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**YOUR AUTUMN EDITION OF**

# WEST LIFE

ISSUE No.9, AUGUST 2016

WEST CHURCH, BANGOR PUBLICATION

**How good and pleasant  
it is when God's people  
live together in unity.  
Psalm 133:1**

ONLY INSIDE YOUR WEST LIFE / FIRST WORD / YOUTH & CHILDREN'S / STORIES FROM HOME & AWAY / TESTIMONIES / CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Aerial photograph of West  
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West Church, Bangor — Welcome, directory and contents

## WELCOME TO YOUR AUTUMN WEST LIFE

Welcome to the Autumn issue of Westlife. I hope you have had a relaxing and refreshing summer.

The magazine comes with its usual range of articles reflecting the life and witness of our congregation. Andy Heron recounts his journey to Christian faith, we have input from our various families overseas and Maureen Bennett brings us up to date with what's been happening since we produced our vision report earlier in the year.

I've attempted a piece to understand the impact of the UK's recent referendum on coming out of Europe and there are many photos as well to enjoy!

Please look at the list of activities and organisations that will be up-and-running soon and be encouraged to join.



My thanks to Cheryl in the office for editing the magazine and, as always, we are deeply indebted to our advertisers for their financial support. Please take note of the ads!

Enjoy the magazine

Charles

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Rev Charles McMullen  
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**Assistant Minister:**  
Dave Gray

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Rev Jim Hagan

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**Youth & Children's Associate**  
Sonia Mawhinney

**Youth & Children's Worker:**  
Andrew McClelland

**Church Co-ordinator:**  
Stephen Cully

**Church Secretaries:**  
Elaine Ward & Cheryl Miller

**Church Officers:**  
Ken Macartney  
Martin Yardley

#### Sunday Service Times:

10.00 am Traditional Service  
10.00 am Young West  
11.30 am Contemporary /  
Family Service (Crèche provided)  
Children leave for Sunday School at 11.45 am  
11.45 am #Café church  
6.30 pm Evening Service  
8.00 pm Deeper

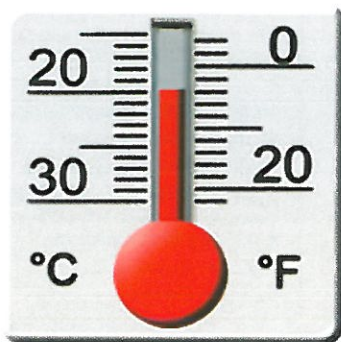


# THERMOSTATS & THERMOMETERS

Rev Charles McMullen

**We** are living in very turbulent times. The daily digest of news from the mainland political parties is a psychodrama far more worthy than the soaps. The fallout from Brexit and nervous financial markets make it difficult to see the way clearly ahead. I have written some comments about the EU Referendum and they appear elsewhere in this magazine.

What is happening nationally can also be a reflection of our personal lives. It's good to appreciate our regular routine of work and home, activity and resting. Suddenly, however, events intervene. After years of service, it's time to retire. A promotion or a new job alters the course of events. There are those landmarks of leaving school, graduating or being appointed to your first employment. We rejoice in special moments with family members and friends, cherishing our relationships. And then those wonderful moments occur as engagements are announced, marriages celebrated and babies arrive. There is so much that is good in life, but we are also aware of the pain of illness, separation, bereavement, breakdown and unemployment.



The weather is as changeable as the sunshine, clouds and rain. A few weeks ago in a sermon I drew the distinction between thermostats and thermometers. There are some people who are like thermometers. If it is hot, the temperature goes up. If it is cold, the temperature goes down. If there is tension all around, they absorb it and become preoccupied. If everything is working out well, then the mood is good! I don't know about you, but bad weather particularly during the summer time can really depress me!

Other people are thermostats. They regulate the atmosphere and the situation never dictates to them. There is that wonderful equilibrium, gentleness of spirit, just at ease eating in palaces as you would be sleeping in a cardboard box under a bridge somewhere along the River Lagan! There is flexibility and willingness to adapt. And why? Because there is a deep, deep well from which to draw all the resources of the living God.



What is the secret? Towards the end of his letter to the Philippians, Paul speaks of his concern for others as well as his confidence in the gospel and contentment in Christ. Three "cs" well worth pondering. He shows concern by looking out beyond himself to the needs of others, even though he is held chained to Roman soldiers under house arrest and awaiting execution. He has learned to be content whatever the circumstances, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. And then he goes on to



express his overriding confidence in Jesus Christ: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

The autumn represents one of those dramatic turnarounds for many families. After the relative peace and calm of summer, it's suddenly back into the whirlwind of routine, taxiing and even church activities. Just a few minutes back again at work and you wonder if you have even had a holiday. All those emails that are stacked high and waiting for you!

In the midst of the hurly burly, remember that in Christ we are called to be thermostats – having our hope and confidence in Him. Whatever is happening in the world or even momentous events in our personal lives, let's take the words of the Apostle Paul seriously to heart. To be that thermostat, let's plunge deep into the resources of God, opening our lives to receive His Spirit of life and hope. Let's keep reading our Bibles and learning His incredible promises. Let's share Church together at the deepest level of worship and fellowship. Let's keep Jesus to the fore as the One who always remains constant. I've just included yet another "c".

And here's another "c" – the "c" of my name. And the assurance of my love and prayers to you all!

Agape!

Charles McMullen

# WEST IS A LIVING AND THRIVING COMMUNITY



by Maureen Bennett, Deputy Clerk of Session

**L**ast January we provided the congregation with an interim report on the work of the Jubilee Report. It came with a promise of more information, especially on how it would inform future actions. The aim of this article is to do that—to remind you of the purpose of the exercise, the outcomes, what has been done since and what is under consideration.

## The Purpose of the Jubilee Review was:

- To ascertain the extent to which the purpose statements of West Church are fulfilled within the current life and witness of West Church, having particular regard for:
  - i) the building up of the Kingdom of God in Bangor West, through the development of maturity, ministry and mission among its members;
  - ii) the extent to which provision is made for people of all ages and is both intergenerational and intragenerational and;
  - iii) the areas where the purpose statements are strongly met and where there are shortcomings.
- To review the purpose statement for West Church in the light of the changes we can expect over the next five to ten years giving due regard to a) staffing, b) accommodation and c) finances.

## Summary of outcomes

1. The Jubilee Team reported positively on many areas of church life. There is no doubt that **West Church is a living and thriving community** providing for many, a rich experience of Christian life for its members.
2. **Charles McMullen** is loved and appreciated for his gentle leadership. His care for the members of West is praised consistently and there were various comments of how his leadership and that of the pastoral staff team has built upon the legacy of Rev. David Bailie, shaping and directing the congregation to the place that it is now.
3. There has been **growth of around 25% in church membership** since 1999. There has also been significant growth among children and young people. For example, since 2013 the numbers of under 18s attending on Sundays has increased by 28% while the outreach through Coffee Bar and Wyldlife has increased by 100%.
4. The provision for **children and young people** has been singled out for its exemplary leadership, strategic planning and its focus on outreach, developing maturity in faith and opportunities for Christian Service.
5. **Cafechurch** has also been an exciting new venture; during the first few years over twenty people that we know of, came to a new and living faith in Jesus Christ. Since then the attendance has continued to grow and for many people of all ages, it continues to be a place where they can be transformed by the love of Jesus, worship Him and grow in faith.
6. **Other strengths** highlighted include the work of Mums and Toddlers, the range of pastoral care provision and the focus on overseas mission.
7. However, there is a sense in which West is at a **tipping point** and needs to consider the steps to take, under God, to deepen the faith and commitment of our members, to strengthen the cohesion of the church family and to plan systematically for the way ahead.
8. The **governance and leadership** of West has not sufficiently kept pace with the growth in numbers and the expansion of its areas of ministry. Worship, discipleship, pastoral care, youth & children's work and mission & outreach are key areas, each with their own action team. The Jubilee Report has drawn attention to the shortcomings in some of the ways in which these teams work and the need for more coherent, **strategic planning** and evaluation. It is important that the size of West does not become a negative factor in the opportunities for fellowship and ministry among our members. The current **accommodation** is not sufficient for the current programme of activities, never mind any further growth.

Continued on page 6



9. **Staffing** has also not kept pace with the numerical expansion and the growth in mission and ministry. Further, members of the congregation are often reluctant to embrace **leadership roles** either because they expect the staff team to assume all leadership roles or because they do not feel suitably equipped. Leadership training and succession planning among the lay leadership requires attention.

10. A recurring theme in the report is the issue of **discipleship**: there was an expressed desire by a significant number of members to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus Christ; however the considerable contrast between the numbers on our rolls and the numbers in attendance on Sundays or the numbers in Home Groups or the numbers at our corporate prayer gatherings also raises questions about commitment and what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ in the 21st Century.

11. **Worship** is much more than praise. Nonetheless the Jubilee team concluded that there is a need for a review of the praise, in particular the opportunities for the congregation to participate, and the integration of music within the services of worship.

12. The **financial figures** show considerable increase over the years and, while we are able to balance our books, closer analysis shows that less than 10% of our members provide half of the income, and that we have difficulty in meeting our obligations to the United Appeal of our central church. Inevitably our giving will vary from family to family but Scripture encourages us to be regular and disciplined and to give to God in response to what He has given us. The level of giving in West has not kept pace with the growth in numbers and ministry; it constrains the development of our accommodation, our levels of staffing and outreach and, most significantly of all, it challenges our levels of discipleship and commitment.

13. The Jubilee Report also drew attention to the following matters:

- i) the need to review our communication with, and pastoral care of the large numbers of **peripheral members**;
- (ii) the need for **provision for the 20-30 & 30-40 age groups** and support for young people transitioning from Young West
- (iii) the levels of **community outreach**

It also underlined the importance of the **purpose statements** of the church and the '4 Ms' of the Mission Statement (Membership, Maturity, Ministry and Mission) in keeping congregational life balanced and encouraging review, but stressed that these statements are not well-known.

## What has been done so far and what is under consideration

**Leadership & governance:** a number of useful meetings of the elders and pastoral team was facilitated by Rev. Craig Mawhinney; subsequently Session has approved the setting up of new action teams covering similar areas to before, each with its own terms of reference; each team will be led jointly by a member of the pastoral staff and an elder, and comprise both elders and other members of the congregation. These teams will provide an opportunity for a more distributed lay leadership and for succession planning; they will address the areas outlined in paragraph 8 on the previous page. Their being led by members of the pastoral staff should ensure greater coherence and a stronger sense of shared strategic direction.

**Staffing:** an Associate Minister has been appointed; consideration will be given to further appointments such as a family worker as resources become available.

**Discipleship:** a key part of discipleship is to help people move from being consumers to maturing in their faith and sharing the good news of Jesus with others. It goes beyond attendance at Sunday services. The development of small groups is underway and will be accelerated. Leadership programmes, seminars, conferences and mentoring will also be considered while the provision of courses such as Alpha, Freedom in Christ and Life in the Spirit will continue. Within this, specific attention will be given to provision for 20-30 & 30-40 year olds.

**Cafechurch:** Keith Mitchell (Mitch) of Crown Jesus Ministries was appointed on a part-time basis to provide leadership in Cafechurch and to pilot a new Cafechurch in the neighbourhood. Lessons have been learned that will help in further outreach ventures and in how to develop the existing Cafechurch. The new Associate Minister will take on a leadership role in this area.

**Pastoral Care:** an expanded team of visitors is concentrating on visits to the elderly and vulnerable members of the congregation; welcome teams are on duty at all entrances every Sunday and keep a look out for newcomers; a newcomers area is set up in the Welcome Area on Sunday mornings on a regular basis. Lunches for the elderly and vulnerable have also been provided on a monthly basis. Attention will be given over the next few months as to how pastoral care can become more inclusive of those in cafechurch and also those members on the periphery of church.

**Finance:** the financial position was set out in the spring edition of West Life and two members of the Finance sub-group have encouraged each of the Sunday congregations to review where possible, their financial giving. We wait to see how the congregation responds.

**Communication:** the Communication sub-group has been asked to give consideration as to how best to share the aims of West Church with the membership; it will also explore new ways of using technology to help keep our large membership up-to-date with all that is happening and to allow members ease of communication with staff, Session and Committee.

**Accommodation:** 'Number '93' has been purchased and refurbished and has considerably relieved the pressure for office accommodation and small group meeting rooms. A review on how to relieve in the short term, the pressure on the accommodation on Sunday mornings has been completed and the recommendations are under consideration. A further review is currently looking at the extra accommodation we may need in the future.

**And finally and importantly:** What is set out above are some of the facts from the review and the corresponding actions. However, central to all that we do and what has brought us to this point after fifty years, is our dependence of God. We are thankful to God for all that He has done to draw people by His Spirit into a living relationship with Himself.

In West we continue to be a Church of the Word and Spirit where:

- God is honoured in all our worship;
- Jesus Christ changes lives;
- We aim to welcome and care for everyone;
- We encourage God's people to discover and use their gifts;
- We reach out in love and service;

until we arrive at real maturity - the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13) ...and that means us all. You are encouraged to reflect prayerfully on your role within the West family. If you want to chat further about any of this, please feel free to contact any member of the pastoral team whose contact details are included on page 3 of this magazine.

# Welcome back to Rev. Andy Galbraith



We are delighted that Rev. Andy Galbraith has been appointed as our new Associate Minister. He will take up his post at the beginning of September and will have responsibility for #cafechurch, outreach and general duties. We surround Andy, his wife Jo and members of his family with our love and prayers.

A Service to mark the Induction of Rev. Andy Galbraith will be held on Thursday 1st September in West at 8.00 pm in the Church.

UNTIL WE ALL ATTAIN  
TO THE UNITY OF THE  
FAITH & OF THE  
KNOWLEDGE OF THE  
SON OF GOD,  
TO MATURE MANHOOD,  
TO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

EPHESIANS  
4:13



# PROJECT GRACE!

## LORD, LET YOUR KINGDOM COME

Rev. Charles McMullen



**Writing in the immediate aftermath of the European Referendum, the United Kingdom finds itself in a sea of uncertainty. Financial markets are turbulent, investors worried and European neighbours stunned. There is the need for a strong hand at the helm to guide the country into calmer waters. However, the Prime Minister has indicated that he will resign and the Leader of the Opposition is fighting for his political survival as his Shadow Cabinet implodes. It all sounds like the perfect storm!**

Although I had made my mind up as to how I would vote, that did not prevent me during the campaign from being swayed almost simultaneously by opposing sets of arguments. I was concerned about economic stability as well as the importance of local, accountable democracy. Even as I stood praying for guidance in the polling booth, I was uncomfortable that such complex issues should be reduced to a binary "yes or no". The pencil in my hand seemed like a very blunt instrument indeed.

It would be interesting to hear reflections from those living in the Irish Republic, where there has been a much greater tradition of holding referenda and an electorate hopefully much more skilful and adept in the process and its consequences. The outcome of the recent vote in the UK

has been to reveal a deeply divided society in need of healing.

Scotland, Northern Ireland and London voted to remain, while Wales and the rest of England decided to leave. One would assume that older people would be much less risk averse, but they opted for Brexit in greater numbers. Younger people felt indignant that their future should be decided by pensioners, but did not turn out in sufficient numbers to make a difference. Homes were often split, which undoubtedly led to some interesting conversations over dinner.

Interestingly, the vast majority of Westminster MPs are now at odds with their constituents. Parliamentarians will find themselves battling with their conscience, as they try and act in response to the will of the people. There may have to be a general election later in the year.

Most challenging has been the manner in which those feeling poor, disadvantaged and marginalised took themselves to the polling stations, quite often for the first time in a generation, to deliver a protest against what they perceive to be the affluent, metropolitan elites which have grown richer and richer, while they have been left behind.

As I reflect over these past few weeks, the words of W B Yeats' poem "The Second Coming" seem very apt: "The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity." Nobody sold a compelling picture to the country as a whole about remaining in Europe, while some of the pledges made very loudly by Leave supporters seemed disingenuous. It is simply not true that

£350m is sent to Europe each week and after the vote leading Brexiteers distanced themselves from the pledge that all this money would be given to the National Health Service.

Since the parliamentary expenses' scandal, there have been fundamental questions about trust right across the political spectrum. A week before votes were cast in the referendum, the Labour MP Jo Cox was murdered in her constituency and there was almost surprise that a politician should be so public spirited and servant-hearted with a genuine love for people.

The two sides of the campaign were dubbed Project Fear and Project Hate. The former produced figures about how much worse off we would be outside the EU, while the latter highlighted that the entire population of Turkey could descend on these shores, if admitted to the EU. The austerity budget threatened in the light of a pro-Brexit vote looks as if it will not materialise. Some of the immigration posters left me profoundly disturbed. It is strange what lies buried in the subconscious, because I suddenly recalled occasions in England during our Troubles when I was almost afraid to open my mouth!

It occurred to me that fear and hate are the antithesis of everything



**"The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity."**

William Butler Yeats  
1865 - 1939

that I stand for as a follower of Jesus Christ. Paul writes to Timothy: "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." Or again as Paul states, we are to "Hate what is evil and cling to what is good." Later in the New Testament 1 John records these words: "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."

All of this leads me to ask the question if there is something radically different we can add to the debate in terms of what might be described as "Project Grace." In a tense, febrile atmosphere full of painful division where trust in the system has broken down, how can we paint a compelling picture of Jesus Christ in His love, truth, faithfulness, mercy and forgiveness? Project Grace is about God's people being sure of their identity in Jesus Christ, totally surrendered to Him as His disciples and journeying by faith, sharing His loving kindness with others.

It's a project not simply about our local community, but stretches out across the nations. The prophet Isaiah reminds us that the nations are like a drop in a bucket to God. At Pentecost, when Parthians, Medes and Elamites, among many others, were gathered in Jerusalem, they all heard the disciples speaking to them in their own language. Such was the demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power that convicted and brought them to Christ.

It's a project of reaching out to others. Events in the Middle East have led to unprecedented numbers

fleeing and seeking refuge in European countries. Some of our congregations in Ireland have been incredibly enriched by the inclusion of different nationalities. Our God-given mandate is to welcome the stranger and care for those in need: "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?" This includes not only the refugee, but many others who are suffering economically. We give voice to the poor and hope to the needy.

Too often, however, Church has been a place where we close doors and draw boundaries, maintaining the status quo and sitting in the same pew. Somehow we need to get out of our Sunday best and enter into the chaos all around us, demonstrating the power of our words in actions, coming alongside the poor, the ill, the lonely, the addicted, the frightened and the angry. Part of me wonders how this can happen and then I realise how much is already going on in quiet, unobtrusive ways.

It's a project of how we use language. Nigel Farage, leader of UKIP, referred to the vote as a victory for real, ordinary and decent people. I am not sure how this left those who voted to remain. On the other side of the spectrum, those wanting to leave were often branded as fascists, bigots and xenophobes.

We have all offended by our exaggerations and been embarrassed by our verbal gaffes. Our language needs to be seasoned, full of wisdom, encouragement and affirmation. "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone" (Colossians 4:6).

Sometimes, more than anything else, those around us who are hurting simply need a listening ear!

It's a project of building genuine community. I long for that kind of Christian community seen in Acts 2 where there is devotion, passion, desire, togetherness, generosity and Godly increase.

It's finally a project of hope. In a sea of such uncertainty, whether we are elated by the outcome of the Referendum or bitterly disappointed, we have the helpful reminder that God is in control. "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19). More than that, around 1850 Matthew Arnold referred in his poem "Dover Beach" to the sea of faith which was once at the full, but now he can only hear "Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar." How we need to be praying for that tide to turn and a mighty outpouring of God in our churches that will break down barriers and spread throughout the land in life-changing, healing power.

**Project Grace! Lord, let your kingdom come!**

**We have this hope as an**

*Anchor for the Soul,*

**firm and secure.**

**Hebrews 6:19**



# CHURCH FAMILY WEEKEND 2016

by Dave Gray

**T**he prospect of heading off to an unfamiliar place with new people always poses questions: Will the beds be comfy? Will the bathrooms be clean? Will people be friendly? Will the food be good? Will I enjoy it? Will it be worth it? These questions can initially be countered by taking the safer option to stay at home. The 'I'll give it a go' option is riskier, but ultimately it is only the experience that allows us to discover the valid answers.

For eighty members of the church family this May we took the 'risky' step of moving our lives to Castlewellan Castle for the first West, Church family weekend. We ranged in age from one to seventy plus, with representatives from café church, Young West, the 10am service and the 11.30 family service. Some of us came with friends, others came on our own, we even had a honeymoon couple (congratulations again Gerry and Carolyn!).

The Castle was built in the second half of the 19th Century and was the home of the Annesley family for some 111 years. It only took an hour to transfer ownership to us, as we settled into our rooms and

Castlewellan Castle, the venue for West's Church Family weekend



discovered the upstairs and downstairs hospitality of our venue. It was every kid's dream (including us big kids), the discovery of secret doors, the mysteries of the cellars and using foam swords to defend the West Church Family from imaginary dragons.

**Faith Building:** Colin Anderson opened the Bible up for us as we walked through the Old Testament and then considered how we keep

going in our race of faith. All generations worshipped and learned together, even praying together—seven year olds praying for pensioners and all ages blessing each other. It was wonderful!

**Food:** Our meal times were shared in the faded grandeur of the great dining hall and were terrific times of chat and connection—real Proverbs 15:17 dining!

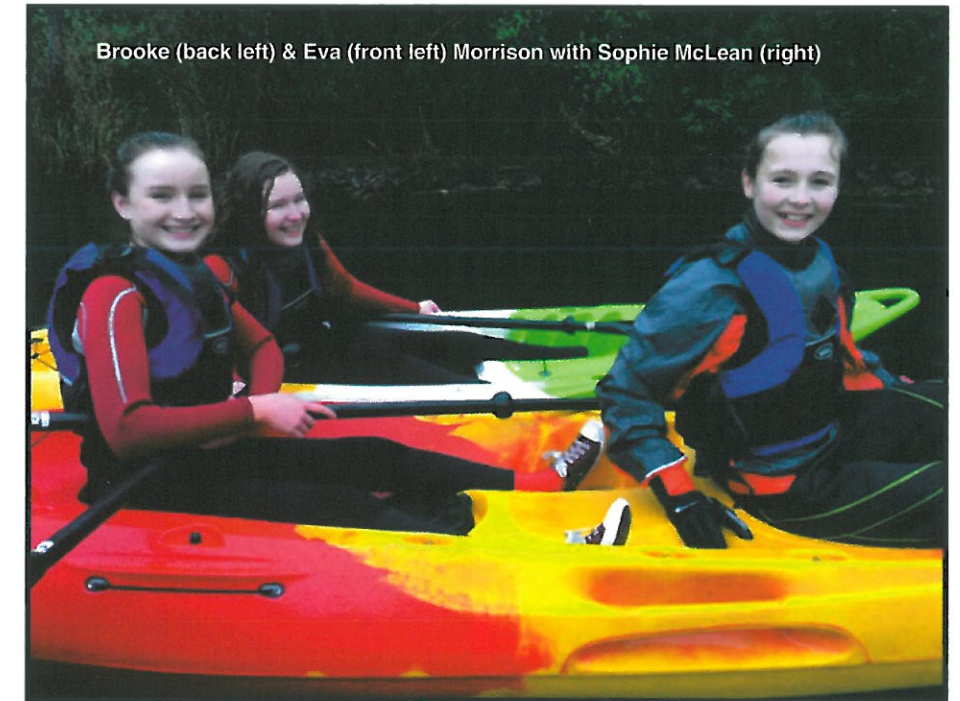


**Family Fun.** Just being in the castle, with the beauty of the parkland and lake stretched out was brilliant for all ages. Our late show with the very talented Robert Sinclair on keyboards, movies in the castle cinema, canoeing on the lake, mountain biking on the slopes, maze walking, leisurely conversations, walks, soak the leader, coffee in Maude's and the evening opening of the ice cream parlour in the cellar were all highlights! But perhaps the zenith was the 'West Olympic Challenge'; an evening of 'sporting' events where the might of USA, the passion of South Africa and the fashionable flair of France were overcome by the carnival kings and queens of team Brazil.

**Fellowship:** Psalm 133:1 says; How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! For me, the legacy of the weekend is exactly what this psalm says. Many came on the weekend knowing people only on a surface level or not at all. As we packed to go on Sunday afternoon, the sun was glorious and we could testify that we tasted what the rest of this Psalm promises: It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life for evermore.

**Future:** A Date to put in your diaries; West Church Family Weekend 2017, 16th-18th June. And start saving! (provisional cost £75 for adults, £260 for families).

Brooke (back left) & Eva (front left) Morrison with Sophie McLean (right)



Fun times at Castlewellan Castle



**How** good and pleasant it is  
when God's people *live together*  
*in unity.*  
Psalm 133:1



**NO  
CHILD  
TAKEN**

# TEARFUND

“Giving a voice to the voiceless and making those invisible, visible”

Over the last couple of months we have been blessed by two visits from Tearfund's Director in India, Prince David and also a film maker working for a small organisation who is a strategy partner with Tearfund in India.

Tearfund is an organisation that works directly through churches and partner organisations and NOT the Government. Tearfund represents a Voice for the Voiceless and makes the Invisible, Visible.

In this article, we have provided you with first hand snapshots of the work that is going on in the Bihar Region of India and also in Mumbai which show how our financial support as a Connected Church is making a real difference to many.

We must PRAY HARDER and PRAY MORE—one life changed makes a difference. THERE IS HOPE!

## True Story:

A 12 year old girl was sold by her mother & brother for 20000 Rupees (around £200.00). She had been raped by her brother and told not to complain by her mother. She ended up working in the Red Light District and became HIV positive. A Tearfund partner worked to rescue her and then provided the aftercare and rehabilitation to help her cope with life outside a brothel. This girl gave her life to Jesus and was able to turn things around, qualifying as a teacher. She is now married and her husband also is HIV positive.

It was through the work of Tearfund partners, that we are supporting, that saved this girl from a horrendous life of abuse and gave her hope for the future.

## SOME HARD HITTING FACTS

- India has a population of over 1.3 billion
- 1/2 of the worlds human trafficking happens in India
- 14 million people live in slavery, 36% of whom are under the age of 18
- 1 million children are involved in the sex trade
- In India there is no respect for women which goes a long way in explaining the high levels of rape
- Prostitution exists due to poverty
- Children aged 3-4 years are sold for £8-£10
- 2 out of 5 girls and 2 out of 7 boys face sexual abuse before the age of 18.
- 60% of sexual abuse is not reported and most of sexual abuse starts within the family

What does Tearfund & their partners provide in Mumbai?

Shelters, Care Homes & Medical Centres

It is extremely hard and very dangerous to bring a child or a woman out of a brothel. Our money goes towards the rescue of a child or lady, rehabilitation of a child or lady and the support of people in this mission. It is labour intensive work—informers are needed, social workers, lawyers, shelter and after care to name just a few pieces of the jigsaw. The rescued person then needs to be educated to integrate them back into society. Many children have no birth certificates—they exist, but they 'don't exist' officially as far as statistics are concerned. Tearfund also gives HOPE and they give JESUS.

Bihar is one of the poorest states in India where much of our financial support is used. Why here?

In 2008 there was a massive flood in the region which was caused by lack of flood defences upstream in Nepal which affected 11-12 districts in Bihar. From then, there have been flood reduction programmes put in place and since 2013 most communities are now quite self-sustaining regarding the risk of flooding.

It was at this time, when many flood defence meetings were taking place, it came to light that many children were going missing through trafficking by family members and family friends. In India, there is a 'shame culture' i.e. they don't talk publicly when things go wrong. Therefore there was no awareness that so many children were being "sent off". It became apparent when people spoke more openly that there was a real need for change and something had to be done.

**Why are children trafficked and what work is being done on the ground?** Many people in the region are landless with no skills. Men therefore move to the cities for petty labour and are away from home for 3-6 month stretches leaving wives at home with 4-5 children to provide food and healthcare—these are the most vulnerable people. Men don't want to leave their villages, so Tearfund partners have generated skills to keep them there e.g. Small Milk Producer Group. A loan is provided to buy a cow which is milked. A better educated boy measures the quantity and fat content and this is then sold onto a factory/company for a fair price. The boy then gets a small wage as do all the producers.

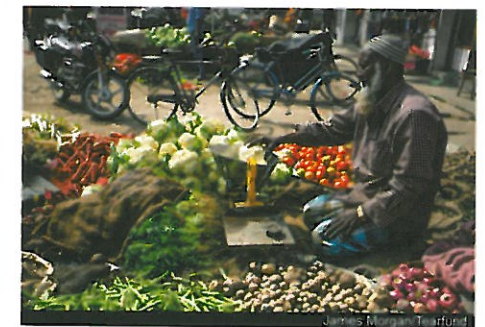


Water irrigation programme

**Working the land:** There is also a programme working in association with scientists who help farmers. They have found that by using different seeds, planting 1 instead of 7 and planting them more spaced out provides a better crop. They are planting 25% of what they used to. They are using 50% less water for irrigation than they used to. They are using organic manure and as a result they are producing 3 times more crop. This process has been ongoing for 12-18 months and more and more people are catching on.



Pictured above is Marta, at a meeting for agricultural management and below is a market seller in Bihar selling his crops as a result of the programme



Women in self help group in Bihar, India. This is one of the ways EHA has supported families enabling them to buy foods and healthcare and send children to school.

Another programme to help people in the Bihar area is to work with women—women are keen to start small businesses and one such business was using an engine to generate electricity. This project started 2 years ago and in that space of time everything has changed. They worked as a group and lobbied the government to install electricity. The production of electricity in villages now allows children to study longer and women to cook better meals for the family providing a much better diet. In a previous edition of West Life we also read how Tearfund partners stepped in to help one man who had lost his legs start up his own business so that he wouldn't have to send his children away.





James Morgan/Tearfund

### Returning Home:

When children return home they are likely to be suffering from trauma, in some cases very deep. As a Connected Church, our financial support allows Tearfund partners to provide highly trained medics and special counsellors who have the skills to get the children to channel their experiences and in many instances their negative experiences are turned into positives within their communities. Each child will be affected differently and as such is treated as an individual with their own tailored rehabilitation.

**THERE IS HOPE!**

After being away from home for maybe 3—6 years boys especially will have lost any interest in studying. The traffickers are clever as they know how to keep the boys interested, making them want to stay. They work the boys extremely hard in the cities in return for good food, a room with facilities that they didn't have at home e.g. they have a TV enabling them to watch movies and with the money they earn they will have access to technology. When they return home, they are misfits—they have no skills, they don't know how to milk cows for example and this makes them vulnerable to being taken away again. With our financial support as a Connected Church, Tearfund and their partners work with these boys to provide them with vocation training and are developing new programmes for them to become involved in their villages.

**THERE IS HOPE!**

### How do Tearfund & their partners bring women out of prostitution?

We must remember that these girls and ladies are not in this business through choice. They were forced into this line of work and the proposition for them to 'get out' of this business is a very welcome idea. They do resist however as they are misfits and have financial obligations to send money home to their families. Tearfund and their partners befriend the girls and women and show them compassion. Sahaara is one such organisation working in this area. Early intervention makes it easier to get the women out of this business.

The girls and leaders are treated with love and dignity and this is reciprocated. Non-judgmental relationships are created and in the end it is their decision to leave this line of work.

**THERE IS HOPE!**



Mark Lang/Tearfund

Indira was trafficked as a child and ended up working in a Mumbai dance bar where she was used for sex. She's now at a home run by a Tearfund Partner.

Change is happening for the better in Bihar and Mumbai and it is with your prayers and financial support that this is possible. Tearfund Partners give more than just food, shelter and aftercare—THEY GIVE HOPE AND THEY GIVE JESUS.

For further information on the work or to support Tearfund please contact Jane Richardson who is our Church representative.

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**A**s we learn to love God for who He is we love Him more and more. He becomes the desire of our hearts and our delight. This is the focus in the Samuel Prayer Hub.

As we worship Jesus and invite the Holy Spirit to come upon us and lead us to the feet of Jesus we enjoy deep communion with Him. Springing out of this, the Holy Spirit speaks words of encouragement and hope, and declarations of truth into our spirits.

Sometimes we are led into spontaneous worship, being drawn closer and closer to the One we adore. Following on from one such time we were given the words, 'the sun of righteousness rises with healing in its wings'. When we looked up the context in Malachi 4, we read that this promise is given to those who revere His Name, which is just what we had been doing. And so we rejoiced and declared that the Son indeed would rise with healing in His wings over the people of West and over Bangor and then we went on to include others known to us for whom we desired healing. At other times the Spirit may lead us into a song of victory, to be sung, for example over Bangor, as



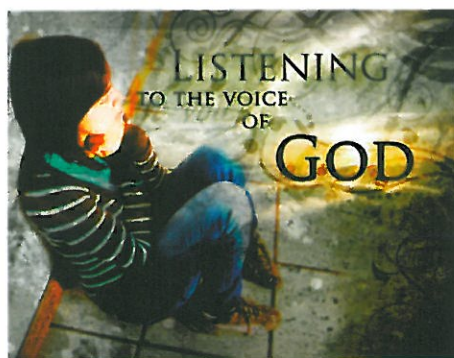
a declaration of His intent. Sometimes, after we have been thanking Him for something, He will give us a promise. One time after someone had been thanking God for the generosity in the giving to the outreach fund the Holy Spirit gave us the words, 'see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out blessings upon you'. When we looked up the context in Malachi 3 we read that this promise was given to those who brought their tithes into His house that there be food. Clearly God was indicating that generosity over and above other giving was going to be blessed with

an open heaven also. And so this led us into further thanksgiving and assurance.

Each evening is full of expectancy as we meet together. Folks come when they can and for as long as they want to, to the Prayer Room at 7.30 pm until 9.00 pm on the third Monday of each month. Please come and be part of this wonderful time in which we set aside the busyness of life and still ourselves in God's presence.

Just being there is enough to revive us!

Heather Thompson



### 'Listening To God' Prayer Seminar

Over the past year more than sixty people, thirsty to hear more consistently from God, have come to this seminar. Each seminar has been lively with anticipation and has become an oasis of refreshment and deepening relationships.

As we have shared experiences of hearing God talk to us, and as we have learned more about how amazingly God has equipped us by His Spirit in our spirits, we have had 'the eyes of our hearts' opened even

more to seeing and hearing from God.

Out of such a two way relationship insights come to us personally for healing of our hearts: a process which draws us closer to the One Who has the answers, and through Whom we can move into greater freedom. We also reflect on how the Holy Spirit comes upon us to enable us to be witnesses, and how He guides us into God's purpose for our lives as individuals. As we abide in Jesus, Jesus abides in us, and as we listen for and respond to His insights, we will be about our Father's business just as Jesus was.

We meet for three consecutive weeks at a specified time for two hours, followed by a fourth meeting a few weeks later so as to follow up on any further questions and to encourage each other. The next two seminars are scheduled, the first on Wednesday evenings 14th, 21st and 28th September, with feedback on 19th October, each at 7.30pm in Meeting Room 1 in No

93, and the second on Wednesday mornings 11th, 18th and 25th January, followed by 15th February at 10.30am in the Prayer Room. It would be helpful if you would let Elaine and Cheryl in the office know when you are coming, or put your names on the sign up sheet in the Welcome Area near the time, as I would prefer to keep the groups to ten or twelve people at most. If needs be I will arrange another one!

There is no expectancy placed on anyone other than to enjoy and be encouraged in growing in 'listening to God'. Please come and explore this with others.

Heather Thompson



**'The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners.'** (Luke 4:18,19)

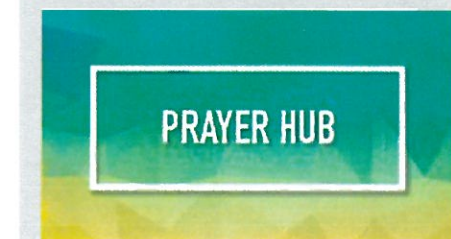
## Prayer Hubs

We, in West, believe in Prayer. While we do not understand how it works we know about the power of prayer and how God loves to hear from His children.

To this end, last session we launched prayer hubs and would hope that each activity in West, along with its leaders and participants, would be prayed for at some stage each week. There is so much which goes on that no one person could pray for everything but we ask you to sign up for the prayer hub where that activity is on your heart.

Information sheets listing all the hubs are at the Welcome Desk and on the Noticeboard. You can meet in the Prayer Room which is available most times to pray, or meet together in another venue or on your own, coming together only infrequently.

Thursdays (8.00 am, 2.00 pm and 8.00 pm) are dedicated times for prayer in the Prayer Room. We pray for one hour and it would be great to see you at one of these sessions.



# PRAYER MINISTRY COURSE

In His life and through His death and resurrection, Jesus brought these words of Isaiah to fulfilment. He preached about the Kingdom, healed the sick and delivered those who were oppressed. Towards the end of His life He said these remarkable words, 'I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.' (John 14:12.)

There will be an opportunity for anyone who has a desire to help others in this way to attend a prayer ministry course on two successive Saturdays, the 8th and 15th October, from 10am until 4pm each day. There will be a mix of teaching and discussion, and of receiving prayer and of praying with others. There will be no demands made on you so if you would like to explore this aspect of ministry please come.

Heather Thompson

## STREET MINISTRY

### Street by Street Ministry September 2016

Carnalea Methodist is considering a new initiative in the autumn involving prayer in the community. Seymour Street Methodist Church in Lisburn currently runs a prayer project where they choose a street each fortnight and a team knock, door to door, and take prayer requests or leave a note offering prayer if the person wants to post the prayer request into the Church post box. That street is prayed for by the entire congregation for a fortnight and the individual requests are prayed for by the Church prayer team. Then another street is visited and becomes the focus for the next fortnight and so on.

The streets around Carnalea are part of Bangor West and our friends from the Methodist have asked if the Street by Street Ministry is something in which West and our prayer team would like to join and pursue. They have invited the leaders of the prayer project in Lisburn to talk about their experiences and the practicalities of establishing this ministry and have invited us to attend. A number of us have already indicated our intention to go. If you are interested in hearing about this exciting ministry please join us in Carnalea Methodist on Tuesday 27th September at 7.30 pm.





# ALL CHANGE IN NEW ZEALAND

An update from Ben, Jenni, Samuel, Joshua & Hannah Carswell  
Serving God with Tertiary Students Christian Fellowship in New Zealand



Ben & Jenni with their children Joshua, Hannah & Samuel

## Thank you for your prayers

The past month has been full of challenges and complications, but we have seen God's good hand on our lives and circumstances, so thank you for praying for us. We are facing more busy months, so we would value your prayers as we minister amongst students here in New Zealand.

## Europe Visit

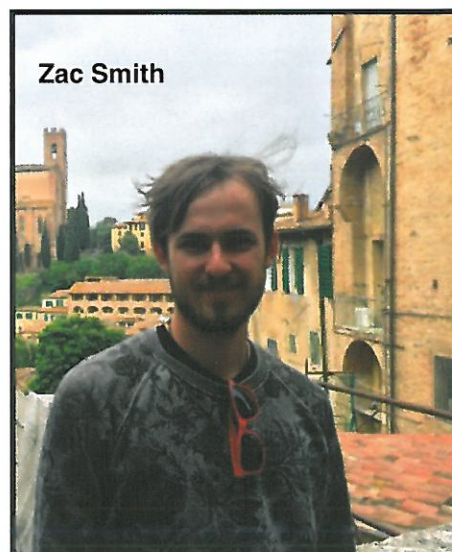
It was a real encouragement for Ben to spend time with various friends and family who partner with us in the work. After sleeping in 16 different beds, travelling by plane, trains and automobiles and preaching on 4 occasions, it was good to

get home for a rest! Thank you for your prayers for Jen & the family when Ben was away. Unfortunately, 24 hours after returning, an old back injury flared up and Ben has been in significant pain and discomfort, spending much of his first week incapacitated.

It was brilliant to spend some time with Zac Smith, working with IFES in Siena, Italy. Zac was a student who Ben met regularly to disciple, studying the Bible together and taking him to the Urbana missions' conference in the USA in 2012. During that conference, Zac heard God calling him to serve with IFES in Italy and left in August 2015 to serve in Italy. Zac is pretty much fluent in Italian and making a real contribution to the work in Siena.

Praise God for the day to day

work of recent years here in New Zealand having an impact globally.



## Answered Prayer

We recently asked for prayer for Jen's work situation. Jen was expected to return to working 3 days a week, which for various reasons we felt was impractical for us. It seemed somewhat impossible, but remarkably, her work came back with an option that has allowed her to continue working just 2 days per week. When we asked for prayer it seemed it would take a miracle to get this outcome—give thanks to God that He has worked to bring this to fruition!

## In June

Ben has been in Queenstown, on the South Island, where he spent time with TSCF's MINTY discipleship interns. Ben is training them in thinking about mission through evangelism and apologetics as well as helping them think how they articulate the gospel clearly, whilst being both faithful and relevant.

Ben is also part of the TSCF leadership team that gathers to pray,

discuss and plan for the work in New Zealand. Please pray for unity, clarity and vision as we seek God's will for the work here.

## Staff Changes

Once again, we have some changes ahead in the coming months. LiLian Lim, who has been on staff in Hamilton is moving on, meaning we will be in a period with no full time staff in the region. We are thankful that Dave Hodgkinson, a former TSCF intern, has agreed to join TSCF and is currently working on raising support so he can start the role. In the meantime, Ben will be covering the groups in the Waikato region.

In Wellington, we are looking forward to welcoming Max & Mei Rideout from InterVarsity Canada onto the staff. They are arriving in August and we are looking forward to introducing them into Kiwi and Wellington life, as well as specifically into the student work. They

bring experience working with international students, which we hope to build on. We are also hoping that Kim Shaw will be able to join the TSCF team in Wellington in a part-time capacity. Again, she is in the process of raising support to get to start the role.

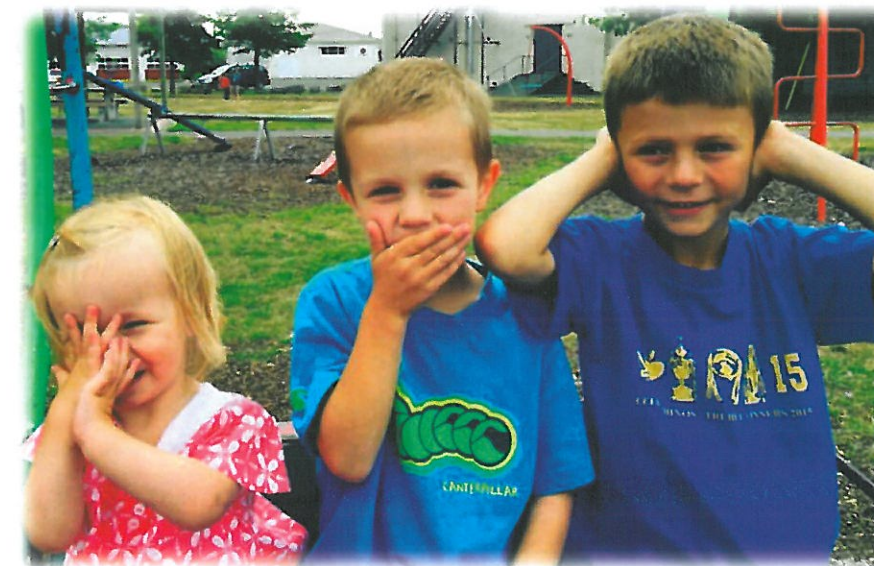
Now that the SPARC conference is over and with new staff joining in Wellington, Ben should be able to focus more of his time on his National Outreach Co-ordinator role. We are currently exploring some projects and possibilities that may allow this to be developed further, particularly amongst some of our graduates. Please continue to pray for wisdom in the decision making for these and further opportunities in the future.

## Family

The family are well. The boys have had good reports from their teachers at school about their progress. Hannah continues to delight us with her delicate, but mischievous nature. Jen survived the nearly 3 weeks Ben was away and it was great when the end of school term came to allow us to spend time together as a family.

Thank you again for your prayers and encouragement

Love from the Carswells



Hannah, Josh & Sam enjoying the park

## Be Part of It!

We trust in God to provide every cent needed to do the work He has called us to. If you would like to stand with Ben or Jen financially in this work please contact Ben directly on [benc@fscf.org.nz](mailto:benc@fscf.org.nz) or speak with the Church Office.



# SPECIAL FRIENDS ACTIVITY CLUB

by John McGilton



**“Special Friends” Activity Club is a group set up for children with all forms of special needs whether they be physical or neurological.**

Our Group's aim is to provide an enjoyable, relaxed and friendly atmosphere where all members can feel free to explore and participate in a wide range of activities, including arts & crafts, music, physical play and sensory stimulation. The Group

is for families who know all too well the daily struggles faced at outdoor events or indoor play areas and the logistics involved attending other youth organisations. We hope to present an invaluable opportunity for children to engage and develop their much needed social and motor skills whilst creating lasting friendships in a calmer environment.

This will undoubtedly provide a great chance for parents and carers to participate or relax whilst sharing mutual experiences and exchanging knowledge.

We also arrange fun days out throughout the year with visits to the farm or ten-pin bowling and we also invite guests to join us at our meetings such as Children's Entertainers or exotic animals etc.

Our children are aged between 4–11 years old, with siblings made welcome, and we run on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month between 10.00 am and 12.00 noon.

We are self-reliant and survive purely on our own fundraising, so any small donation will be greatly appreciated.

As with any group we are always keen to enlist the help of energetic and committed leaders who are able and willing to give up just 2 hours a month, as per Club timings. Age or experience is not important—only the patience and kindness to help make someone feel special.

For further details on helping out or bringing your child to Special Friends, please contact the Church Office.

## HOSPITAL & PASTORAL VISITATION

If you have a family member in hospital, please do not hesitate to contact Rev Charles McMullen (91454338). Although there is a good chaplaincy service in all the major hospitals in Belfast, there are many gaps in the system. Nowadays there is such a quick turnover of hospital beds, making it very easy to miss somebody.

The same applies to general visitation. Members of the pastoral team are more than happy to call. If they can be of any help, please do not hesitate to be in touch with them.

Please do not assume that members of the pastoral team may have already heard of a particular situation of need. It is always much better for us to be told several times than not at all!

The Pastoral Team



# VOLUNTEER

vol·un·teer [vol-uhn-teer]

**Noun**

1. a person who voluntarily offers himself or herself for a service or undertaking.

2. a person who performs a service willingly and without pay.

**A**s a growing congregation there can never be too many volunteers. Fact - in West, with almost 1100 families or over 2800 members, we are often short of volunteers both on Sundays and during the week.

**Where do we especially need help?**

**Welcome Rota:**

On a Sunday we have members of our congregation on "Welcome Duty", two in the Vestibule and one at the Crawfordsburn Road entrance. Would you be willing to add your name to the rota for one or two Sundays over the course of a year, or maybe even for a month block? **A smile and a warm welcome is all that is required.**

**Sunday Morning Tea/Coffee:**

Would you and a few friends be willing to make tea & coffee for between Morning Services? You can do this once or twice a month or a couple of times throughout the year. There are clear instructions as to what is required—all you need to do is bring the milk and make sure the Charles has a coffee waiting for him in the Minister's Room between Services!

**Mums & Toddlers:**

Would you be available for a few hours on a Tuesday morning to help the Mum's & Toddlers Team set up toys, prepare tea/coffee, scones, juice & biscuits, play with the toddlers, chat with the parents and of course tidy up at the end? **No matter how young or old you are, if you have a love for babies and toddlers you'll fit right in.**

**J Club & Crèche:**

We are always keen to have new J Club leaders and parents join our

teams to help share the rota. Sonia has the various Sunday School resources for J Club prepared in advance. Volunteer for a month at a time for a few weeks at Crèche or during the summer when other leaders are off if you don't think you can commit to being a leader.

These are only a few areas where we are currently looking for volunteers—there is plenty going on and help will never be turned down. Don't be shy—give the office a call to find out more.





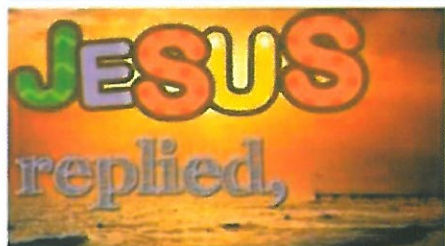
# God's Big Plan

by Clare & Michael Smith

**I**t's not often you get the opportunity to reflect back on your walk with God but writing this article has enabled us to do just that!

We are the Smith family... Michael, Clare, Oliver, Patrick and Austin. Michael and I have been together for 20 years. I was brought up in the Salvation Army and Michael grew up in Glasry Presbyterian, so when we got engaged we had the dilemma of where to worship.

Even at this stage in our relationship we knew God had a place for us and this is something that we hold dear to us each day; "You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand". John 13:7



You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.

John 13:7

So the story goes that one Sunday morning we went for a walk down to Helen's Bay beach when we saw people going into the Presbyterian Church on Church Road and we thought we would pop in. Six years later we were still enjoying the closeness of fellowship within a small congregation. Oliver was born in 2006 and something changed in us. Instead of God's word and worship being for our own personal strength and witness, we now felt this huge sense of responsibility that God had blessed us with a child and now it was up to us, as parents, to teach



Clare & Michael with Austin, Oliver & Patrick (front)

him in the ways of the Lord.

Meanwhile Michael had been going to a Badminton Club at Hamilton Road Presbyterian and he suggested that perhaps we should go one Sunday. So we did. We went once a month for a long time. Michael felt we would benefit from the different activities on offer and he especially enjoyed the fellowship among younger men his own age, many of whom were new fathers or had young families.

**"These commandments that I give you today...impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk...when you lie down and when you get up" Deuteronomy 6:6-7**

I was very reluctant to say the least but I did feel a sense of spiritual fullness which I hadn't felt before and I was enjoying fellowship with other families with young children. We prayed about a permanent move and eventually we did. While we were at Hamilton Road, Patrick and Austin were born and we spent 5 years there encouraging each other and building each other up.

But one year whilst on holiday we discussed how we each felt that something was holding us back from serving. Admittedly we both felt that we were continually 'taking' from Church. We were being fed spiritually; we were being encouraged in worship, loved and prayed for within fellowship groups and our children were being nurtured in Sunday School and crèche. But each time

we tried to give, it was as if God was saying, 'No, this isn't right'.

It was the Easter after that holiday that Oliver attended Easter Mission for the first time and gave his heart to Jesus. It was also during this week that God gifted us with a firm and definite plan that we should 'go home' to West Church and that is where we went. It was the easiest decision we have ever made. The peace we felt in our hearts reassured us that it was the right place for us. Needless to say, when God has us where he wanted us, he opened the doors for us to serve! I got involved initially helping at Mums and Toddlers, Michael started helping in BB and disappears off every now and again to play at being Bear Grylls with the other BB leaders! I love helping in P1 Sunday School and I even became the agent for the Presbyterian Herald!

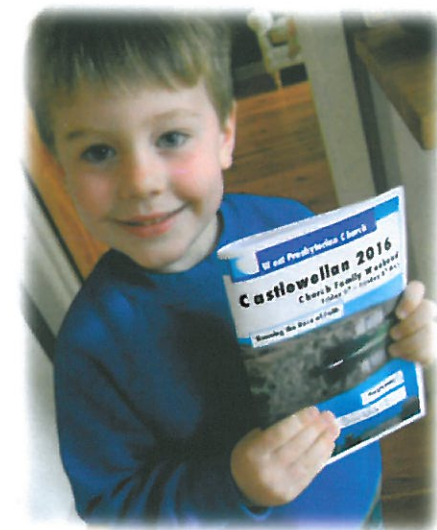
But a special prayer we have as members of West Church is that our families are supported. We are involved with an organisation called

'Care for the Family' which aims to promote strong family life and to help those who face family difficulties. Michael and I both come from homes where our parents divorced and that was hard for us when we were growing up. It also had an effect on our own marriage and is still affecting us as we try to explain why Nana and Grandpa fell out of love etc.

But the reality is, life is tough. Things happen, as Christians we are not immune.

- A new baby comes along, marriages are put under pressure
- A husband loses his job, how do families cope?
- The children hit teenage years...when will it ever end!

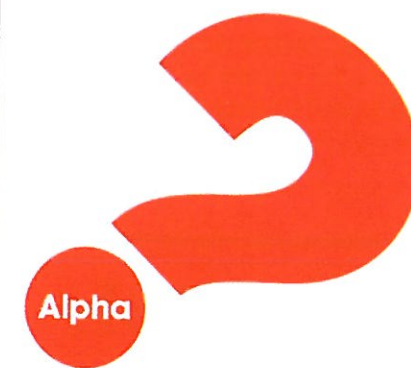
All of these issues and more affect our Church and we need to support one another, pray for each other and learn to serve each other in whatever way we can.



Austin, after a fantastic weekend away with the Church family

It is such an amazing experience to feel God's presence whilst we love, care and serve one another.

**"God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them" Hebrews 6:7**



## What is Alpha?

Alpha is a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith, typically run over eleven weeks. Each talk looks at a different question around faith and is designed to create conversation. Alpha is run all around the globe, and everyone's welcome. It runs in cafes, churches, universities, homes, bars—you name it. No two Alphas look the same, but generally they have three key things in common: food, a talk and good conversation.

**First up there's Food:** Food has a way of bringing people together. It's no different at Alpha. Most sessions start with food because it's a great way to build community and get to know each other.

**Then a Talk:** The talks are designed to engage and inspire conversation. Usually around 30 minutes long, they explore the big issues around faith and unpack the basics of Christianity, addressing questions from *Who is Jesus*, and *How can we have faith?* To *Why and how do I pray?* and *How does God guide us?*

**Followed by Discussion:** Probably the most important part of any Alpha: the chance to share thoughts and ideas on the topic, and simply discuss it in a small group. There's no obligation to say anything and there's nothing you can't say (seriously!). It's an opportunity to hear from others and contribute your own perspective in an honest, friendly and open environment.

**Want to find out more?** We will be running an Alpha course on Tuesday evenings, starting 27th September at 8.00 pm, under the leadership of Rev. Andy Galbraith. There is a sign up sheet on the Church Noticeboard in the Welcome Area. This course is open to anyone, so family members and friends are welcome to come along.



# FAREWELL...

## End of an Era in 7th Bangor

**W**hen you think of Scouts in West Church, the person you think of first is Jack Darrah (Mr Scouting). In 1966, Jack started his Scouting career, as the Assistant Scout Master. When the second Pack of Cubs were formed in 1977, Jack became the Akela, a role he held until 1989. He then became District Commissioner, followed by a term as County Commissioner, returning to 7th Bangor in 1997 as Group Scout Leader, a role he has held until May this year. Jack has been a tireless and dedicated worker for the group, increasing the numbers in all sections, so much so that there is a significant waiting list. He was very willing to help out all sections, whether it be a Squirrel party, a Beaver Fun Day or cooking for the Cub Pack Holiday, taking Scouts and Explorer Scouts as far afield as Canada & Austria. Jack has been the recipient of the following Scouting awards, the Medal of Merit, The Silver Acorn and The Silver Wolf, which is the highest award and is the unrestricted gift of the Chief Scout and only awarded for service of a most exceptional nature.

Jack has witnessed many milestones in the history of Northern



Jack demonstrating campfire cooking skills

Ireland Scouting, the formation of Squirrels, Beavers and the introduction of girls to Scouting. From his boyhood connections in Cregagh Scouts to County Commissioner, Scouting has been Jack's vocation.

Although, Jack is retiring from 7th Bangor, he will still be involved at District and County Level. We wish him well in the future.

Norma Conway

## Paul Westwood—GSL

**P**aul Westwood has been appointed as the Group Scout Leader of 7th Bangor Scouts. Paul was born in Bangor but the family relocated to Derbyshire where Paul was a Cub in 1st Bolover. They returned to Bangor in 1981.

Paul became an assistant Scout Leader in 2007 when his children were in Cubs & Beavers. He became the Scout Leader in 2008 and from 2013 he has taken on the role of Assistant District Commissioner for Scouts.

Paul has been a chef/catering manager for the past 24 years. His hobbies outside the family and work are fishing and going to the gym. We wish Paul well in his new role and assure him of our prayers and support.



Jack, pictured with his wife Anne and daughter Jayne at a farewell presentation

**M**any thanks to Jayne Fulton for all the time and commitment she has given to our children over the past many years in West Church.

Jayne was responsible for overseeing all of Sunday School and in recent years has been a key leader in Junior Beginners.

We will miss her enthusiasm, creativity and commitment in sharing Bible stories with children. We will continue to put into practice her desire for each child to be known individually and to be prayed for.

We want to wish Jayne all the very best as she continues to fulfil her responsibilities as an elder at West Church and any new ventures she embarks upon.

From the J Club leaders.



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# MALAWI UPDATE

## BY SAM & BARENICE

**T**he Student Christian Organisation of Malawi (SCOM) is an interdenominational organisation established by the church to provide guidance in the spiritual, character and leadership development of students both in post primary academic institutions and universities/colleges. SCOM has grown from 20 branches at the time of its formation in 1961, to over 500 currently, with a student membership of 30,000 in post-primary educational institutions.

Sam Mayuni heads up the work of SCOM in the northern region of Malawi and Barenice works alongside him in a voluntary capacity.

SCOM HAS five aims, namely:

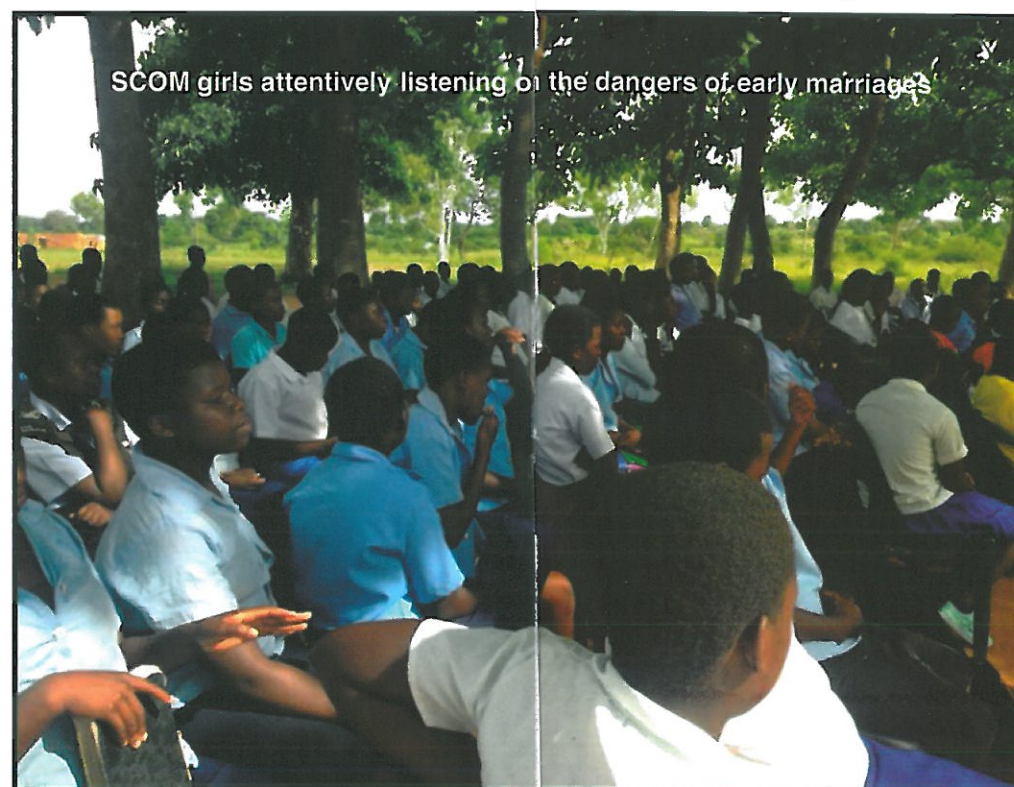
- To call all students to a personal faith in God; Father Son and the Holy Spirit;
- To deepen the spiritual life of students through prayer, Bible study and worship;
- To help Christian students live as witnesses for Christ;
- To call students to work for the extension, unity and renewal of the Church throughout the world;
- To call students to responsible membership of the Church in personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord



Students enjoy group discussions on the dangers of technology amongst the youth

### Some Positive Developments:

- More Students are showing interest in SCOM activities.
- During some previous visits to schools, a significant number of school administrators asked if SCOM could assist with workshops exclusively for girls because of the numbers of young orphan girls leaving schools and entering loveless marriages with certain problems in the future.
- Following visits to universities and colleges by Barenice in 2015, many activities that were not happening are now taking place in colleges and universities in our region. Some are new conferences and workshops that started last year.



SCOM girls attentively listening on the dangers of early marriages

### Universities and colleges 2016 SCOM Conference

This year the Universities and Colleges Conference was attended by 270 students from the northern part of Malawi. Last year we had about 130 students. What an opportunity to reach out to the upcoming leaders!

### Some Key Concerns:

**The HIV/AIDS Crisis:** The youth are the group hardest hit by the AIDS epidemic. They are the most sexually active group and in general, still a long way from changing their sexual behaviour. Thus SCOM has a difficult task. A related concern is the phasing out of boarding facilities in Community Day Secondary Schools. The situation in most of these centres is that students self-cater; sadly where there is no control. These facilities are known as 'gender hostels' and immorality is rife here.



### The plight of needy students:

The number of students who cannot afford school fees is increasing. SCOM is approached by many students seeking assistance but regrettably, owing to lack of finances, it is not possible to help. Some girls have been forced to engage in relationships with 'sugar daddies' to raise their school fees. Such behaviour exposes them to the risk and contraction of HIV/AIDS as well as frustrating SCOM's efforts to promote good moral values.

**Prosperity Gospel:** Prophetic ministries by prosperity gospel preachers remain a threat to Christian work. Many students are now just vulnerable and taken in by those who might prophesy to the students about their bright future. As a result many young people stop reading the Bible and fail to work hard at school, believing Jesus will bless them with all their needs.

### Financial support from well wishers:

SCOM is so thankful for the continuous support it received from West Church. In 2015-2016, the support we received was mostly spent on conducting workshops and conferences for girls, as pictured above.

**Pictured right, is baby Susan Charisma Mayuni, the beautiful new daughter of Sam & Barenice and little sister for Samantha.**

### Prayer Items: With about 350 schools in our region, please pray

- For us that we will be able to continue being available to students with news of hope.
- That God will continue supplying us with resources for our visit to schools and servicing of our car which is not as strong as it was and it's likely that it will not take us much further with ministry work.
- For our family—we are entrusted with a big task and that is to bring meaningful life to the youth in our region.





# START DATES

## Sundays at West

Group	Age	Start date	Time	Contact	Number
Crèche	Babies & Toddlers up to 3 years	Sunday 4th Sept	11.20 am	Sonia Mawhinney	07899 853039
Little Acorns		Sunday 4th Sept	11.30 am	Heather McCreary	07899 853039
Junior Beginners	3-4 years	Sunday 6th Sept	11.30 am	Sonia Mawhinney	07899 853039
J Club	P1-P7	Sunday 6th Sept	11.40 am	Sonia Mawhinney	07899 853039
Young West	Year 8 and over	Sunday 4th Sept	10.00 am	Andrew McClelland	07753 347748
Missionary Interest	for anyone	1st Sunday of month	11.15 am	Ian McAleer	9127 2814
Peru Prayer	Open to all	Last Sunday of month	8.00 pm	Beverley Bryans	9122 6908

## Youth & Children

Group	Age	Start date	Time	Contact	Number
Bangor West Nursery Playgroup	Pre-school	Thursday 29 Aug	9.00 am	Allison Easlea & Wendy Somers	9147 0664
Girls' Discipleship Group	speak to Andrew	Monday 5th Sept	7.00 pm	Andrew McClelland	07753 347748
Guides	Rainbows 4-7 years	Monday 19th Sept	6.30 pm	Stephanie Shields	07718 757746
	Brownies 7-10 years	Monday 19th Sept	6.30 pm	Sonia Beckett	9146 5090
	Guides 10-15 years	Monday 19th Sept	7.30 pm	Stephanie Shields	07718 757746
Parents & Toddlers	pre-nursery	Tuesday 13th Sept	10.00 am	Maureen Blackmore	9145 6897
Boy's Discipleship Group	speak to Andrew	Tuesday 6 Sept	6.30 pm	Andrew McClelland	07753 347748
Girls' Brigade	Explorers age 3-P4 Co. Section P5+	Wednesday 31st Aug	6.00 pm	Cheryl Miller	07851 699000
		Wednesday 31st Aug	7.15 pm	Cheryl Miller	07851 699000
Boys' Brigade	Anchor Boys P1-P4	Thursday 1st Sept	6.30 pm	Marie Taylor	9181 4238
	Junior Section P5-P7	Thursday 1st Sept	6.30 pm	Barry Powell	9146 1419
	Co. Section Yr 8+	Thursday 1st Sept	7.45 pm	Roy Nesbitt (Captain)	9145 0419
Girls' Discipleship Group	speak to Andrew	Thursday 8th Sept	6.30 pm	Andrew McClelland	07753 347748
Coffee Bar	Year 8+	Friday 9th Sept	3.00 pm	Andrew McClelland	07753 347748
Scouts	Squirrels 4-6 years	Friday 9th Sept	6.15 pm	Jayne Stranex	9146 3260
	Beavers 6-8 years	Friday 9th Sept	6.15 pm	Phil Orr	07772 750403
	Cubs 8-10½ years	Friday 9th Sept	6.45 pm	Colin Lorimer	07872 445370
	Scouts 10½ - 14 years	Friday 4th Sept	7.30 pm	John Gillespie	07713 081781
	Group Scout Leader			Paul Westwood	07443 855513
Special Friends	5-11 years	Saturday (1st & 3rd)	10.00 am	John McGilton	9145 1144
wYldlife	Year 8-10	Saturday 3rd Sept	7.00 pm	Andy Shields	07738 260680
Younglife	Year 11-13	Saturday 3rd Sept	7.00 pm	Andrew McClelland	07753 347748

## Courses

Group	Who for	Start date	Time	Contact	Number
AGAPE (1 day course)	Open to all	To be confirmed	9.00 am	Albert Ward	9127 0104
ALPHA	Open to all	Tuesday 27th Sept	8.00 pm	Rev. Andy Galbraith	9145 9688
DivorceCare	Open to all	Thurs 5th Jan '17	7.30 pm	Dorothy Campbell	9146 5333
Freedom in Christ	Open to all	January 2017	8.00 pm	Albert Ward	9127 0104
Griefshare	Anyone bereaved	Friday 7th Oct	7.30 pm	Anne Andrews	9181 8145
Life in the Spirit	Open to all	Course in Jan 2017	7.00 pm	Rev. Charles McMullen	9145 4338

## Groups

Group	Who for	Start date	Time	Contact	Number
Tuesday Together	Senior Adults	Tuesday 13th Sept	2.30 pm	Terry/Carol Burke	9145 5420
Sycamore Club	Adults with learning disability	Tuesday 13th Sept	6.30 pm	Derek/Tanya Polley	9146 8394
3Cs (Craft/chat/Coffee)	Ladies	Tuesday 6th Sept	7.00 pm	Norma Conway	9146 9913
Badminton	Adults	Tuesday 6th Sept	7.30 pm	John Hutcheson	07711 611846
Banner Group	Open to all	Wednesday 7th Sept	10.30 am	Roberta Hagan	9122 7611
3Cs (Craft/chat/Coffee)	Ladies	Wednesday 7th Sept	7.30 pm	Norma Conway	9146 9913
Carers' Group	All carer's	Tuesday 6th Sept (1st Tues of month thereafter)	7.30 pm	Margaret Webb	9146 1883
Wednesday Night Fellowship & Prayer	Open to all	Wednesday 7th Sept	7.00 pm	William Hall	9146 1071
Thursday Bible Study	Open to all	Thursday 15th Sept	10.30 am	Albert Ward	9127 0104
Art Club	Open to all	Thursday 15th Sept	2.00 pm	Henrietta Alexander	9145 1350
Presbyterian Women	All ladies	Thursday (2nd & 4th)	8.00 pm	Maureen Blackmore	9145 6897
Friday Men's Fellowship	All men	Friday 2nd Sept	10.30 am	Derick Riddell for 11.00 am	9122 9384
Men's Breakfast	All men	Last Saturday of month	8.00 am	Paul Shields	9042 5310
Walking Group	Open to all	Last Saturday of month	varies	Derek Polley	9146 8394
Home Groups	Open to all	as arranged		Dave Gray	07812 915428
PULSE		as arranged		Mary Braithwaite	9145 2702

## Prayer & Praise

Group	Who for	Start date	Time	Contact	Number
Prayer for Israel	Open to all	1st Monday	7.30 pm	Ivor McClinton	07966 489892
Prayer Ministry Team	Ministry team	as arranged	7.30 pm	Heather Thompson	9146 7290
Samuel Prayer Hub	Open to all	3rd Monday	7.30 pm	Heather Thompson	9146 7290
Worship Group		Monday 12th Sept	8.00 pm	Andrew Seaton	9127 4673
"Listening to God"	Open to all	as arranged		Heather Thompson	9146 7290
Choir	Open to all	Wednesday 7th Sept	8.15 pm	Gillian Caughey	9127 2277
UCB Team Meeting	UCB Team	Last Wednesday	8.15 pm	Dorothy Campbell	9146 5333
United Prayer Meeting	Open to all	Thursday (all year) Thursday (all year) Thursday (all year)	8.00 am 2.00 pm 8.00 pm	Catherine Bell	9146 9246
Bangor Prayer Watch	Open to all	last Friday of month	8.00 pm	Beverley Bryans	91226908



# WORLD VISION IN ANGOLA

George Hopkinson provides us with an update on Grenville's work with World Vision and family life

**W**e have been living and working in Angola for World Vision for 18 months now. Grenville, Ollie (12), Lulu (11) and I are based in the capital, Luanda and Toby (14) is at school in Ireland. It can be quite a challenge here at times as Angola is a country of extremes. It's a beautiful place, with dramatic bushland and coastline, but is also frustrating in terms of corruption; heart breaking in the numbers of children whose hold on life is so fragile, yet also inspiring when actions can have such a tangible, visible affect on lives.

Grenville's role is to lead the World Vision team here and try to expand the programmes they deliver. World Vision has programmes targeting malaria, providing clean water, promoting agriculture and economic development and supporting community land rights. However, a particularly important area of World Vision's focus is on the health of the youngest children in the rural provinces. Angola is globally THE worst place to be born and has the highest death rate for children under 5. Over 400 children under 5 die here every day.

World Vision sends in teams to assess the levels of malnutrition of children in villages. Using an armband to measure the child's biceps, it is very clear if there is malnutrition. If a child's arm is large enough that the armband measures green, then they are ok, orange means that the child is moderately acutely malnourished and red means severe acute malnourishment - children with moderate & severe acute malnutrition will most likely die without treatment. Our own children tried on these bands and were shocked to see how small a child's arm would need to be to indicate malnourishment.

The UN recommends emergency measures when community malnutrition levels rise above 12% however some of the villages Grenville has visited have levels of malnutrition as high as 36%. The solution can sometimes be quite simple though. World Vision provide a 'therapeutic food' which is like concentrated peanut butter and very high in fat and protein. The families are also helped by a community activist, who teaches the mothers how to prepare food for their

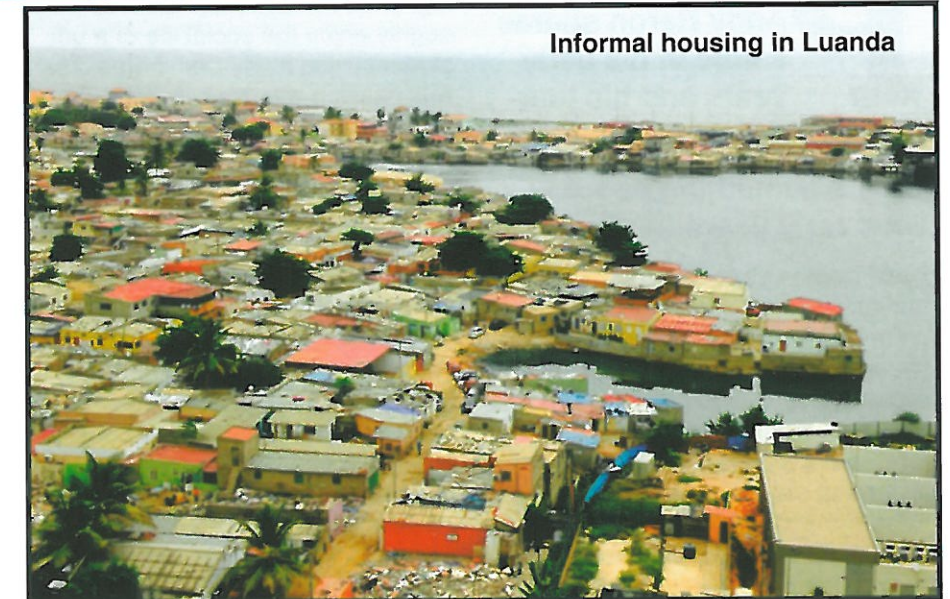


The Hopkinson's all together Christmas in South Africa (l-r) Toby, George, Lulu, Grenville and Ollie

children and helps them understand what babies and children need in order to be healthy. In rural areas, the average age of a first time mother is 14 years with many having 4 or 5 children before they are 20 years old. Education levels are low with only 2% of rural girls participating in secondary education. These social, educational and economic issues have a direct impact on a mother's ability to care for their children's health.

Grenville loves his job here, although at times the level of need feels overwhelming. The corruption and apathy of the government is also frustrating – and he's trying to do it all in Portuguese too – just to up the ante!

Pictured above left is a malnourished child in October 2015 and again in May 2016 after 'therapeutic food'



Informal housing in Luanda

challenging for me – Toby is thriving there and Ollie just cannot wait to start! (I'm not taking it personally!)

The security situation here has deteriorated in recent months as the economy is based on oil and the oil price has fallen dramatically, the local currency has devalued and people have lost their income and crime is rising. World Vision has decided that Lulu and I should move to South Africa, which is nearby, (4 hours by plane) and accessible to Ollie and Toby (Angola is not as they have no residency visa), and that Grenville will stay in Angola and continue his work. We are waiting for paperwork to allow us to live in South Africa, but until then we'll stay in Angola.

Knowing we are here by God's grace is so, so important, as at times I do question what on earth we're doing! But we're reassured that this is part of His plan and I can see Him working so clearly in our lives here.

George Hopkinson

In terms of family life – it's 'interesting'! Food is in erratic supply, even in the capital. Some weeks it's fine but at other times finding even the basics is tricky. This week I can't find onions or flour and sugar and UHT milk is flying off the shelves in a store that still has stock. But I am one of the lucky ones as I have foreign currency to buy with. We feel vulnerable at times due to the language barrier - it's rare to find English spoken and our Portuguese could definitely be better! We're often stopped by the police, looking for a bribe. They ask for a 'gaseosa' or soft drink as code for money but at least once we've offered a Fanta!

There is no church for us to attend but I have found a Bible study group and we're thinking of starting a small home church next year. However, we are also incredibly fortunate that there is a school for Lulu (11) – which she LOVES. Ollie is joining Toby at Campbell College in September and although that is really

## Please pray for us!

- **Pray for Angola** - that the currency stabilises and those in power feel compassion for their fellow countrymen.
- **Pray for World Vision's work** - that they will have the funds to deliver all the programmes and that working alongside the government goes smoothly.
- **Pray for Grenville** - that he continues to be inspired to work here and sees God's hand in his life.
- **Pray for Toby and Ollie** - that they thrive at Campbell and are happy, even though they are so far from us.
- **Pray for Lulu and me** - that we're safe as we wait for our papers.



# Testimony of Conversion

by Andy Heron Pastoral Associate

**P**astoral Associate Andy Heron shares a little of his early years and his journey of faith

## Tell us something about your early years

I was born in East Belfast and my earliest years of education were at a primary school on the interface between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Short Strand. My parents were not very religious, and rarely went to church, but sent my sister and me to Sunday School in East End Baptist Church, Belfast. I got a thorough grounding in Bible knowledge there, but at 12 years of age, I told my parents I didn't want to go to church any more, as they didn't, so why should they make me go? So I stopped going, but I still believed in God.

## Did that belief in God ever leave you?

Most certainly. When I was 14, a family tragedy crushed any faith in God I still had left. At that point in time, I deliberately chose to refuse any belief in God & became an atheist with a strong aversion to anything Christian.

My teenage years were rather difficult, for various reasons. In 1976, at the age of 18, I left home to study history at Reading University, Berkshire, England. I later switched to French and German. I was far removed from any Christian influence and became very interested in left-wing politics, but was never totally committed. I did, however, enjoy arguing strongly with any Christians I met!

## What was student life like for you in the mid 70's in England?

I wasn't terribly interested in studying, to be honest. But I did thoroughly enjoy the social life of a uni student living away from home. My real passion was rock music. I played guitar with a rock band, doing gigs at student events and pubs. We were so bad that we constantly changed our name, since we would never have been invited back to play in the same place twice under the same name!

One night, at a student party, an inebriated friend asked me a strange question, 'Andy, are you happy?' No-one had ever asked me that, and although it wasn't asked in a way that demanded a serious answer, it stopped me in my tracks and made me think. I remember thinking to myself, 'I am really not very happy.' But another few beers put paid to that train of thought!

## When did your views on God begin to change?

In my 3<sup>rd</sup> year of uni, I had to head off to Germany & France for a year as part of my course. There it was the same story as in England: parties and booze and little time for study. In fact, I attended one lecture in 6 months!

Two weeks before leaving Germany to travel to France, I was working frantically one evening to complete a much-neglected dissertation. I was listening to music on my radio-cassette player (now there's an age give-away!). I paid little attention to what was playing until a pop version of the old hymn 'Amazing Grace' came on. I put my pen down (there were no personal computers in those days!) and started listening. When I heard the words of the opening verse, I understood for the very first time that I was lost and blind. I knew enough from my Sunday School days to realise that I needed to be found and have my eyes opened by Jesus, whose followers I had often



mocked & ridiculed in my chosen atheistic path.

## Was this the beginning of a process towards faith?

Many people come to faith through a gradual process. For me it was more like a Damascus Road experience. That evening alone in my room, I was dumbfounded at the thought that the One whose very existence I had been denying all those years was pursuing me and calling me to follow Him. In an instant, I came to believe that my sins had contributed to the necessity of His sacrifice for human sin, and I literally cried out to God for forgiveness. My Swiss room-mate happened to be out that night, otherwise he'd have been rather shocked!

## How would you describe your journey of faith ever since?

I've never found the Christian life particularly easy. The journey has been full of ups and downs in my experience. I've had moments of doubt, and even times when I've felt like giving up altogether. But two Scripture passages have had a great steadying influence on me over the years...

**1. At a time when many began to abandon Jesus, he asked the Twelve if they were going to leave him too. Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life.' (Jn 6.68, NLT)**

**2. 'I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.' (2 Tim 1.12, NLT)**

## Special Day of prayer for our land at Maze Long Kesh

Interdenominational Divine Healing Ministries has organised a special day of prayer for our land to help people find God's peace. This will be held on **Saturday 17th September 2016** at Balmoral Park, Maze Long Kesh and is open to everyone. We are encouraging people to come **as individuals** before God on that day - to lay down their own personal burdens from the past, to forgive those who have hurt them, to say sorry where they may have hurt other people, and to pray for the future of our country.

At Maze Long Kesh the prayer will take place in the Show Jumping Arena which is about 150 yards long. It has a beautiful grassy surface. In the very centre there will be a large plain wooden Cross. Please enter through one gate, spend time with God for as long as you wish, and then go out through another gate at the far end of the arena. We trust that through the time that people spend in prayer they will be helped to find the Peace of God. We hear a lot of talk about dealing with the past; seldom do we hear any talk about God or Forgiveness, yet this dimension is absolutely vital.

This special day of prayer is the vision of Billy Moore, a lay-reader in Lisburn Cathedral who is responsible for the outreach work in Hillhall Estate. Billy and Dean Sam Wright have asked Divine Healing Ministries to organise the whole event. It just so happens that DHM has recently completed seven years of prayer for the renewal and revival of the faith in the land. We see this event on September 17th as a natural continuation of all those years of prayer.

There will probably be many other stages on the journey, but we will allow the Lord to guide us one step at a time. Many people in our country are still hurting deeply from experiences during the Troubles. This day of prayer is an attempt to help everyone find the peace of God. People may come and go as they please. The hours of prayer will be 9.00 am to 6.00 pm. Please keep the date in your diary—**Saturday 17th September at Balmoral Park, Maze Long Kesh.**



# “THE STRONG PERSUASION OF SAM MCMULLEN BROUGHT ME TO WEST!”



Michael McComb started coming to West just over 2 years ago with his close friend Sam McMullen. Michael lives in Bangor and attended Bangor Grammar School.

**If you would live anywhere, where would it be?**

It would have to be Brazil, in an apartment overlooking the Copacabana beach.

**What makes you laugh the most?**

My friends, watching videos of dogs and Tottenham Hotspur!

**What would you sing at a Karaoke night?**

‘Good Times’ by Chic

**If you could only eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be?**

Boojum (Mexican Burritos)

**What were your favourite subjects at school?**

Maths and History were probably my favourites.



A view of Copacabana beach

**What and where are you currently studying?**

I have just completed my first year of Business Management at Queens University.

**Where do you see yourself in five years time?**

In five years time I'd like to think I might be in the process of starting my own business or serving God, possibly in South America—quite a difference!

**How did you come to West Church?**

Well, I had just become a Christian at a school SU camp and was looking for a church. The strong persuasion of Sam McMullen brought me here...

**Are you the guy we see playing the piano, or are you the one playing the trumpet at the 11.30 am Service?**  
I'm the one playing the piano and it's my twin brother playing the trumpet.

*(Actually that's not true as Michael plays both instruments to a really high standard!!)*

**What do you think is most challenging living as a Christian for people of your generation?**

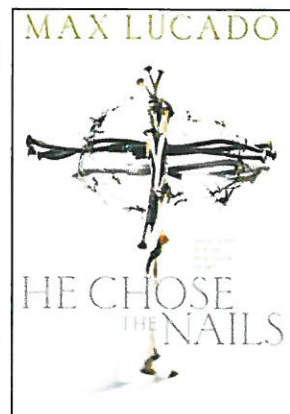
Finding identity, satisfaction and worth in being God's child when the world encourages you to find that in other things. That's definitely a real challenge for people of my generation and also accepting that God is all we actually need.

**Research would suggest that your generation is the 'missing generation' in many churches. Would you agree with this and what do you think churches should do to change this?**

Yes I would agree. Something I know I am often guilty of is deciding someone's salvation for them and deciding that they would say no to an invitation to come along to church. I think we should be more courageous in inviting the 'unlikely'.

**Have you any favourite Christian books you have read or podcasts you would recommend?**

I'm a big fan of Max Lucado and the favourite book of his that I've read is 'He Chose The Nails'. I'm currently reading 'Counterfeit Gods' by Tim Keller and feeling challenged.



Michael McComb

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## 3Cs - Craft - Chat - Coffee

Since the beginning of September 2015, the needles of the members of 3Cs have been busy clicking. Various charities at home and abroad have benefitted from the many beautiful garments produced. Our charity Coffee Morning in March was for the work of the Salvation Army with the Homeless in Belfast and the local area. We would like to thank all who supported us, helping us raise £750 for this worthwhile charity.

Twiddlemuffs, helping those with dementia, have been a big part of our knitting this year. Nearly 100 have been knit and donated to local Residential & Nursing homes, the Ulster Hospital and to the Council for Social Witness for their homes in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The season finished with members from both groups having a night out at Papa Joe's New Orleans restaurant.

3Cs have two groups—the Tuesday evening group will recommence on September 6th, 7.15—10.00 pm and the Wednesday afternoon group will start on September 7th, 2.00—4.00 pm. Both groups meet in the Committee Room, in the Welcome Area.

New members are always welcome—it doesn't matter if you knit one garment per year or one per week. The most important thing is meeting together, making new friends and having a chat, along with a cuppa.

Donations of double knitting & chunky wool are always appreciated.

Contact: Norma Conway (Tuesday) 9146 9913 or Ethel Anderson (Wednesday) 9146 2666



Group members with knitted Twiddlemuffs



# JOURNEY IN PERU

## Recent visit of Mike & Christine Stenning March 2016

### The Casa Hogar family



**W**ell, it's great to be able to tell you about our recent trip back to Peru. We left home on 14th March, with four heavy suitcases packed with all kinds of everything for the long journey to Peru. We were able to spend some time with Beverley in Lima just before she returned to Northern Ireland and it was great to catch up on what was happening at Casa Hogar.

We were lovingly greeted at Casa Hogar by Miriam and all 23 children. Naturally we felt very sad that Miriam's husband, dear Secundo, had passed away just 5 weeks before we arrived and it has left a huge gap in all their lives, although they know and take comfort that he is at peace with the Lord and free from pain and suffering.

There are three new children into the home, so it was lovely to meet them too. The first is little Rocie who is 6 years old. Her mother has three children, her father abandoned them and the mother was engaged to another man who takes a lot of alcohol

and beats Rocie's mother, so the grandmother had been raising her because the stepfather did not accept the child.



Rocie, a new child to Casa Hogar and Michael with Isaías



There are also two gorgeous little brothers, Isael is 9 years old and Isaías is 6. They had different fathers, one died last year from consuming alcohol and drugs and the other died two years ago from an illness. Their mother was unable to care for them and they had been living with their grandfather before coming to Casa Hogar. Little Isaías and Michael became great friends and he followed Michael everywhere. They have both settled very well into the home and are starting to learn to read and write.

In the early part of the year, a short term missionary called Nikita

from South Africa had answered God's call to go out to Casa Hogar as Miriam was caring for Secundo full-time as his illness worsened. We were able to give Nikita a break away for a week and took over the household tasks and caring for the children.

With 12 hungry children you have to shop for food every few days. There is no transport at the home and convenience foods such as we know them are expensive luxuries. So shopping for food involves a 25 minute walk down a dirt road, a cheap local bus or taxi into the town and another little taxi to the market. After buying several kilos of vegetables, fruit and meat, chicken or fish and perhaps 15 dozen eggs as well as sacks of rice, pasta or potatoes, we made the return journey usually several hours later back to the home.

Michael was able to use his practical skills to put up new shelves in the kitchen, replace some broken windows and he brought great delight to children by building their first ever go-kart. We also took the children out for ice-cream and to the cinema to see Batman v Superman (in Spanish of course!!). Michael is sure this is the way to learn Spanish by watching superhero films!!



During our time in Huánuco we also got to visit Eliazer one morning. He and his family are living in a different part of the town and are happy with their home. Eliazer is doing very well and continues with shoe making and needlecraft and is keen to carry on his studies at night school. Miriam's sister Margarita takes a great interest in his welfare.



Margarita with Eliazer

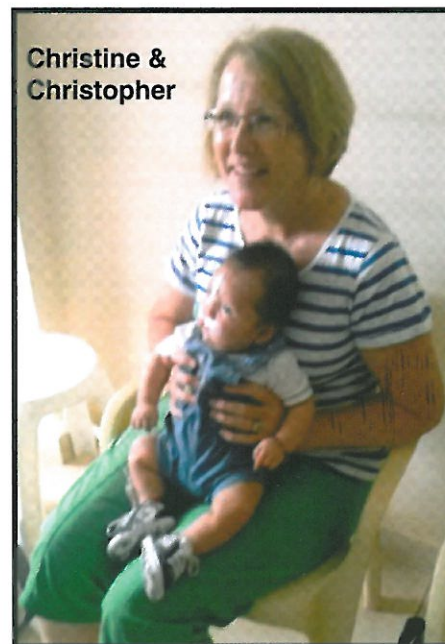
At the end of our trip, we flew up to Moyobamba in the north of Peru to visit the staff in St. Luke's Clinic.

They are continuing to bless many children and their families with the wonderful work they are doing with children born with cleft lip and palate. The next surgical campaign took place at the end of June and this little boy called Christopher had his first operation then.

Both of us feel hugely privileged to be able to go to Peru and share God's love with all those we meet. Our flights are already booked for our fourth visit in mid-September and we look forward (DV) to seeing all our dear friends there.

Grateful thanks also to our West Church family for all your love, your interest, support, prayers and encouragement.

Christine & Christopher



## Peter Helps Children to Smile

by Beverley Bryans



as shown by the generosity of her many friends and family. Mary, Peter's granny, read the article and became a lady on a mission!! She, with Peter's assistance, and that of friends, family and generous giving of many along the Peninsula via Smarties Tubes, Quiz Sheets and other means, raised the astounding total of £3,260, enabling 13 children in Peru to have life-changing surgery and aftercare. Michael Stenning presented Peter with a cup for his achievements and Christine gave a framed letter of appreciation from Mario, Director of St' Luke's Clinic. Following an inspiring speech from Peter, many were moved to tears and really touched. He even hopes to visit Peru in the future. We thank God for this provision through such dedication from Mary, her lovely grandson & his mum Joanne & family circle.

A happy and joyous occasion took place on 22nd May in the Conference Room at the Peru Update evening. Peter Clarke, a fine young man of 10 years of age from Kircubbin, Co. Down, was born with cleft lip and palate. His granny Mary, read an article in the Newtownards Chronicle featuring Kathleen Turner, friend of a member of the 'Peru 12'. Kathleen raised £1000 for Help Them to Smile at her 80th birthday by requesting donations instead of gifts—a popular lady indeed

**Partnership in Peru:** Sincere appreciation is expressed for all interest and financial support in this part of God's Kingdom. To establish a Standing Order for any amount or for any other information, please contact Beverley on 028 9122 6908 or bevbyans@gmail.com

**Prayers for Peru:** Please pray that the 3 new children will settle and integrate well, that God would heal traumatic memories and that they all, with Miriam, will experience complete healing from grief following Secundo's passing. Pray for Miriam as she carries on Secundo's legacy both as mother, teacher and administrator at the home and school. Pray also for all future developments of the home and school.

### Faith Children's Services

**Website:** Please do keep up to date with progress at St. Luke's Clinic and Casa Hogar by visiting [www.faithchildrenservices.co.uk](http://www.faithchildrenservices.co.uk) and/or FCS Peru on Facebook



# YOUTH & CHILDREN'S PHOTO GALLERY

**T**he Youth & Children's department has continued to thrive over the last session under the leadership of Sonia Mawhinney, our Youth & Children's Associate, Andrew McClelland, our Youth & Children's Worker, Ashleigh O'Sullivan, Andy Shields and Courtney Thompson, our Interns and the many volunteers.

Here is a snap shot of some of the recent activities that has been going on in and around West....



Pictured above are a few of the various activities that took place for the Year 7 & Year 8 'Lock-in'



Above, P7 Sunday School with their parents & leaders & below, Easter Mission leaders on Easter Sunday



## Upcoming Youth Events for those going into Yr8



Wednesday 24th August ~  
"Dodgeball & Donuts"  
at West 7.00—9.00 pm



Tuesday 30th August  
at West at 6.30 pm  
Cost £3.00  
Book by 24th August



## YOUNG WEST NEW COMMUNICANTS

Sunday 13th March saw a number of our young people join with their families and mentors to take their first communion on Profession of Faith



Pictured left to right, Thomas Haddock with his dad, mum & sister, Lauren Ward with her mum, dad & sister, Angus Bell with his mum and Jessica Palmer with her mum & dad

## PRAYER PARTNERS

At West, we are trying to pair up an adult in our congregation with some of our young people with a specific purpose of praying for them and Maureen Blackmore has been one of our adults who has been involved with them right from the beginning.

**Why did you sign up to pray for our young people?**

I thought it was a great privilege to be invited to have some input into their lives.

**Who do you specifically pray for?**

In my Bible at Psalm 139, I have my list of 14 girls who would now be 18 & 19 years old and with that list came suggested topics for prayer e.g. University choices and courses, learning to drive, relationships with friends and most importantly growth and development in their relationship with

God.

**14 girls—that's quite a list. Have you had the opportunity to meet these girls?**

I met all 14 girls as a group in Young West on a Sunday and got to know a wee bit about them, put faces to names and told them a bit about myself and on a Sunday in the Coffee Bar I'll get a smile or a wave as they pass through. But there are 3 girls in particular who have shared situations with me and asked for prayer and it has been a wonderful encouragement to me that they have come to and shared just the working out of these situations.

**Would you encourage other adults in the congregation to get involved in praying for our young people?**

I wonder if you ever thought of yourself as a piece in a jigsaw puzzle that is God's big picture. A piece with your own specific gifts which give you a unique purpose and a piece which fits perfectly into a place that God has for you. Can you imagine yourself as a piece that works alongside others who have their own unique part to play in sharing God's love in our Church family? One of the greatest gifts each of us has to offer others is prayer. We can encourage and strengthen them by naming them and their needs before the Lord. Can I encourage you to become a small piece in the much bigger picture of God's plan for the lives of young people in West.

**Please speak with Sonia if this is something you feel you would like to become involved with.**

Thank you



## LICENSING OF ALAN MARSH



Alan Marsh has recently completed his studies at Union Theological College, Belfast and has been appointed as Probationer for the Ministerial Office within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland at a recent Service on Sunday 5th June, here in West, by a Commission of the Ards Presbytery.

Alan, along with his wife Esther, were joined by many family and friends as well as members of the Ards Presbytery to mark this special occasion.

Alan has taken up a position as Assistant Minister in McQuiston Presbyterian Church in Belfast.

We all join together and pray that Alan and his family settle into this new role as he begins his new Ministerial responsibilities.

## FAMILY BBQ



The weather certainly didn't hamper the wonderful atmosphere that always surrounds the family BBQ, held directly after the 11.30 am Service on Children's Day. Hundreds packed into the Church Halls to enjoy a BBQ feast and the fun activities in place for the children. Many thanks to the Catering team & BBQ chefs who made this a truly special day



# 12TH BANGOR BOYS' BRIGADE

## 12TH BANGOR BOYS' BRIGADE

NEW 2016/2017 SESSION RESTARTS FOR ALL BOYS ON THURSDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER 2016



ANCHOR BOYS : Y1 - Y4 6.30 - 7.45PM

JUNIOR SECTION : Y5 - Y7 6.30 - 7.45PM

COMPANY SECTION : Y8 - Y14 7.45 - 9.45PM

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!



FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE  
CONTACT ROY NESBITT 028 91450419  
OR EMAIL [royfnesbitt@aol.com](mailto:royfnesbitt@aol.com)



President Badge recipients at the Annual Display 2016  
(front l-r) Adam Powell, Scott & Ryan Sittlington, James Crockford, Scott Miller, Daniel Conway, Tian Mahoney & Christopher Larkin with Captain Roy Nesbitt and the boy's mums



Pictured above left is the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award Group ready to set off on Expedition. Above right is an Orienteering Session at Ganaway, below left, the Junior Section at their Activity Weekend at Ganaway and below right the boys ready for some Caving.





# GIRLS' BRIGADE NEWS



## Celebrating Success at our Annual Display

**C**ongratulations to Hannah Wilkinson, pictured left with her mum Jacqui, on achieving her Queen's Award. There are 6 elements to this award: 1) Spiritual Development, 2) Company Service, 3) Community Service, 4) Project Assignment, 5) 2 Initiative Tests and 6) a Study Paper. Once this is all completed over a minimum 2 year period, there is a final interview at GB HQ as well as a short presentation which this year was on Fields of Life, 'I Am Girl' campaign.

Pictured below is Ellen Robinson with her mum Joan and Sophie Anderson with her mum Carol. Both girls were awarded their Brigader Brooches, the highest badgework award within Girls' Brigade, worked for over their 4 years in the Brigader section of the Company. Well done to both girls!



## Our new Session begins on Wednesday 31st August

6.00 pm—7.00 pm for Explorers—Fun Night  
7.15 pm—8.15 pm for Co. Section—BBQ

### Weekly Meeting Times (from 7th September)

Under 5's and Explorers (age 3—P4) meet from 6.00—7.15 pm

Juniors (P5—P7) meet from 6.45—8.30 pm

Seniors & Brigaders (Year 8+) meet from 7.15—9.00 pm

All girls aged 3 years and over are invited to Girls' Brigade on a Wednesday evening and can join at any stage throughout the year.

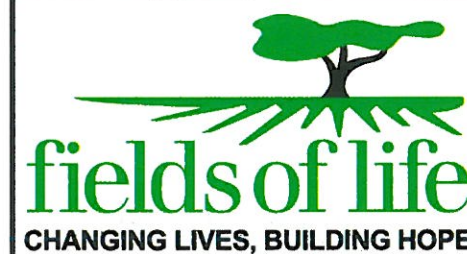
**W**e now have a section dedicated to Girls' Brigade on the West Church website:

<http://www.westchurchbangor.org.uk/GB/GB/Welcome.html>

Here, you will be kept up to date with our latest news, details of all our Sections and leaders, important dates and key events as well as a page providing you with information on what uniform is worn by each age group as well as an ordering facility in advance of our new session beginning or at any stage during the year.



Congratulations to Loren, one of our Officers, who married Josh at the end of May. The P4's provided a wonderful Guard of Honour for Mr & Mrs Mills as they left church following their wedding ceremony.



To celebrate Girls' Brigade's upcoming 125th Anniversary, GBNI are setting up a partnership with Fields of Life, a Northern Ireland based charity working in Uganda with young girls. GBNI's aim is to raise £125,000 over the next 2 years to enable a 'GB School' to be built. Our Company has nominated Fields of Life as its Charity—please visit [www.fieldsoflife.org](http://www.fieldsoflife.org) for further information on their 'I AM GIRL' campaign and the work in which they are involved.



# 7TH BANGOR SCOUTS



Scouts gathered around their cakes after the Scout Bake Off. The Scouts were awarded the Chef's Badge for their tasty efforts.



Cub Scouts enjoying beach activities at Crawfordsburn and Cubs proudly holding their hard won trophies



Squirrels marching behind a puppet after a puppet show by the Beavers



## START DATES & TIMES

Friday 9th September  
Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs & Scouts  
Registration from 7.00—8.00 pm  
Our normal weekly meeting times  
are detailed on page 28

Places are limited and application forms can be obtained from the Church Office to allow names to be added to the waiting list. Alternatively you can email [paul7sl@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:paul7sl@hotmail.co.uk) or contact Jayne Stranex on 9146 3260.



Claire & Luke Richards with Charles on their Wedding Day in February

Andy & Carly Shields on their Wedding Day in February



Bella & Eva Snowden with their mum & dad, Lynsey & Chris



Samuel Best with Charles and his mum & dad, Janeen & Richard



Leo Braithwaite with his sister Darcey and mum & dad, Corrina & Andrew



# United Appeal

## page 48-50

### “Blessings from Brokenness”

Due to the sensitivity of this article, kindly provided by Rev. Uel Mars from a recent sermon he led in West, we have been asked not to publish these pages online. If you would like a copy of the magazine to read this particular article and how the United Appeal of the Presbyterian Church is making a real difference, please contact the Church Office

#### Changes in Districts : New address

##### District

Move 304	Mrs Rita Wilson	Move 404	Mr Tim & Mrs Emma Bryans & family
Move 304	Mrs Pauline Martin	Move 501	Mrs Pauline Wilson & family
Move 403	Mr Tom & Mrs Jenny Kendall & Rose	Move 504	Mr Ryan & Mrs Katrina Dorrian & family

#### Changes in Districts : Remove

302	Ms Mary Gilfillan	604	Mr Robert & Mrs Linda Magee
601	Mr Alan & Mrs Esther Marsh & family	1002	Mrs Mabel Martin

#### WELCOME to the following new members: District

304	Mr Brian & Mrs Oliver Byers	602	Mr William & Mrs Donna Jackson & family
404	Mr Mark & Mrs Genevieve McCallum & family	802	Mr David & Mrs Michelle Nelson & family
504	Mr Nicholas & Mrs Shirlee Massey & family	903	Mr Richard & Mrs Rachel Cull & Reuben
601	Mrs Ruth Moore, Ryan & Alexandra	1002	Mr Ossie & Mrs Jessica Daniels & family

#### The following children were brought for Baptism or Dedication:

28/02/16	Zachary John Martin	29/05/16	Zain Ferguson & Maverick Alban Stewart Daniels
06/03/16	Anabella Joy & Eva Rose Snowden	19/06/16	Melissa Billie Jackson
20/03/16	Reuben Brian Arthur Cull	26/06/16	Benjamin James McCallum
27/03/16	Samuel Brian Best	03/07/16	Emma Kathleen Seeds
22/05/16	Leo William Braithwaite		

#### We regret to announce the following deaths and extend our love and prayers to the families concerned:

01/03/16	Mrs Mary M Miller	10/04/16	Mrs May McClune
04/03/16	Mrs Anne Henry	11/04/16	Miss Mia Cardwell
06/03/16	Mr Frank Rea	20/04/16	Mrs Prudence Ferguson
17/03/16	Mrs Pauline Allen	20/04/16	Mr Eddie Wilson
30/03/16	Mr Mervyn Johnston	02/06/16	Mr Harry McGrath
08/04/16	Mrs Joyce Montgomery		



Please remember to contact the Church Office if you:

- have moved house
- have changed your phone number
- have a new email address
- you or a family member are unwell
- would like Free Will Offering envelopes, Standing Orders or Gift Aid forms
- would like information on groups,



# NEW YORK...

by Paula & Sarah Mawhinney

**W**hen I mentioned to a friend (who has visited New York many times) that I was planning a trip her advice was "don't try to cram everything into your first trip". I thought this strange, surely it is better to try and cram as much in as possible? However, the reasons behind these words of advice were as follows: some people visit New York enjoy it but stroke it off their bucket list and have no desire to return or there are those who visit New York fall in love with the city and will return numerous times. Another bit of advice given to me by my brother was to familiarise yourself with the map of NYC before you go so that you know where everything is and divide Manhattan into the number of days you are there enabling you to get round the main attractions and sights. So armed with this advice and a good travel guide I set about planning our six-day trip to The Big Apple, hoping that it would live up to all our expectations!



Paula & Sarah at the Hans Christian Andersen bronze statue in Central Park

We flew from Dublin to JFK clearing Homeland Security in Dublin.

Our plan had been to get the air train into Manhattan but when we saw those yellow cabs outside the airport we decided to have our first experience in a NYC cab! There is a set price for yellow cab from airports to Manhattan around \$65. Having checked into our Hotel, The New Yorker on the corner of 34<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> in Midtown we were a little shell shocked if truth be told! Nothing prepares you for the constant noise and buzz of the city. It is rush hour all the time and it did not take long for us to be completely captivated by our new surroundings! We walked through Times Square, Madison Square Gardens and before long found ourselves outside the Empire State. By this time, we had been up nearly 24 hours but the view that greeted us when we went to the top of the ESB could only be described as WOW! You have seen it so many times in movies and on television but the Manhattan skyline at night is truly breath taking. What a way to finish our first day in NYC.

Being away with my teenage daughter Sarah, there had to be some shopping involved in our trip, so our second day we had planned in our itinerary would be shopping day! We went outside of Manhattan to Jersey Gardens Shopping Mall a fantastic mall with something for everyone. We got the bus (B111 & B112) from the Port Authority Terminal which leaves every hour takes about 45 minutes and costs \$10. We spent the whole day there and returned laden with bargains and our purses a little lighter! So day 2 finished with a meal out on our return to Manhattan and a wander round Times Square.

The following day we had our first experience of the Subway which we took to Battery Park down in the financial district. From there we took the ferry to Liberty and Ellis Island. We simply paid for our



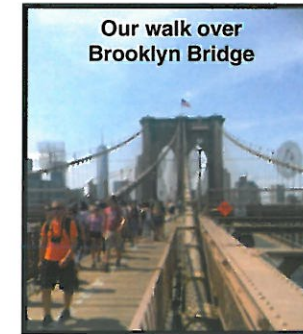
Visiting Lady Liberty

subway fares when we used them. I didn't think it cost effective to buy a subway card as we planned to walk most places but it was good to experience the New York Subway. We stopped and got off at Liberty Island for a look around although we did not go up Lady Liberty. This needs to be booked in advance. We then visited Ellis Island and the Museum. This is a real must for historians as it tells the history of Ellis Island, the gateway for over 12 million immigrants to the US from 1894 to 1954. We found this most interesting and we had to drag ourselves away. You can spend as long or short as you want and the ferry leaves every 20/30 minutes to return you to Manhattan. Our afternoon saw us walking through Wall Street and the financial area however the highlight was a visit to the 9/11 Memorial and Museum. This was a very moving experience, it is a place for quiet reflection and remembrance and is very sensitive and respectful to the tragic loss that occurred there. After all our walking during the day we then took a bus trip around Manhattan and Brooklyn. This was a great way of seeing the lights and sights of New York in the evening while relaxing on an open top bus. We would highly recommend this - the only downside was you are unable to book a specific time so we did have to queue for a while! The tour bus guide pointed out places of interest and told us some wonderful stories and was most enjoyable.

Our fourth day saw us exploring Midtown, Fifth Avenue and Central

Park. We set off from our hotel early after breakfast and didn't actually make it to Central Park until 5pm! There was just so much for us to stop and see on the way: New York Public Library, Radio City Music Hall, Fifth Avenue Shopping and the Rockefeller Centre. The view from the Top of the Rock is amazing and in my opinion better than from the Empire State. With the TOTR you can purchase one ticket and use it to go up in daylight and then again in the evening. We eventually made it to Central Park a little later than we had planned and had a walk round a small part of this beautiful 843-acre park. When you are in the park you actually forget you are in the middle of this concrete jungle.

Day 5 was our marathon day! Armed with bottles of water and comfortable shoes we started our day by getting the Subway to Brooklyn and we then walked over the Brooklyn Bridge back into Manhattan. This is a must do in our opinion! The walk over this iconic bridge into the city is probably my favourite memory of the trip. We then continued to walk up through Manhattan via Greenwich Village, China town, Little Italy, NYU, Washington Square



Our walk over Brooklyn Bridge

we literally collapsed into bed! Our final day in New York happened to be the 4th of July so we headed to Central Park to explore some more of this beautiful park. It was full of families, old and young enjoying themselves. My biggest

Park, Grand Central Station and the Flatiron building before returning to our hotel where

regret is not spending longer in the park! In the evening we enjoyed Macy's 4<sup>th</sup> July Fireworks which did not disappoint and was a fitting way to end our visit to New York.

So that's about it—we hope we have given you a taste of our trip to New York. We fell in love with wonderful, colourful, vibrant, noisy and amazing city, a city of ebb and flow. It is harsh and dirty, yet whimsical and beautiful at the same time, a city that in my opinion has something for everyone!

If you are thinking about a trip to New York, Sarah and I will be delighted to chat with you and answer any questions you may have.

**My top tips are: Plan what you want to do before you go and familiarise yourself with the Streets and Avenues and where everything is. Wear comfortable shoes! If you can, go up both the Empire State and The Rockefeller, however if you have only time or money for one do The Rock. The Rock provided all round better views of Manhattan. We bought our tickets for all the attractions from our hotel, saving us queuing time and money. Spend time in Central Park, as I said my biggest regret is not spending longer there and finally Ellen's Stardust Diner 1650 Broadway is a must for a nice meal and some entertainment while you eat. All the waiters and waitresses are wannabe Broadway performers who sing while pouring your drinks and serving your food. Brilliant place to spend a few hours and cheaper than going to a Broadway Show!**

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"THE DIFFERENCE IS OUR EXPERIENCE"

2016



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

by Robert Sinclair

**W**hen I came back to West Church nearly 3 years ago, after a 12 year gap from a 16 year involvement, there were two types of members - those who remembered me, even slightly, and those who didn't know me at all. It was very comforting to see many familiar faces though and sense the same, genuine, welcoming warmth.

It has been brilliant to be able to come back but, for me, more amazing to realise that after being a leader at Easter Mission 2015, knowing for sure (other than music) what I really wanted to serve God doing: Working with children and youth at West.

So in July 2015, I started being a helper at J Club and in September, put my name forward to be a Sunday School leader every other month. At about the same time, I enrolled to do a Children's Ministry course, run by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland at Queen's Union Theological College in Belfast one evening a week for 4 months.

Very recently, I met Charles over coffee (of course!) and I made a general agreement to write this article on how I found it all to 1 x A4-size page and I did warn him while some people would struggle to fill this, my problem may be how to stop! There really were a lot of amazing things about this course but I'll outline what really stood out for me and my struggle with the essay!

Each week, Ruth Bromley, our course tutor will have invited an experienced and fantastic lecturer on a particular subject or field. These ranged considerably including The Importance of Children's Ministry, Learning Styles, The World of the Child, Family Connections, Creative Bible Communication, Kids and Worship, Managing the Chaos, Helping Children Respond, Creative Programming Ideas and What Next? Along with these lectures, we had a book to read at one chapter a week

## Children's Ministry Certificate Course



and write a brief journal or appreciation as we went along. This book was Making Your Children's Ministry The Best Hour Of Every Kid's Week by Sue Miller with David Staal. At the end of the course, we had to write an essay, incorporating what we learnt from the book and all the lecturers had to answer this question: What area within the children's ministry in your congregation, would you like to see developed and why? My answer? Well, honestly? That was like finding a needle in...several haystacks! Throughout the book, I found myself saying, we do that, Sonia does that, that's what happens on a Sunday morning, we sing those songs, the church would do that, we cover those children.....the list is endless! You have no idea how blessed we are to have such a structured and supported children and youth ministry at West! But I had to find something - at least to pass the course. So, the only thing I could think of was that, probably like every other church, the change in dynamics in Sunday School during the summer

months and was there a way this could be developed and why?

Many leaders who help most of the year take a very well-earned break over the summer and we have to rely more on other volunteers from the church to keep things running. One course tutor explained that children's ministry is a baton we pass in relation to a purpose, with the shared, same vision from the main people in charge.

In J Club last summer, like myself I guess, the volunteers weren't really always that familiar with the children or how things were done throughout the year. The problem is, the children sense this and it makes them less settled. I have a 7 year old as you know who, without any direct questions or steered in any way, notices differences. And perhaps as leaders at the time, we sense this from them and feel we aren't doing things right. But that's not anyone's fault. With no school on, there is a considerable change already and most of a child's structure during the week has disappeared too. One question I should have added is,

could there be too much uncertainty and perhaps, similar anxiety from the volunteers themselves? Or is it just we are all ready for a break? It is worth asking when it has been difficult to get volunteers to sign up to help in recent weeks - through no fault to anyone of course.

I did come up with a possible solution: What if summer volunteers came in a month early in June, when J Club is in full swing with that baton being passed in the usual way. They could even just observe or be gradually introduced over 4 weeks, rather than have to land running in July or August. It has to be said though, very few volunteers last summer would have been new to working with children but still, there is a way that only leaders all year round will know about. They will also have had time to get to know the children. This early start in June would also help that problem. June is a crazy month already though with the countdown to the summer holidays and endless preparations under way to get everything done. It would be fair to say the work-load at West is normally enormous already so, like every other church, getting to the end of June is a race against time as it is! Well, if there was a needle in the haystacks, that was it or all I could find so, perhaps it's something to think about but by far a major problem. We really, really are blessed with enormous respect and thanks to Sonia Mawhinney and everyone behind her. She is a truly gifted youth worker and rarely will you witness someone so perfect for their job! (Second to Charles maybe lol!)

### So, what stood out for me during the course and what did I learn?

I never thought I could learn so much in 4 months would sum that up quite well! There really isn't much space to tell you everything but there were indeed some lectures that made me think.

Children are the future of any church and are no less important to God than anyone else at any age. So what an essential privilege it is to be a leader of such and what an important roll we play! There is so much hope given in this course and so many messages of inspiration, it wouldn't be such a bad idea if you could do it just for these values alone! The impossible can become

possible. The ministry is that baton we simply pass.

The Bible and how verses and stories make up the back-bone of what we do and the values we try to help the children carry throughout their week in their own world is so important. We also do that in the songs that we sing and how we are with the children. We learnt about how children learn and the different types. Children aren't controlled as much as understood. That's the key. They need to be allowed to be who they are and grow as better people with unmistakable genuine faith, belief, trust, friendship, love and fun! Trust me - I know - you can't fake this! Children will know! The course tutors were beacons of passion making us understand the importance of quality in this field or work. I absolutely loved the way everything was spoken about, explained and prepared with such passion and with the support for what we were about to do in our own church. Most of us were already in children's ministry but to be able to take what we learnt to our own churches was priceless.

If you have ever considered working in Children's Ministry but are put off by the potential failure you feel you would be at it, remember this - one of my favourite stories that was related to Children's Ministry: Apollo 13 - the space craft that was at the time, stranded in space with some major problems to overcome to get it and the crew back to earth safely. Two people in charge at the NASA base had this conversation: **"This could be our biggest disaster."** And the reply? **"On the contrary sir, this could be our finest hour."**

This is how you do Children's Ministry. You inspire, breath, dream, act and speak at all times with hope! Within Children's Ministry, you see anything as a challenge ensuring it is the best hour of a child's week. You become aware of how many ways a child can learn and how to accommodate with the very same belief and respect - both for them and them for you. You come to understand, you gain the support of parents and relatives and build as many bridges as you can so you have them on the very same page as all the other leaders and helpers. You come to know the sad demise of family - rumoured to be replaced more aptly as household as the diversity of what a "family" has become and is so disappointingly real. You learn that autistic, health-impaired or maybe just disruptive children need the very same love, belief, hope, understanding and teaching as everyone else. You are never alone in what you do. You share with impeccable adult and teenage helpers who support the cause and very same beliefs and purpose. (Have you ever seen how many there are at West??)

But this is how we can move forward at West so well - the calmness in how we do it! God doesn't do panic or fear. Control with understanding, faith, prayer and carefully-planned steps that draw the children to the amazing ministry we have are our trade marks.

I love what West has become in the 12 years I left and the 3 I've been back. Let's continue to support and serve our amazing God and be grateful for what it has yet to become!

The Class of '16 (Robert front left)

