represented the Presbyterian

Church, and Rev. Leah McKibben (Omagh Circuit) represented the Methodist Church. Fr. Paul Fraser PP Ardstraw West, joined us to represent the Roman Catholic Church, on what was, due to the pandemic, his first visit to Baronscourt since his arrival in the parish. In addition to the memorial, Bishop Andrew dedicated a Russian Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos, a gift donated in memory of Her Grace by the Government of the Russian Federation, presented by His Excellency, Mr. Aleksandr Yakovenko, former Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Court of Saint James. The old pipe organ, which has been out of use for many years and has now been restored, was also dedicated.

Remembrance Sunday

His Grace, the Duke of Abercorn K.G. has once again extended a warm welcome to us to the grounds of Baronscourt Estate to commemorate the fallen of past wars. As was the case last year, this service will be a "Drive In" event. Wreaths will be laid by His Grace

and representatives of the five churches. A collection will be taken up in support of the Poppy Appeal. Please give generously in support of this worthy cause.

Christmas

Services of Nine Lessons will take place in the churches on the following dates:
Ardstraw - Sunday December 19 at 3pm
Baronscourt - Sunday December 19 at 11am
Upper Badoney - Sunday December 12 at 9.30am
Greenan - Sunday December 12th at 11am
Gortin Sunday December 12th at 12.15pm

Holy Communion for Christmas

Greenan - Christmas Eve at 6pm
Upper Badoney - Christmas Eve at 7.30pm
Ardstraw - Christmas Eve 9pm

Baronscourt - Christmas Day 9.30am

Gortin - Christmas Day 11am

Boxing Day - Morning Prayer Baronscourt 11am

Cappagh & Lislimnaghan

Rector: Rev Canon Derek Quinn Email: derekquinn2@aol.com

Tel: 028 8224 2572

Facebook: Cappagh Parish Church @CappaghParishChurch



As I write these notes for the December issue of n:vision none of us knows exactly what Christmas 2021 will be like. Hopefully it will be much better than last year when many people were unable to make the journey home to spend the Festive Season with their loved ones, due to travel restrictions. This year it is my hope and prayer that families will be able to spend quality time together and that there will be no resulting spike in Covid-19-19 infections afterwards.

Like it or loathe it, Christmas is just around the corner and I definitely fall into the category of those who love Christmas, for it is a seasonal reminder to me of God's amazing love for each one of us.

In the year I was born, a missionary in Japan wrote a poem called 'God's Christmas Gift' which calls us to re-evaluate Christmas and to remember the real reason for it. Here are a few selected verses from this challenging poem which remind us that Christmas is not

just about presents, but rather the presence of Jesus, the one born of a virgin long ago and spoken of by the prophet Isaiah as Immanuel, which means "God with us" (Isaiah 7 v 14, Matthew 1 v 23).

*"The festive spirit fills the air,
And people's hearts are gay,
There's trees and lights and lots of toys
"Twill soon be Christmas day;
So much is said of Santa Claus*

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Continued from page 45...

*And of the gifts he gives,
So little said of God's dear Son
Whose own birthday it is.*

*E'en as it was one bygone night
In far off Bethlehem,
When Jesus in a manger lay,
No room within the inn;
Today He's shut outside men's hearts,
Hearts filled with sin and wrong,
They care not that with nail pierced hand*

*He's knocked there oh so long.
They give their presents to their friends,
Receive gifts from each one,
Neglecting God's great Christmas gift -
He gave His only Son
To die upon the awful cross
And pay our debt of sin,
To open wide the gates of Heaven
And let us enter in.*

The gift's still waiting at the tree,

*So few His Word believe,
Though offered freely to all men,
They will not Christ receive;
The tree is just a cross of wood,
Unseen to behold,
But Oh, The gift the dear Lord gives
Is better far than gold."*

This year let us resolve to "Put Christ back into Christmas", and may you know His special peace and presence with you always.

Drumragh & Mountfield

Rector: Revd Graham Hare

Tel: 02882 160178 Mob: 07793032766

Email: grahamhare@hotmail.co.uk

www.drumragh.derry.anglican.org

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



As part of our recent 150th anniversary celebrations at St Columba's, Bishop Andrew dedicated two new lighting systems; one inside the church building and one outside. The results are pretty spectacular and the beautiful church is now visible to all who pass, even in the hours of darkness.

Church was never meant to be hidden and we, as followers of Jesus, certainly should not be hard to see. Instead we should be visible everywhere. In our schools and workplaces, across our communities and in places of strategic influence, the Church

should bring and bare the light of Jesus Christ so that others may see that light and be drawn to Jesus, the light of the world.

For those "inside the building", the family of faith, we are people who seek to live in the light, seeking and following the will of the Lord, following Jesus with a persistent passion and sharing his wonderful transforming power with everyone that we meet.

In these days of darkness, it is my prayer that the Parish of Drumragh with Mountfield will shine a light in our communities and,



like a city on a hill, we will not be hidden, but will instead bring glory and honour to the Lord Jesus.

As we approach the Christmas season, we hope to have many opportunities to share the news of Emmanuel with our communities. Please keep an eye on our Facebook and website for up-to-date details.

Wishing all n:vision readers a very merry Christmas and a peaceful and fruitful 2022.



Edenderry & Clanabogan

Rev Canon Robert Clarke: Rector and Rural Dean

Tel: 028 82245525

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Facebook: Edenderry Union of Parishes



As we welcome Christ into the world we realise we have:

A love that can never be fathomed

A life that can never die

A righteousness that can never be tarnished

A peace that can never be understood

A rest that can never be disturbed

A joy that can never be diminished

A hope that can never be disappointed

A glory that can never be clouded

A light that can never be darkened

A purity that can never be defiled

A beauty that can never be marred

A wisdom that can never be baffled

Resources that can never be exhausted.

Anon

Donkey Lesson

One day a farmer's donkey fell down a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally he decided the animal was old and the well needed to be covered up anyway. It just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey. So he invited all his neighbours to come over and help him. They all grabbed a shovel

and began to shovel earth into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement, he quietened down. A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well and was astonished at what he saw. With every shovel of soil that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the farmer's neighbours continued to shovel soil on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off!

Moral: Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and to take a step up. Each of our troubles is a stepping stone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping, by never giving up! Shake it off and take a step up!

Speed Kills!

Father Christmas must travel at fantastic speed on Christmas Eve to complete his

journey on time, but let us NOT take a leaf out of his book. The following has been suggested if you MUST speed on the motorway; not only be aware that you are breaking the law but also sing these hymns loudly:

1. At 45 mph... "God will take care of me"
2. At 55 mph... "Guide me, O Thou Great Redeemer"
3. At 65 mph... "Nearer my God to Thee"
4. At 75 mph... "Nearer still nearer"
5. At 85 mph... "This world is not my home"
6. At 95 mph... "Lord, I'm coming home"
7. At 100 mph... "Precious memories"

Final Thought

STOMACH ACHE? - Doctor

TOOTH ACHE? - Dentist

HEART ACHE? - God

Season's Greetings

To all readers, a spiritual and merry Christmas, and a healthy and happy New Year.

Drumclaph & Clare, Langfield Upper & Lower

Rector: Rev Robert G. Keogh

Tel: 028 8167 1433

Email: rgkeogh@utvinternet.com

<http://www.drumclaph.derry.anglican.org>

Facebook: Drumclaph ClareandLangfield



Carol Services

St. Andrew's Clare: Sunday 19th

December at 10:00am

Drumclaph Parish Church: Sunday

19th December at 10:00am

Lower Langfield: Sunday 19th December

at 7:30 pm. There will be no morning service this Sunday in Langfield.

Christmas Eve

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

Christmas Day

Holy Communion in Drumclaph at

9:00am and Lower Langfield at 10:30am.

There will be no services in our group of parishes on Sunday 26th December.

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Take Time

'Twas the season of Christmas, abuzz and astir with the buying and wrapping of Christmas gifts this year. I was ever so busy, I just didn't have time to spend on my knees or read a few lines. And as Christmas drew nearer, the busier I got, I couldn't go to church now, that was prime time to shop. I was so sure that Jesus would really understand, I'd take time for him later, when I had no more plans. But I wakened

one morning, with much to do that day, And as I rushed out the door, I thought I heard someone say "Can you not take five minutes of your most precious time And spend it with an old Friend, and share what's on your mind? It has really been lonely since you have stopped praying For I miss talking with you, as the dawn is breaking. Getting ready for Christmas should never, ever mean, That you just don't have time for your Saviour, Lord and King. The Reason for the season,

the Hope of all the earth, Put Christ back into Christmas, give him his rightful place, Celebrate God's gift of love to the whole human race. As I stood there and listened, hot tears flooded my eyes, I asked God to forgive me and help me to be wise. Now I start every morning as I used to before, Spending time in his Presence, receiving from his store. I will celebrate Christmas with a heart full of joy, for that Babe in the manger, the little Christ boy.

Derg & Termonamongan

Rector: Rev Peter Ferguson

Tel: 028 8167 1362

Facebook: Derg Parish Church. Termonamongan Parish



Deacon Intern:

Rev Claire Henderson



Reaching Up, Reaching In, Reaching Out: for God, for Each Other, for our Community.

Our Derg Valley Youth meets fortnightly and our imaginative and creative team are working hard to make each evening a fun, engaging and not-to-be missed time together. Already we have enjoyed a games and party night as well as a harvest themed evening when we got active with bulbs and plants bringing out the message of the Parable of the Sower. We also welcomed our new DYO Claire Hinchliff as she opened the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians. We took a group to the first Freedom youth event in the Waterside. When asked if he would go again, one of our group immediately replied with an emphatic "100 per cent!!"

together in Derg Parish Church with Confirmation planned for 2nd and 9th December with Bishop Andrew. Please pray for all our young people, Year 9 and above, who are considering Confirmation.

Our Journey Towards Confirmation has got off to a great start with over 30 wonderful young people who are considering Confirmation. Following the Youth Alpha course as well as our own teaching, we will enjoy 9 weeks

Derg Parish plan to hold a Christmas Tree Festival 'Carols Through the Ages,' on Friday 3rd – Sunday 5th December. Various organisations in our parish group and community have committed to taking a tree and will decorate it bringing to life a carol. There will be seasonal refreshments and live music over the weekend. There will be an opening service on 3rd December at 7pm and a closing service with Bishop Andrew on 5th December at 7pm. All donations will go to our Mission, Ministry and Growth Fund.

Special Advent and Christmas services

Nativity Sunday 19th December 10am Killeter and 11am Derg.
Carols by Candlelight Sunday 19th December 7pm in Derg Parish Church.
Christmas Eve Holy Communion 7pm Killeter and 8pm Derg.
Christmas Day Family Service - 10am Killeter 11am Derg.

As we entered into a new school year in September it was a joy to see a return of our Sunday Schools and Derg Valley Youth. The response has been so positive from parents, leaders, children and young people alike and

we have even seen our numbers grow. This shows the desire and need for real face-to-face activities bringing our church family together under God's Word. As I write, our Sunday Schools are busy preparing for Remembrance Sunday and they are even looking ahead to Advent and Christmas. We will have some surprises to announce for our children and young people this year building on our Christmas Car Treasure Hunt extravaganza that we enjoyed in Lockdown 2020!!



Urney and Sion Mills

Rector: Rev Jonathan McFarland

Facebook: Parish of Urney Christ Church
and Church of the Good Shepherd @urneyparish



As we approach Advent and Christmas many of us will be glad that we are able to approach this season with more confidence now that most of us have had our Covid-19 vaccines.

We are aware that the stresses and strain of Covid-19, combined with the fragility of life, still dominates much of our thinking these days and this is especially the case for those who will be grieving this Christmas. Our prayer continues to be that God will strengthen us more as a people of faith, rather than a people of fear. The question of what should really dominate our thinking was brought to my mind recently during one of our Confirmation preparation classes. One of the questions that we explored with our young people was 'Why do we need a Saviour?' The answer to this will be obvious to many who worship regularly, but to those who struggle with faith issues, the question is of critical importance.

Our Confirmation candidates said that the big issues facing the world today are Covid-19 and climate change. This seems like a natural answer that we see constantly in our news and media.

The question I would raise is this. Is the coronavirus and global climate change, the biggest reasons why we need a Saviour? The Bible teaches that the biggest problem that humans face is the problem of sin. It is sin that is at the source of our social ills, our afflictions and our sorrow. It is sin that keeps us from enjoying fully the love of God. The apostle Paul taught that the wages of sin is death. This is the universal threat to us all. We may be able to produce vaccines and reduce pollution but we do not have the capacity to remove our sin. That is why we need a Saviour. We cannot save ourselves.

In this season of Advent and Christmas we celebrate with believers all over the world,

the wonderful hope that *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life.*

Why is this not being broadcast on our news? The world is still in the darkness of sin and needs to turn to Christ, the light of the world. This is the good news that God has given us to share with this fallen world. Will you exercise your faith in Jesus by telling others that in Christ we can know the everlasting promise of forgiveness and that God is with us?

May we all put our fears behind us and trust in Jesus who said to his followers, *'In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world.'*

May God's richest blessing be upon you and your loved ones in this season of light and everlasting hope.

Camus-Juxta-Mourne (Strabane)

Rector: Rev John White

Facebook: Christ Church, Strabane @ChristChurchStrabane

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



Simon and Garfunkel once sang about the Sound of Silence. Maybe in a hyper busy, noisy world the sound of silence is to be welcomed. As the Hole in the Wall Gang would say 'Give My Head Peace'.

But, when that silence comes from not hearing from God, that's a different story. For about 400 years, there had been no direct word from the Lord. Had God forgotten his people? No! In the temple one day, a word from God came to a priest, Zechariah. His name means "God remembers." Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, were devoted followers of God. They were old and childless, and Elizabeth was a relative of Mary, who became the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:30-31,

36). One day Zechariah had a rare opportunity to burn incense at the time of prayer in the temple. And while he was doing that, an angel of God came with startling news: Zechariah and Elizabeth would have a son! He was to be named John, and he would become a prophet like Elijah, bringing many people back to the Lord (see Malachi 4:5-6).

This child became John the Baptist, who prepared people for the coming of Jesus, the promised Saviour (Luke 3). When John was born, Zechariah sang a hymn of praise because he knew salvation was coming. God had not forgotten his people. *"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them."* (Luke 1:68)

Dear friends, if you are struggling with disappointments and God seems far away, take heart. God has not forgotten you. He wants to give you his peace today. In his mercy and love God remembers each one of us. That's the good news of Christmas: Jesus, who forgives our sins and brings us new life, has come! So let's join with Zechariah and sing God's praises today and throughout this Advent season.

Prayer

Lord, thank you that you never forget us, no matter the circumstances. Work in us by your Spirit this Advent so that we may increasingly trust in you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Donagheady

Vacant

Rev Canon Paul Whittaker (Rural Dean)

Tel. 07770691560

E.mail. stjamesdonagheady@gmail.com

A busy Sunday at St. James on 24th October. We had a Service of the Word at 11.00am with Kaye Nesbitt. At 4.00pm the Bishop came to confirm sixteen young adults. Leading up to the service we were all a little nervous, as soon as the Bishop arrived and talked to everyone we soon relaxed.

The Select Vestry would like to thank all who helped to organise the service. Thanks to

Rhonda and her team for taking the classes during the last number of weeks.

Thanks to Evan and his team for their risk assessment and making sure that everyone entered and left the church safely. It was great to hear singing in church again as we sang The Spirit lives to set us free and Tell me the old old story.



One would never have guessed that we didn't have a Rector at this time as everyone played their part.

WELL DONE TO A GREAT TEAM!

Leckpatrick & Dunnalong

Rev Canon Paul Whittaker: Rector and Rural Dean

Tel: 028 71880397 Mob: 07770691560

Email: revpaul07@btinternet.com

Facebook: [Parishes of Leckpatrick and Dunnalong Church of Ireland](#)



As we continue to battle with Covid-19 we are enjoying back to Church worship. We have also been delighted to welcome back our organists on a full-time basis and back to our Prayer Books.

off in Portstewart, then Portrush, back to Coleraine for some shopping then to The Vines restaurant in Garvagh for an excellent evening meal. We had a brilliant day out, it was enjoyed by everyone and home for 8.30pm.

and brought a sense of hope at a time when many were feeling something close to despair.

Widows and Widowers

On Wednesday 22nd September we had our Widows and Widowers Afternoon Tea in the Milliken Hall. The attendance was encouraging and a good time was had by all. The Rector entertained us with some music and singing. Hopefully next year we will be back in the Rectory. Thank you to everyone who helped with the catering.

Mothers Union

On Monday 20th September we had a Mothers Union Returning Service in Leckpatrick. We had a good attendance and it was great to see all the Ladies together again. The Rector led the service and provided the music.

AFFIA

A word of thanks to the diocesan Mothers' Union for the generous AFFIA gifts they provided especially for those who were particularly affected by the pandemic. These gifts were very much appreciated by those who received them



Jolly Church Outing

On Saturday 4th September we had our first 'Jolly Church Outing' to Portrush. We went to the Lodge Hotel first for some tea and scones then we stopped



Harvest Services

On Sunday 17th October we celebrated Harvest Thanksgiving in both Churches. Both were beautifully decorated so a big thankyou to Ruby Hamilton and her team in Dunalong and Geoffrey Kelly and his team in Leckpatrick.

Confirmation Class

We were delighted to get our Confirmation Class up and running on Sunday 24th October, we have 11 candidates and a service has been booked with the Bishop for Sunday 3rd April 2022.

We are looking forward to Advent and Christmas events coming down the line in a few weeks' time. We will produce a News Sheet in December do we will all know when and what's happening over Christmas and the New Year.

We will be producing a News Sheet for all our Christmas Services and activities.

Here's praying you all have a wonderful Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

St. Augustine's, Londonderry

Rector: Rev Nigel Cairns
www.saintaugustines.co.uk
www.facebook.com/weechurch

Away back in the month of June, we had our first all age worship service and children's day since 'lockdown 1.' This gave us the template (and confidence) to reinstate our monthly family services. They have been a great success in September and October. After the October family service the entire congregation went outside onto the Walls to listen to the Inishowen Gospel Choir which was performing as part of the International Choral Festival. We were thankful for a dry afternoon, and we had soup and bread to warm us up!



As the family services have been so successful, we are optimistic that the Kidzklub LIVE Nativity will proceed on the third Sunday of Advent. Other special services during Advent and Christmastide



will include our own Carol Service (Fourth Sunday in Advent at 11am), Wednesday evening Advent services (7.45pm), and the City of Londonderry Grand Orange Lodge Carol Service. The choir is working hard for these various occasions, and we thank them and our organist for their dedication.

On Christmas Eve, we plan to hold the 'First Holy Communion of Christmas' at our 11.30pm watchnight service, whilst on Christmas Day we will have Holy Communion at 10am. Then on St. Stephen's Day at 11am, we look forward to Morning Prayer with the Sacrament of Infant Baptism.

The church family is delighted that three of our members have almost completed the Parish Reader's course. We are all looking forward to them taking on their full role in reading the liturgy and assisting at the various services. We are thankful for their willingness to serve



in this way, and assure all of our readers - old and new - of our prayerful support. In the wider life and outreach of the church, we are delighted that the Luminaire Concert series is going so well. Recently, Liam O'Maonlai (Irish Singer and founding member of 'The Hothouse Flowers') wowed the audience on vocals, pianoforte, organ, traditional Irish whistle and bodhran. Like all the Luminaire events, it was a sell-out performance, and we look forward to welcoming Mary Coughlan and the Henry Girls in the coming weeks.

Our church café and vintage market continue to create a great sense of community at St. Augustine's both for our own parishioners and for the wider network of people who



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have supported us since we opened. We remain grateful for their continued support and assure everyone of a warm welcome.

Café weekend opening and Vintage Market Dates are as follows:

Café:

Thursday 25th, Friday 26th, Saturday 27th November (10.30am - 4pm)
Thursday 9th, Friday 10th, Saturday 11th December (10.30am - 4pm)

Thursday 16th, Friday 17th, Saturday 18th December (10.30am - 4pm)

Market:

Saturday 27th November (10am - 5pm)
Saturday 11th December (10am - 5pm)
Saturday 18th December (10am - 5pm)

We have been delighted to bring back LEAH, (Lunch for the Elderly And Housebound), and have really enjoyed our lunches, worship times and fellowship each month. For now we are

using our own hall, and have implemented a bespoke seating plan where we are either seated in bubbles or are seated at a safe distance apart. We are most grateful to everyone who assists with the set-up, cooking, serving and clearing up which has enabled LEAH to happen regularly once again.

The church family at St. Augustine's wish our friends across the diocese and beyond a very blessed Christmas and New Year.

Christ Church, Culmore, Muff and St. Peter

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

Website: www.cccmsp.org

Facebook Page: [@cccmsp](https://www.facebook.com/CCCMSP)

Our Vision: Transforming Community, Radiating Christ.



Rev Canon Katie McAteer, Pastoral Director
E pastoral@cccmsp.org
M 07813 885145



Mrs Angela Dobbins
Parish Administrator
E administrator@cccmsp.org

The memory verse for this year in our group of parishes is Hebrews 10 verses 24-25 '... **let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...**' In this edition of n:vision we are looking towards Christmas. When I think of Christmas the most important theme is the Incarnation; God has become one of us. In the season of Christmas 'Emmanuel' encapsulates this truth; God with us.

The time we have spent confronting Covid-19 and addressing its effect on our society, and on our Church communities, has been a time that has reminded me of how important fellowship is. It is vital to be together. As a Christian this 'being together' in the context of congregational worship has assumed a renewed importance. I see the Sunday Service as a time when I can recharge and when I can reset my priorities as I worship as part of my local Christian community. As society relaxes the Covid-19

restrictions I hope more of you will join me on a Sunday for congregational worship. However, the new ways of being church - using online services on Facebook and WhatsApp Fellowship groups - will remain an important element in building community and supporting one another. I hope you will join with me and embrace the opportunities to build fellowship with God and with one another.

We will still be in the season of Advent when this edition reaches you. Advent is a time of getting ready. This challenge to be ready is a good opportunity to reflect on your involvement with Church life. Our Christian faith operates on a number of different levels. Christianity is personal; we each are called to follow Jesus individually as disciples and this involves us allowing his teaching to transform how we do things. Whilst Christianity is personal it is not private, and we have a message of hope for everyone. That is a message we are to share. I believe people in our parishes are coping in different ways with the challenges of Covid-19. One of the things

we can do is check on each other. I would like us to continue to develop our caring side as a group of parishes. Connecting with one another to ask how people are doing, is a small, simple way of building community and encouraging one another.

I am so thankful for the volunteers across the parishes who help us reach out to others. I want us to see this as a living out of one of our core values, 'we serve in teams'. I know that I cannot fulfil God's call on my life without the community in our churches. My personal belief is that the world needs a message of hope and love more than ever. Join me in bringing this message to our parishes and to local society.

On behalf of both the Rectory family and the Parish family may I wish you all a renewed experience of God's love and hope this Christmas season.

Yours in Christ,
Robert+

Moville, Greencastle, Donagh, Malin & Culdaff

Bishop's Curate - Rev Alan McCracken



Fahan Upper and Lower

Rector: Rev Canon Judi McGaffin

Tel: 0769361154

Facebook: Fahanandbuncranachurchofireland

"Cherishing and connecting with all God's children"

We hope that you are able to keep in touch with all that is happening in these parishes on our Facebook page [fahanandbuncranachurchofireland](#)

Looking back

Harvest in a rural community is a big annual life event! With restrictions this year and remembering all the people across our world that will be surviving on less than 40 cent a day (36% of the world population) we decided to thank God for our own situation and have a "minimalist" harvest in terms of decorations. Instead we brought all sorts of non-perishable items to church and these were delivered to the Inishowen food bank. Thank you to everyone who gave so generously.

Bible study is continuing on Zoom and we are looking at how the early Church developed through the Acts of the Apostles and reflecting on what lessons we can learn in our time and place!

St Mura's National School is busy this year learning about God's creation! They are

also very busy connecting with our online community at PRAISES Time - AND they are creating some amazing pieces of art each week as they learn about God! They have shared their work with CJ - so you can see it in the CJ section of this edition of n:vision!

Annual Prayer Week this year (the 7th in these parishes) was again on line and we were thinking about some of the great prayers that we find in the Bible - regular prayer, persistent prayer, urgent prayer, desperate prayer, and the ultimate prayer. You can, if you go onto our Facebook page, watch these short times of reflection.

As I write this we in the parishes are preparing for the Bishop to visit us to confirm Jamie, Gareth, Owen and Callum! The young people and their families have worked incredibly hard in their preparations! We are all really looking forward to the event as the 2019 Confirmation at which Jamie was to be confirmed was postponed. We will share the photos in due course. Please pray for our candidates and their families as they take this next important step on their Christian journey.

Looking forward

We are working towards a new Church year starting on Advent Sunday. This year we will be concentrating on a Jesse Tree as we prepare for the birth of Jesus! Keep in touch with us on our Facebook page - [fahanandbuncranachurchofireland](#) for further information and join with us when you can!

Online services are at 8am on a Sunday, 7pm on a Wednesday and 10am on a Saturday. There is a "telephone service" on 00353749390190 and we are back in church on Sundays - 10.30am in Christ Church Bunrana and 12 noon in St Mura's Fahan.



Taughboyne with Craigdooish, All Saints & Killea

Rev Canon David Crooks: Rector and Rural Dean

Tel: 074 914 0135 Mob: 00447871974658

Email: dcrooks@eircom.net



The Confirmation which had been postponed twice, at last took place in All Saints' Church on Sunday 19th September. Nine young people made their vows and commitment to Christ and received their first Holy Communion. They were Rachel Browne, Ellie Cox, Sam Coyle, Alan Devenney, Ava Garvey, Joshua Garvey, Natasha Gordon-Moore, Rachel Jeffrey and Stirling Moore. The Bishop addressed the candidates in a very meaningful way, and indeed, was able to remember their names.

Following the Service, presentations of bouquets of flowers and gift cheques were made to Frances Moore and Davina Devenney in appreciation of their sixteen years teaching in All Saints' Sunday School. Over those years, they have taught the faith to dozens of our young people. They are deeply appreciated - any volunteers to step into their shoes?

The churches were as usual, decorated to a very high standard for the Harvest Thanksgiving Services. Taughboyne did not have a service, but joined with Killea. Most sincere thanks to Mr Sean McClafferty for his fine harvest sermons. Although I was away for the first half of October, I hear great reports! Many thanks also to the Rev'd Mervyn Peoples and Mrs Norma Burns for conducting services in October.

Although at the time of writing, Covid-19 cases are increasing, yet many restrictions have been lifted. It is too soon yet to know if we can have our usual Christmas sales and services. It is to be fervently hoped that we can. Details of any activities, sales, services, Carol services etc will be announced in a parish magazine nearer the time.

And finally - 2021 is the fifteenth centenary of the birth of St Columba. Columba's

cousin St Baithin was his successor as Abbot of Iona from 597 to 600 AD, so the Columban connection with Taughboyne and Craigdooish is very important.

There will be a service in St Eunan's Cathedral, Raphoe on Tuesday 7th December, the actual birth date - as far as we know, at 7.30pm. The Primate, Most Rev'd John McDowell, Archbishop of Armagh will preach at Evensong with the Organist and Choir of St Columba's Cathedral, Londonderry.

It was for me a deeply spiritual experience to visit Iona in October. My late father, Archdeacon Crooks was Rector of Gartan and in 1963 organized the great celebrations of the 14th centenary Columba's departure for Iona.

Conwal Union with Gartan

Rector: Rev David Houlton

Facebook: The Parish of Conwal Union @ConwalParish



Associate Priest:

Rev Heather Houlton



It was so lovely to have something approaching normal services at Harvest - especially in St Columba's Gartan at the end of October. What's more, the multiple confirmation services under Covid-19 restriction were also very much appreciated - thanks to the rapport Bishop Andrew established with the families as well as the parishioners drafted in to run the services under the restrictions and to keep us fed and watered between them! Small numbers made for a more personal experience for

the young people and their families. Now Christmas is coming and we are hoping to run most of the normal services (*details below are subject to change*):

Plans for Christmas and New Year 2021/22 (hopefully):

12th Dec: 10.30 Conwal Sunday School Christmas Service.

19th Dec: 12.30 Gartan Christmas Carol Service (*maybe outdoors*).

20th Dec: 7pm Letterkenny Carol Trail

(*starting at Trinity Presbyterian Church*).

24th Dec: 6.30 Service of Lessons and Carols - Conwal Parish Church.

11.30 Midnight Communion - St Columba's Church, Gartan.

25th Dec: 8am Traditional Christmas Communion - Conwal Parish Church.

10.30 Family Christmas Communion - Conwal Parish Church.

1st Jan '22: 11.30 Gartan Big Dip - Gartan Outdoor Centre.

Tullyaughnish, Kilmacrennan, Killygarvan & Glenalla

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



Clondevaddock, Rossnakill, Portsalon & Leatbeg

Vacant
Rural Dean: Rev David Skuce

Clondehorkey, Cashel & Mevagh

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



Thanks

As I relinquish my role as Priest-in-Charge of Mevagh and Clondehorkey I wish to thank parishioners for all their helpfulness, co-operation and support over the past three and a half years. Parochial ministry, with all its many facets of experience and interaction with people, is a wonderful privilege and I am very grateful for the joy and inspiration of being able to exercise that ministry among people who show a real willingness to respond to leadership and to face challenges. May God bless you in the days ahead.

I wish also to record my thanks to Bishop Andrew Forster and his predecessor, Bishop Kenneth Good and I am pleased to accede to requests to continue for the time

being in presiding at the Holy Communion on a monthly basis and also to continue as Chairman of Creeslough and Ballymore National Schools. I am greatly indebted to the Rural Dean, Rev. David Skuce for all his friendship, pastoral helpfulness and support especially during the past two years.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptism

Holy Trinity, Carrigart
Sunday, 10th October: Leah Joy Roulston, Barrack, Ramelton

St. John's, Ballymore
2nd October: Jacob James Russell, Stackernagh, Churchill, Letterkenny

Confirmation

St. John's, Ballymore
3rd October: Megan Russell, Glack Sophie and Orlaith Moffitt, Cloonmass

Marriages

St. John's, Ballymore
22nd October: Laura Montgomery and John MClafferty

Burials

St. John's, Ballymore
4th October: Harry Stewart, Breaghy, Portnablagh



Dunfanaghy, Raymunterdoney & Tullaghobegley

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



It has been great to see an easing in the Coronavirus restrictions. However, we still need to be on our guard. This virus is still lurking about and can still do damage. We are grateful to all those who have worked so hard to keep us safe during this time. We as individuals, need to do all that we can to reduce the risk of catching and spreading the virus. We do not want a reoccurrence of the restrictions imposed on St. Stephen's Day of last year.

One key change has been the re-introduction of singing during our services. Many people are delighted that we can now sing. They felt that something was missing in their worship. This year saw the return of our services of Harvest Thanksgiving and both churches were very tastefully decorated and those involved in the decorating, are to be congratulated. It is so important that we are thankful and grateful to God, for providing us with so much, which we in the West take for granted, while others throughout the world go without.

On Saturday the 18th December there will be a Coffee Morning in the Parish Hall

commencing at 11am. During this event the Christmas Hamper lines will be drawn. Early in the New Year we intend to have a Tractor Run and a Parish Auction. Please hold on to any items which would be suitable to sell at this auction. More details will be on the Parish Facebook closer to the time.

The season of Christmas is nearly upon us. In due course details of our services during the Festive Season will be posted on the Parish Facebook.

It was a delight to have our Bishop present with us on Sunday 3rd October 2021. Thirteen young people were confirmed from this group of parishes and the parish of Clondehorkey. Due to the number of candidates and the government restrictions it was necessary to hold Confirmation services in two churches. I would like to pay tribute to the parents and candidates, especially those who were not confirmed in their home church, and to our Bishop for being so accommodating and in the way he conducted the services. It was a great pleasure to prepare this group of candidates for their Confirmation. The engagement and banter

were very positive, and the atmosphere was excellent.

Sadly, our classes had to be postponed for at least sixteen months due to the announcement of the lockdown on the 17th March. When the classes resumed in September, I couldn't get over the changes in our young people. They had become so grown up and even so much taller. These boys and girls had changed into young men and women. They are all a great credit to their parents and parishes. The services of Confirmation were a bit different this time in that each candidate sat in a family bubble. They were in the company of their parents, godparents and family as opposed to sitting beside the other candidates. It was uplifting to see the newly confirmed receive their first communion in the company of their family. In closing I would like to wish all those who were confirmed well and that they keep to the commitment they made on the day of their Confirmation and finally to wish you all a happy Christmas and peaceful New Year.

Gweedore (Carrickfinn & Bunbeg) & Templecrone

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



I would like to congratulate our young people on their Confirmation. Classes were challenging in the Covid-19 crisis - but they rose to the challenge and worked hard. We are blessed with wonderful young people in our parish.

While I am writing this, COP 26 is happening in Glasgow. This is the United Nations 26th

Climate Change Conference. The world is getting warmer because of fossil fuel emissions caused by humans. Icecaps are melting and sea levels are rising.

We are seeing more extreme weather events taking place around the world - including heatwaves, floods, and forest fires. These naturally occurring events are

being made worse because of the effects of climate change. Governments around the world agree that urgent action is needed.

The world needs help. Just over two thousand years ago, the world was in a poor state - false gods were worshiped; there were the powerful and the oppressed; the poor and the hungry. The rich got richer, and the poor became poorer. There was no hope. The world needed help. Our help came in the form of a little baby, born in poverty, but destined to be a king. Our help came in the form of our Lord and Saviour. He came to save a troubled world. He came to give his life for a troubled world.

In Advent we prepare for this event, as every year we celebrate the coming of

Jesus, when Earth's humanity met with Heaven's divinity. And a time when each year we recall the hope of the second coming of Christ. *"In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."* John 1:4-5

Jesus is our light in dark times. We have the world in a state of crisis with the climate crisis; we have a life controlled by the coronavirus and restrictions; we have a life which can be saved by the coming of Jesus. May we rejoice in his love; may we celebrate our freedom; may we cling to the hope he brings us - not just at Christmas, but every moment of every day.

This Christmas, in the interest of keeping appropriate distancing and compliance

with Covid-19 advice, we will have our celebration of nine Carols and Lessons during morning worship, one service in each church, on Sunday 19th December.

Christmas services are

Family Communion service in St Crone's Parish Church, Dungloe, at 6.30pm on Christmas Eve; Holy Communion in St Patrick's Parish Church, Bunbeg at 8.30pm on Christmas Eve, and a Service of Holy Communion in St Andrew's Church, Carrickfinn at 10.00 am Christmas Morning. There will be a service of Morning Prayer in each church on Sunday 26th December.

I wish you every blessing this Christmas.

Ardara, Glencolumbkille, Glenties, Inniskeel & Lettermacaward

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



On 19 May, I was involved in a road accident and due to the extent of the injuries I sustained, I am only now returning to work. I would like to thank all those who generously gave of both their skill and their time during this difficult period, to ensure that worship was available to all parishioners within the group.

Four of our churches are open - with services taking place each Sunday - the exception being Glencolumbkille, which is closed for repairs. The East Window was badly damaged by high winds and had to be completely rebuilt. This was

expertly and beautifully carried out by Alpha Glass Derry. The roof of the church was also damaged. Repairs were delayed because of widespread difficulties within the building industry, but I'm happy to confirm that the necessary work is now underway and will, I hope, be completed in the near future.

On Sunday, 26 October, St. Conal's Church, Inniskeel hosted our Confirmation Service. Six candidates were duly confirmed by Bishop Andrew.

A number of parishioners have contracted - and thankfully recovered - from Covid-19.

Their experience serves as a reminder, if we needed one, not to become complacent when dealing with this pandemic.

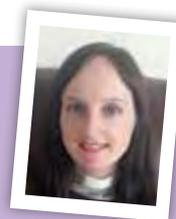
Although the evenings are closing in, and the rain is getting a little more horizontal, the vast majority of people you meet are positive and looking forward to interacting once again in fellowship with neighbours and friends. The people of the Atlantic coast are nothing if not resilient and positive in their outlook. They know this too will pass, and that all will be well; all manner of things will be well.

Inver, Mountcharles, Kilaghtee & Killybegs

Bishop's Curate: Rev Lindsey Farrell

Tel: 074 973 6013 Email: lindseyfarrell@btinternet.com

Facebook: Inver and Mountcharles Church



'I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord' Luke 2:10, 11

Choosing a Quieter Christmas

For the second year in a row we are preparing to celebrate the birth of Christ in a quieter way. Although this is not what we would choose, I believe that the quiet intimacy of these celebrations will deepen our understanding of the importance of this season, and will draw us closer as the family of God. In recent years the true message of Christmas has become all but lost amid a sea of tinsel and fairy lights. We have often become so consumed in sharing joy with one another that we have forgotten what that joy is all about. So, although we are facing the prospect of another careful Christmas, I believe we should see it rather as an opportunity to focus directly on the birth of the Christ-child in that squalid stable over 2,000 years ago, and what His birth means for us today.

- *If the presents are fewer in number this year, let us remember the importance*

of thanking God for the ultimate gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, a gift that will remain with us for eternity and fills our hearts with joy;

- *If the decorations are a bit more sparse this year, help us to hold fast to what we truly treasure in this life - family, friends, neighbours, decorations that money can't buy;*
- *If the table has less turkey, vegetables and fruit spread across it, let us share instead the fruit of Spirit and choose to build one another up in love, joy and peace;*
- *If there are fewer gathered for dinner, let us celebrate with what we have, giving thanks for those who are precious to us and holding fast to the hope of meeting up again soon;*
- *If loved ones have passed away, let us remember and give thanks for the hope that is ours of a reunion in glory, made possible through the birth of the Christ-child.*

When the wrapping, the fairy lights, the party poppers and the leftover food is stripped away, what remains is what is truly precious; the love of family and friends, the memories

that are now so dear, the hope of better times ahead and the constant presence of a Lord and Saviour, born into a dusty stable, but a permanent fixture in our hearts and lives. Let's make this year different. Let's make it better. Not by filling it with more lights and ornaments, but by holding on tightly, and truly giving thanks for the precious gifts of family and friends that we have already been blessed with. And let us never forget that greatest gift of all, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the hope and joy that He brings to each and every one of us.

We wish you every blessing, from all at Inver Group!





Drumholm, Kilbarron & Rossnowlagh

Rev Canon Brian Russell: Rector and Rural Dean
Tel. 0749734025
Email: brianrussell117@gmail.com

Autumn Get Togethers

The *Allingham Arts Weekend* in Ballyshannon concluded with an evening of verse and song in St. Anne's Church on Sunday 7th November at 7pm. We are very grateful to Maeve Fenton for her part in putting together the programme.

Others joined in the *International Day of Prayer* for the persecuted church viewing a service online hosted by Open Doors on Sunday 7th November at 7.30pm.

On Thursday 18th November the *St. Anne's Farmers Sale* took place at 8.30pm in St. Anne's Hall, Ballyshannon - a welcome return to Parish fundraising for the upkeep of the new hall following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. We are as always indebted to Keith Anderson for emptying our wallets and purses.

As with the last *Drumholm Christmas Sale*, when items were posted on Brian Russell's Facebook Page and then purchased by message or by phone, this will be repeated this year with items viewable on Friday 3rd December to be purchased, and then collected from the front door of The Rectory, Ballintra on Saturday 4th December. Here is an opportunity for all Parish families to become involved in the sale, either by providing something (we know nothing shifts quicker than home baking), or by buying something.

Advent & Christmas Worship

We always look forward to the children taking the stage at Christmas. It is very much hoped the pupils of the Kilbarron N.S. will share with us Christmas readings and songs in St. Anne's Church on a date as yet to be announced. Sunday 19th December: 12.15, Drumholm'

Service of Christmas Readings and Carols. 4pm, St. John's Church Rossnowlagh's Carol Service, 7pm. St. Anne's Community Carol Service with the participation of the Ballyshannon Brass and Reed Band.

On Christmas Eve, Friday 24th December, the first Communion of Christmas will be hosted by St. Anne's Church at 11.30pm. On Christmas Day Holy Communion will be celebrated in St. John's Church, Rossnowlagh at 9.30am and in Drumholm at 11am.

On Sunday 26th December a Group Service will be held in Drumholm Parish Church at 11am.

A healthy and prosperous Christmas and New Year is wished to all readers.

Donegal, Killymard, Lough Eske & Laghey

Rector: Venerable David Huss, Archdeacon of Raphoe
Tel: 074 9721075
Email: donegal@raphoe.anglican.org

www.donegal.raphoe.anglican.org
Facebook: @DonegalGroupofParishes



Looking back

Despite the ongoing presence of Covid-19, the strong uptake of vaccination has meant a considerable easing of restrictions, enabling us to have something a bit closer to a normal autumn. In particular we have been blessed by being able to sing as a congregation again. Our Confirmation services went well, with 14 candidates being confirmed in September. Bishop Andrew was with us again in October for the Harvest Thanksgiving in Killymard - a wonderful night. Our other Harvest visitors were the Revd Janet Rossall (Donegal), Mrs Esther Russell (Laghey) and the Revd Malcolm Young (Lough Eske). They all

delivered encouraging, Bible-based messages which blessed us greatly. An excellent job had been done by the teams decorating each of the four churches for the occasion. We enjoyed well-attended Family Services in September and these will continue to be a feature. We also hope for the return of Sunday School soon.

Looking ahead

At the time of writing it is too early to say with confidence what carol services etc. will take place and in what form. Suffice to say that we will celebrate the Saviour's birth as joyfully as ever, whether our gatherings are large and noisy or (more likely) smaller and quieter. Our outdoor worship times and Family Harvest Trail

showed us how we can come up with new ways of continuing our congregational life in safe ways and perhaps some similar fresh thinking will serve us well at Christmas.

The Mustard Seed

We continue to be open on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 10.30am - 2.00pm. Huge thanks to Louise and the team of volunteers. In line with legislation covering all restaurants and cafés, we can only offer indoor dining at present to those with a Covid-19 pass. We look forward to the time when this temporary restriction is lifted.

Continued on page 60...

Continued from page 59...

Meanwhile, our outdoor area has remained popular despite the more wintry weather!

How to Connect

You can follow us on Facebook, YouTube,

Instagram etc. - just look for 'Donegal Group of Parishes.' We have regular online services Sunday, Wednesday & Friday and a recorded service accessible any time from any phone on 074 9710199 (from UK 00353 74 9710199).

Baptisms

Sophie Margaret Byrne 3rd October 2021 Killymard
Laura Jane Harron 19th September 2021 Laghey.

Stranorlar, Meenglass & Kiltcevogue

Rector: Rev Adam Pullen

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

Facebook; Stranorlar, Meenglass & Kiltcevogue CofI @smkcofi



It has frequently been said that we are living in interesting times. Many of us are weary and I think most of us would have thought we would be celebrating Christmas in a more 'normal' fashion. I am a bit of a film buff and one of my favourite films is The Lord of the Rings. A conversation between Frodo the ring bearer and Gandalf the wizard about difficult times, seems to me very pertinent.

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo.

"So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do

with the time that is given us." (J.R.R. Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings*)

With this in mind as we approach Advent, how can we discern what we can do in these times? Well, we as a parish have had links for some time now with Tearfund.

During Advent we will be running Bible studies reflecting on how and what we decide to do in this time given to us. Partly due to these unusual times we will be running this in a hybrid model! That is, it will be run online via Zoom for those to access online from near and far, and in the church for those who wish to access it in person. Please do join us, if your parish is not running something for

Advent. After all it is a time of preparation for welcoming the light of the Lord at the darkest time of the year.

We will be holding our Christmas Services including Carols, yet in these times, it is difficult to plan exactly how. Therefore please do look in our website stranorlar.raphoe.anglican.org or our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/smkcofi>, for future details. Wherever and in what format you are reading this on paper or online may I wish you a Blessed, Safe, and Peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

God Bless
Rev Adam

Convoy, Monellan & Donaghmore

Vacant, Rural Dean: Rev Canon David Crooks

Tel: 074 914 0135 Mob: 00447871974658

Email: dwtcrooks5@gmail.com

Brody Mathew, son of David and Darnise Browne was baptized in St Ninian's Church, Convoy on Sunday 24th October. We wish the family and the families of any other children who have been baptized recently every blessing. As Rural Dean in charge, I am not always aware of all the details.

Harvest Thanksgiving Services have been held in all three churches. The churches

were as usual beautifully decorated, and excellent sermons were delivered. Our thanks to Rev Arthur and Mrs Norma Burns for their conduct of services during the vacancy.

The Car Boot Sale on 9th October raised around €1,100. This was a great result, and thanks to all who worked for it.

At the time of writing it is not possible to

predict what the situation will be with regard to Covid-19 and social distancing and what numbers can attend events. Although numbers of infections are increasing alarmingly, it is possible that things will be better this year than they were around Christmas last year. Details of any sales, Advent and Christmas and Carol services that might be allowed, will be announced nearer the time.

Raphoe, Raymochy & Clonleigh

Vacant, Rural Dean: Rev Canon David Crooks Tel: 074 914 0135 Mob: 00447871974658

Facebook: St Eunan's Cathedral @cathedralraphoe

Mia, daughter of Rick and Jacqueline McFarland was baptized in St Eunan's Cathedral, Raphoe on Sunday 14th October. Abigail Rose, daughter of Adam and Marie McKinley was baptized in Raymochy Parish Church on Sunday 3rd October. I am not always aware of all the names of children who are baptized by Canon Deane who is so kindly conducting services during the vacancy, but every good wish and blessing with all who have been baptized.

Congratulations to Melissa Parke and Barry Carr who were married in St Eunan's Cathedral on Saturday 18th September.

Alan McBride and Marcia Doherty were married in Raymochy Church on 28th August. This was a particularly poignant wedding, as Alan's Father, Ritchie McBride died suddenly the previous day. It was a difficult but brave decision to proceed with the wedding, which was conducted very

graciously and sensitively in the circumstances by the Rev'd Mervyn Peoples.

Several children are eligible for Confirmation. Details and dates will be organized as soon as possible.

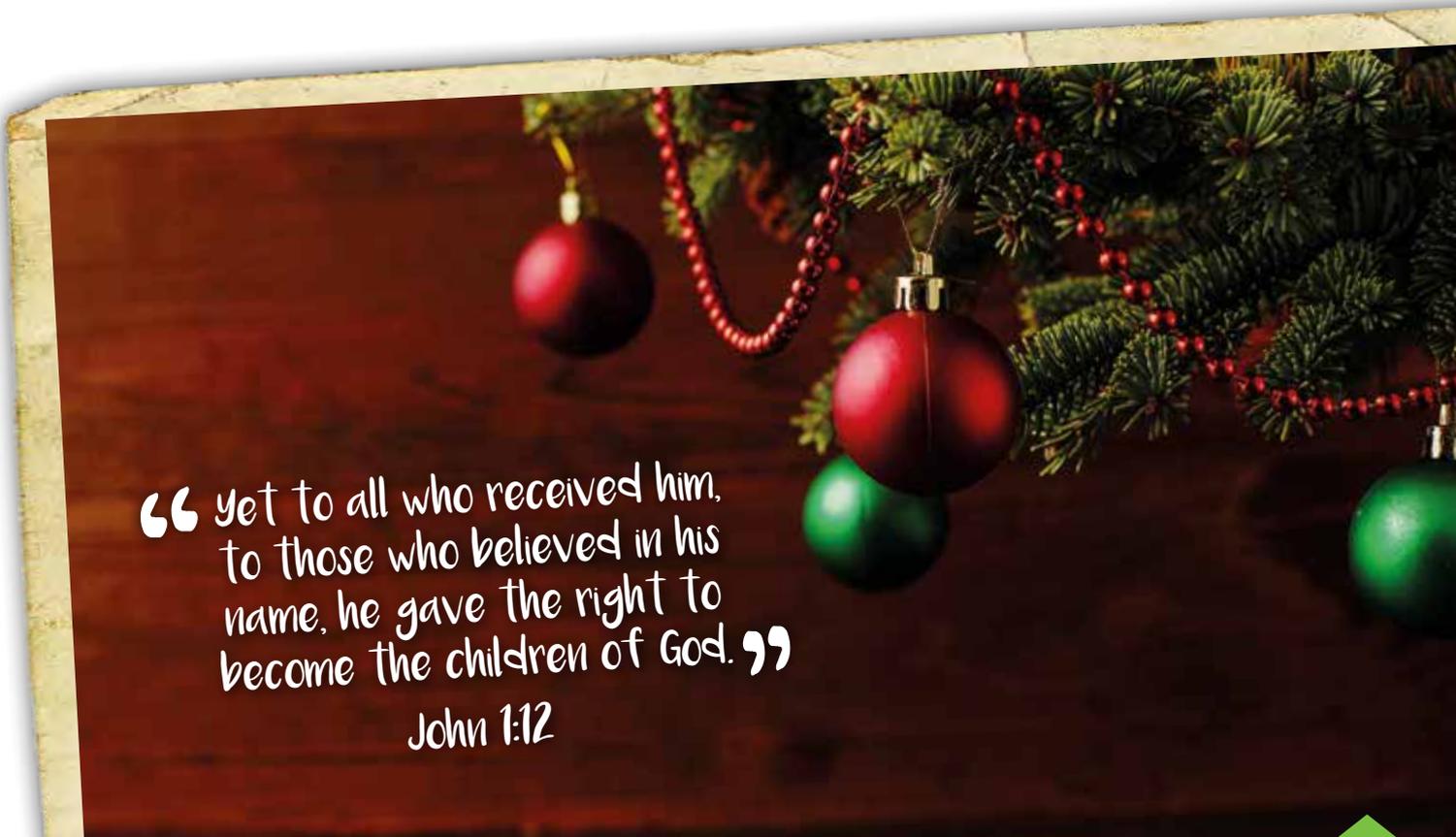
Brian Lacey's book on St Columba was launched in the Cathedral on 8th September. This is a significant publication, appearing as it does in the year of the 15th centenary of the birth of St Columba. This important event will be celebrated in a special service of Choral Evensong in the Cathedral on the Saint's 1,500th birthday, Tuesday 7th December. The Organist and Choir of St Columba's Cathedral, Londonderry will sing the service, and the Preacher will be the Primate, the Most Rev'd John McDowell, Archbishop of Armagh.

Harvest Thanksgiving Services in all three churches were well attended and the churches were as usual beautifully decorated.

The graveyard at Clonleigh Church has been tidied up and greatly improved by John Byrne and his team of workers. Also, the new music system in Clonleigh is up and running, and working well.

Congratulations to the Revd Judi McGaffin upon her appointment to a Canonry in the Chapter of St Eunan's Cathedral. Her installation to the prebendal stall of Killymard was held on 4th November.

It is too soon at this stage to know for certain what form Advent and Christmas activities, sales, services and Carol services will take, and what restrictions, if any, will be lifted. Details will be announced nearer the time. Meanwhile, the three Select Vestries are all working well and conscientiously to organize whatever fund-raising is possible, and they deserve our appreciation.



“ 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

SAINT COLUMBA

AND THE Book

Did St. Columba's copying of St. Finnian's Psalter lead to the first ruling on copyright, viz: *To every cow belongs its calf; to every book its copy?* A Psalter is a book of psalms and the incident, which is said to have occurred around 560AD, led to the battle of Cúl Dreimhne near Ben Bulbin Co. Sligo and Columba's eventual exile to Iona.

The famous tale was referred to by Dr. Stephen Kelly (English Subject Lead, Queen's University Belfast) in his talk "*Calves and Kindles*": *St Columba and the History of the Book*, on Friday evening 22 October. On the subject of St. Columba and the copied Psalter Dr. Kelly was quick to say that the tale found its origins in the early 1500s long after the Derry Saint's death (A.D. 597) - there being no mention of it in *Adomnan's Life of St. Columba* written about a hundred years later. Nonetheless, one school of thinking links the Saint's copied text to that contained in the Cathach (*or Battler*), a reliquary used by the Clan Ó Domhnaill as a rallying cry and protector in battle. Certainly this manuscript is one of the oldest surviving in Ireland, and the second oldest Latin Psalter in the world.

Discussion on the Cathach brought Dr. Kelly on to the wider world of early medieval texts such as the *Book of Kells* and the *Book of Durrow*, and the evolution from scroll to the eventual layout in columns

and paragraphs that made the book much more practical to read. We were treated to a succession of magnificent pictures of early texts, many of them sublime in their interweave design and colour, and all extraordinary examples of literary, artistic and religious innovation. Here Stephen Kelly made the very significant point that some texts appeared to have had a mystical, awe-inspiring effect, on both scribe and viewer while others served a more devotional or prayerful role. This despite the occasional irreverent doodles (*Woe is me...etc.*) written on margins by exhausted young scribes! Whatever the nature of these early texts they were confined to monasteries or the very privileged and this more or less persisted until the quantum leap of the Gutenberg Printing Press in 1450. Thereafter, with books more accessible, eventually the thrust of knowledge spread throughout the globe helping to bring about the dawn of modern civilization as we know it.

Dr. Kelly demonstrated that the Medieval Period is pivotal in the development of the book as we have come to know it in today's world. That, of course, includes the modern *Kindles* so cleverly mentioned in the talk's title, the *Calves* furnishing the vellum that originally made the texts possible.

The abiding question is, what made such progression come about? Experts tell us that it is down to technological innovation



- the next phase driven by the last. Yet underpinning this is 'why?' What urges man to take the next step? And is the book a thing of the past? Stephen Kelly believes not, feeling that despite the internet the book is alive and well in its many modern forms - 'Even in a digital age it shapes profoundly our understanding of memory, history - and ourselves,' he says.

We must not forget that even the look of a library of books can be awe-inspiring. This, so well evident in the ancient Melk Library near Vienna where the gold binding on the books is said to cast a mystical glowing light over the setting, lifting minds and hearts to contemplation. Books here seem not destined for reading but rather for inspiration, for, though full of knowledge, the removal of one destroys the balance of the whole magical aura.

Thus on it goes with the book in its many guises as popular as ever it was.

Ken McCormack

And finally...

Many lives have been lost to the coronavirus pandemic, over the last year and ten months, and many people will be stricken by grief or racked with illness for the foreseeable future. In the grand scheme of things, then, the loss of the last two St Columba's Day services at Gartan are hardly among the most distressing effects of Covid-19. But the virus has, nevertheless, robbed us of opportunities to celebrate the contribution made by this diocese's single greatest missionary.

The June service - traditionally held on the site of St Colmcille's Abbey on the Sunday nearest the saint's June 9th feast day - is probably my favourite event in the diocesan calendar. It is only when standing amid the abbey ruins, in the beautiful remoteness overlooking Lough Akibbon, about a mile from his birthplace, that one truly appreciates the scale of Saint Columba's achievement in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ so far and wide.

Even nowadays, in the era of motorised transport and 'sat nav', reaching the site involves a significant degree of effort. So,

imagine what it must have been like 1,500 years ago. Imagine how difficult and arduous it must have been to travel to Derry (where he is reputed to have founded a monastery on the site of St Augustine's Church); to the monasteries at Movilla (Newtownards) and Clonard (Meath) where he studied; to Offaly, where he founded Durrow Abbey; and ultimately to the Isle of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland, where he built yet another abbey - and where the saint was to end his days.

Remarkably, though, death on Iona - surrounded by the monks he taught and inspired - did not herald the end of Columba's story. Far from it. His spiritual heirs, among them St Eunan (Adornán), carried the torch of Christianity throughout Scotland, on into northern England, and beyond into continental Europe. Columba's legacy is writ large today, near and far, at home and abroad, in the numerous churches, schools, hospitals, societies, bands, parks and cultural venues which bear his name. Buildings such as the Church of St Andrew and St Columba in Mumbai, and St Columba's Church in Victoria, Australia, are testament to his 'reach'.

'Preserve with each other sincere charity and peace.'

On Tuesday 7th December, in St Eunan's Cathedral, Raphoe, the Archbishop of Armagh, Most Reverend John McDowell, will preach at a special Service of Choral Evensong, sung by the Choir of St Columba's Cathedral, Londonderry, which will signify the culmination of a year of muted celebration to mark the 1,500th anniversary of the saint's birth.

In life, Columba led Gaels and Picts to faith. In death, he is venerated by Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Presbyterians alike. He was a missionary of global stature, of whom we are rightly proud and for whom we should give thanks.

Columba's last words - to the monks gathered round his deathbed - were: 'Preserve with each other sincere charity and peace.' That exhortation is as relevant today as it was fourteen hundred years ago. What a legacy that is for any missionary.



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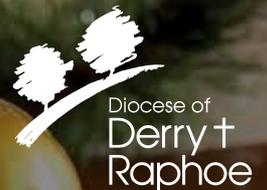
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THE DEADLINE IS NON-NEGOTIABLE

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(depending on Government and Diocesan guidelines at the time)

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Diocese of
**Derry +
Raphoe**

