

YOUR SPRING EDITION OF

WEST LIFE

ISSUE No.14, MARCH 2018

WEST CHURCH, BANGOR PUBLICATION

A year of Community & Building Relationships

Charles, Presbyterian Moderator Designate



christian
aid
week
13-19 MAY

GOD'S KINGDOM IS STRONGER

THAN STORMS



JOIN US

Marcelin and his daughters Ketia, Linda and Keshna still haven't recovered from Hurricane Matthew. Marcelin doesn't expect them to survive if another hurricane hits. Please give generously this Christian Aid Week.

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We believe in life before death

WELCOME TO YOUR SPRING WEST LIFE

Another West Life magazine for your enjoyment and the opportunity to catch up with all that is happening in the congregation.

A lots of news this time! In our part of the world we can suffer from so much busyness and activity, as well as never being really content with who we are or what we have. That makes it all the more refreshing to read Heather Thompson's and Kim Wright's very moving account of their recent visit to Kindfund, Kenya, where children know joy and peace far beyond their meagre circumstances, and a simple, trusting relationship with Jesus Christ.

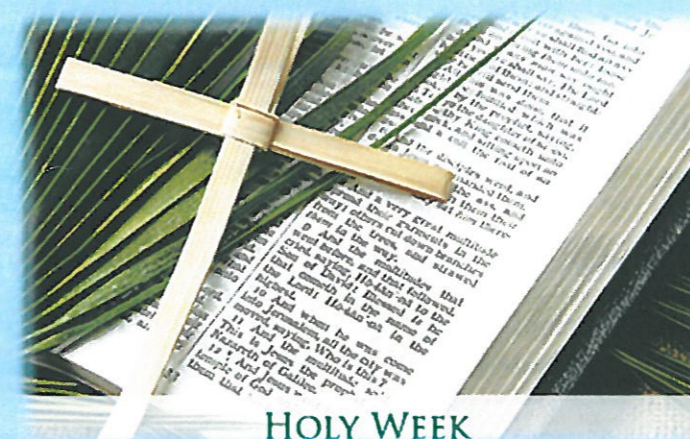
As always, Beverley Bryans has been very conscientious at keeping us up-to-date with all that has been happening in Peru. It's as if the names she mentions have become part of our family!

If you want to find out more about the guide dogs that appear at our 10am service, then read the special article by Ian and Ann Carnahan.

Don't forget about Easter Mission and our Holy Week services.

My thanks to Cheryl Miller. Who has been particularly patient about deadlines this time and, of course, to all who provide generous sponsorship to assist with product costs. Enjoy!

Charles



HOLY WEEK

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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
18.30 Evening Service
8.00 pm Deeper

GOD PROMISES TO BE WITH US

by Rev. Charles McMullen

These past few weeks have been a whirlwind of activity for us as a family. Before Christmas we made the decision that Barbara would retire from her teaching post in Ballyma-gee Primary School, which will take effect at the end of the present school year.

Sadly, we had to put our dog to sleep at the beginning of March. Mac was over fourteen years old and life had become a real struggle for him. There have been a few red eyes and now the house seems very empty. Those of you who are dog-owners will recognise the feelings. I greatly appreciate the love and compassion of our vet, Linda Glenn, who gave me the strength to take the decision.

And then there was my election as Moderator-Designate of the General Assembly at the beginning of February. I have to say that I am looking forward to my year in office and the core theme that is already beginning to emerge is all about Building Relationships. That applies to us personally as we abide in Christ and as we grow closer together in Christian love in our congregations. It is particularly relevant at this time of seemingly intractable and bitter political impasse in the wider community.

I will never forget coming into West the Sunday after my election and being swept away in a tidal wave of love, affirmation and encouragement. The memory of that moment Barbara and I will take with us as we travel throughout Ireland and beyond in the year that lies ahead. We know that we can rely on our very special church family at West to be part of our journey and to remember us in prayer.

Particularly meaningful has been the constant flow of emails, text and Facebook messages, telephone calls, letters and cards. These have come from many different parts of



the world and cover every part of my life, taking me right back to my childhood. During an interview for Radio Ulster's *Sunday Sequence*, I mentioned how the most amazing stories about a fictional character called Wee Johnny shared on a weekly basis as children's addresses by my home minister, Rev Harry Pinkerton, brought me to that place of putting my trust in Jesus Christ! Two of Mr Pinkerton's daughters heard the interview and I am delighted to say have been in touch.

As all of this has been happening, a dear friend in West sent me a link to a beautiful sung paraphrase of the familiar Psalm 139, which I would recommend for you to read: "You hem me in –behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there" (vv5-8).

Whatever our moments, whatever our circumstances, whatever our needs, it is good to be reminded that we are never alone and God

promises to be with us. Take the words of the Psalm to heart if you are soaring on eagle's wings above the mountain tops or feel washed up and exhausted on the shore; if you are welcoming a new member into your family or saying farewell to another.

The Easter message takes the words of the Psalm and brings them gloriously to life. We are reminded that God has entered into the very depths of our experience in order to lift us to the highest heights. The Cross is replaced by the empty tomb and resurrection power comes flooding into the darkest places. There is reconciliation and restoration as the tallest, thickest walls come tumbling down.

It is only the Good News of Christ that can build relationships. Let me leave you then, as I wish you a Happy Easter, with the final verses of Psalm 139: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Agape!

Charles McMullen



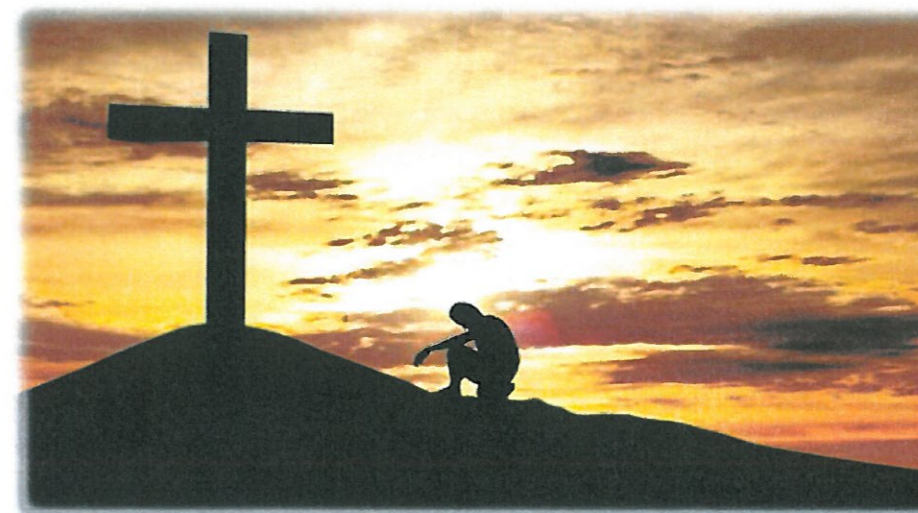
Holy Week 2018

Monday 26th—30th March

The Speaker at our Holy Week services this year will be Rev. Dr. Heather Morris who is currently the Home Mission Secretary of the Methodist Church in Ireland and her theme will be "I will wait at the foot of the Cross."

Our Holy Week services start each evening at 7.00 pm and there will be a time of prayer open to everyone at 6.30 pm. The themes and venues of each service are below and we would love to see everyone there for what promises to be a wonderful week. There will be tea and coffee after the services on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and on Thursday we will share together in Holy Communion.

Monday	"The son of Man must suffer"	Mark 8:27-38	West Church
Tuesday	"Nothing"	Romans 8:31-39	West Church
Wednesday	"Love the Lord your God"	John 12:1-8	St. Gall's
Thursday	"At the Table"	Luke 22:14-24	St. Gall's
Friday	"Watching"	Mark 14:32-42 & Luke 23:49	Carnalea Methodist



Rev. Dr. Heather Morris

BRINGING PASSION TO THE GOSPEL

by Lindsay Conway, Clerk of Session

Sunday the 11th February 2018 will always be a red-letter day in the history of West Church. A day of true celebration and of acknowledging God's love and call on the life and witness of Charles. As well as celebrating the 30th anniversary of his ordination, we also celebrated his election as Moderator designate. To simply say that the congregation was delighted, that our minister, pastor and friend is Moderator Designate is an understatement. "Charles is the man for the job – the Church will be in safe hands – This is his time, called of God", just a few of the comments that have been made in recent days.

Charles made it perfectly clear that he was seeking God's will in the whole process of who would be the next Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. We as a congregation had embraced that desire on the Sunday before the election and called for prayer and fasting on the evening of Tuesday the 6th February.

So often in his ministry Charles has drawn us to those challenging words and powerful commands of Romans 12 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship. The Message translation brings new freshness to the passage – "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you:



A day of double celebration—Lindsay & Norma Conway presenting flowers to Charles & Barbara to celebrate 30 years of Charles' ordination.

Take your everyday, ordinary life — you're sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life — and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him." We know that Charles will follow these sound principles as he embarks on this important role, the next stage of his life's Ministry.

The Presbyterian Church has played such a significant part in Charles's life, from those childhood days attending Trinity Presbyterian Church in Omagh, with his Mum and Dad, to his call as Minister in

West Church, nearly twenty years ago. Charles has played a full and active role in our denomination, locally and within the wider church. This makes him well placed to represent our church and to comment on those big issues that church leaders must address on a regular basis. The year ahead will afford Charles the opportunity to bring his

passion for the Gospel to the whole church, both at home and internationally and to demonstrate his compassion for people as he pastors to the wider community. On a personal note, Charles will be the seventeenth Moderator that I have had the privilege of serving. We will follow with interest the busy schedule of our Moderator, assuring Charles and Barbara of our prayers and support. But we as a congregation will miss them.

The following article was published on Thursday 15th February by the Tyrone Constitution and has been provided to us for publication with their kind permission.

Former Omagh Academy head boy to be the next Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

A former head boy of Omagh Academy, who worshipped with his family at the town's Trinity Presbyterian Church in his younger days, is

to be the next Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

He is the Rev. Charles McMullen, son of the late Jim and Rita McMullen, and he grew up in the family home at McClay Park just off Omagh's Hospital Road.

Fifty-seven-year-old Mr McMullen, who currently serves as minister of West Church, Bangor, County Down, with its some 1,100 families, speaking after his election said he was 'simply overwhelmed'.

'I am simply overwhelmed to have been elected...', says Rev. Charles McMullen

The Church's 19 presbyteries met independently across Ireland on Tuesday night of last week (6th February) to elect a successor to the current Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Noble McNeely, of Holywood, from a list of three ministers.

Known as the Moderator-Designate, Mr McMullen will officially take up office as the Church's most senior office-bearer and principal public representative when he is formally elected and installed as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland at the Assembly's opening night in June.

The 57-year-old minister received nine votes and will be the Church's 179th Moderator since the election of its first in 1840.

Speaking after the result, Mr McMullen said: "I am simply overwhelmed to have been elected Moderator-Designate and commit myself to the Lord for His help and guidance over what I am sure will be an exciting, challenging and enriching year that lies ahead."

Encouragement

"I know I can draw on the prayers and good wishes of the entire denomination and much further afield. I

hope I can be involved in a ministry of building relations and offering encouragement, both within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and with others as I reach out in Christ's name."

The election takes place annually and this year there were three nominees who needed to receive a simple majority of votes from the 19 Presbyteries to become Moderator-Designate.

Along with Mr McMullen, Rev.

Brian Boyd of Kells and Eskylane and Rev. William Henry of Maze Presbyterian Church were also nominated.

They received the following votes: Mr McMullen nine votes: The Presbyteries of Ards, North Belfast, South Belfast, East Belfast, Carrickfergus, Coleraine and Limavady, Derry and Donegal, Dublin and Munster, Monaghan.

Mr Boyd six votes: The Presbyteries of Ballymena, Down, Omagh, Route, Templepatrick and Tyrone.

Mr Henry four votes: The Presbyteries of Armagh, Dromara, Iveagh, Newry.

Born in Omaha, Mr. McMullen attended Omagh County Primary School prior to Omagh Academy, and along with his family was a regular worshipper at the town's Trinity Presbyterian Church.

Graduated

With a lifelong interest in languages, Mr McMullen graduated with joint honours in French and German from Trinity College Dublin in 1982 and was awarded his MA in 1985. In 1982 he went to St. Antony's College, Oxford, where he studied Modern European History and completed his Master's Degree

by thesis in 1987. In the meantime (1984-1987), he attended the Church's Union Theological College in Belfast.

On leaving Union College, he was licensed in Trinity Presbyterian Church, Omagh, in 1987 and ordained as assistant minister in Harmony Hill, Lambeg, in 1988, before being called to Legacurry Presbyterian Church, near Lisburn, where he was installed in 1991. In 1999 he became minister of Bangor West.

Talking about his call to the ministry, he said: "There is nothing as satisfying and fulfilling as sharing the love of Jesus Christ with others. A definite call to the ministry began to take shape in my late teens during the ministry of Rev. Bill Clarke (a former minister of Trinity Presbyterian, Omagh, now sadly deceased) who involved me in church services allowing me to read lessons and prepare prayers and talks.

Sense of peace

"By the beginning of my graduate studies I was unsettled, almost as if I was running away from a sense of call to the full-time ministry. I remember very clearly yielding to the Lord and a profound sense of peace enveloping me which has never left."

In describing his ministry, Mr McMullen said "the key word for me is 'relationship' - our relationship with God in Christ, our relationship with one another in Christian community together and the sense of building relationships as we share the love of Christ with outsiders.

"Christian love is very central to my ministry, it is inclusive and encouraging in the hope of bringing people to an encounter with the loving God and the truth of His Word."

Cont'd page 8



Bangor West, which was established in 1961, is a large congregation on the outskirts of the town, with some 1,100 families of around 2,700 people. With four morning services on a Sunday the church has a strong, vibrant and growing children's and youth ministry with over 150 teenagers attending Young West on a Sunday morning.

Describing his congregation, Mr McMullen said: "West Church is characterised by loving relationships, deep spirituality with an emphasis on prayer, the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the simple joy of life itself. A diverse place that is home to traditionalist, evangelicals and charismatics, as well as people from many different Christ faith backgrounds. It is not a perfect place by any stretch of the imagination, but many continue to find a personal faith in Christ, healing, restoration and renewal, which is wonderful.

Pioneering spirit

"There has always been a pioneering spirit in the congregation and we

recently launched a fresh expression of worship at our evening service with specific appeal for those in their 18-30s. The addition of Cafechurch, a more informal environment, has grown to over 100. There is also a Sunday School for children with special needs and the Sycamore Club for adults with similar need," he said.

Thinking about his year in office, Mr. McMullen said: "I have no doubt that I will have a very steep learning curve over these next few weeks, but I am looking forward to experiencing life throughout the denomination and beyond. While it is true to say that in ministry you receive far more than you give, I want to spend as much time as possible drawing alongside people, listening to them and encouraging them.

"At West, my overall passion is to see renewal come to the traditional Church, finding new ways of expressing timeless truth to people of all generations so they can find fullness of life in Jesus Christ. I believe very strongly that the Christian life

rises and falls at the point of the devotional and, as Moderator, I hope to bring this emphasis to the wider Church."

He is married to Barbara—they met at the 1990 General Assembly—and the couple have three adult children. Keen walkers, Mr McMullen and his wife enjoy walking around the North Down and Antrim coasts and walking trips overseas. He enjoys reading and current affairs, watching Ulster play rugby with his son, following Chelsea Football Club and keeping fit.

As a writer he has contributed to denominational magazines and BBC Radio Ulster's 'Thought for the Day'.

Mr McMullen will be officially nominated to this year's General Assembly at its opening night in Belfast on Monday, June 4.

Our cover photograph and Charles pictured below have been provided with kind permission by the Belfast Telegraph and Pacemaker Press



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IN WEST?

Charles will finish in West at the end of April, which gives him the month of May to prepare for his Installation as Moderator on Monday 4 June. During the first week in June he chairs the General Assembly and then most Sundays for the ensuing year will be visiting congregations throughout Ireland. There will be tours of four Presbyteries and a trip overseas, still to be decided. Special events so far include the possible visit of Pope Francis at the end of August and a special service to mark the centenary of the Armistice on Sunday 11 November.

The next Moderator will be installed at the beginning of June 2019 and then Charles will attend other

church assemblies as the Presbyterian representative. After a holiday he will return to West at the beginning of August 2019. A Moderator's Assistant has been called to serve in West during the period of Charles' absence. He will be ordained and inducted at the end of April. Andrew Gill, a Dubliner, is the full-time Assistant Minister in First Carrickfergus. He has a background in engineering and was youth worker at Adelaide Road Presbyterian Church, Dublin, before training for the ministry. He feels a call ultimately to minister in the Irish Republic. While here in West he will have preaching and pastoral as well as specific responsibilities as a member of the team



Pictured above, Andrew Gill

under the leadership of Andy Galbraith. Those of us who met him were impressed by his warmth and gentleness.

RISK

A devotional piece by Neil Anderson (Freedom in Christ). These devotions can be accessed by visiting the Freedom in Christ webpage- www.ficm.org.uk

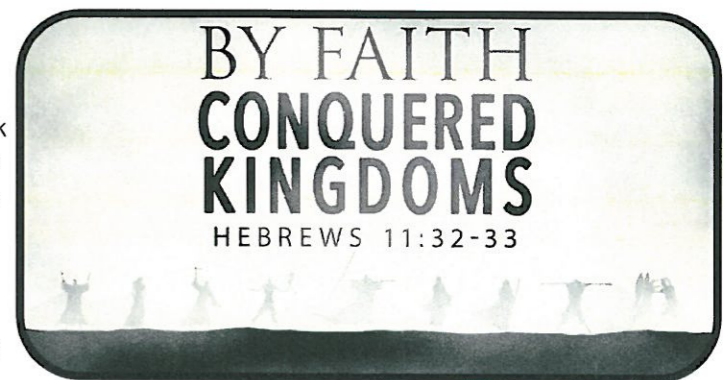
Who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong (Hebrews 11:33,34)

Is faith a risk? Of course. But failing to step out in faith is to risk missing real life. I have been challenged by the following thought from an unknown author.

RISK

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental. To reach out for another is to risk involvement. To place our ideas, our dreams, our dreams, before a crowd is to risk their loss. To love is to risk not being loved in return. To live is to risk dying. To hope is to risk despair. To try is to risk failure.



Risks must be taken because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. The person who risks nothing does nothing, has nothing, is nothing. He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he simply cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love, live. Chained by his certitudes, he is a slave; he has forfeited freedom. What a privilege for us to be able to walk by faith in God Himself, armed with all the promises of His Word. I suppose we all desire the security of the solid tree trunk, but the fruit is out on the limb. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. The timid soul asks, "What do I stand to lose if I do it?" The fruit-bearing Christian asks, "What do I stand to lose if I don't do it?" Real life is lived on the cutting edge.

Heavenly Father, help me stand up for what is right, to reach out and love others, and to dare to believe.

18:30 ~ A REAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY

by Andy Galbraith

During the autumn of 2017 there was a question that the staff team and session at West were pondering and exploring solutions to. The question was this: how do we address the increasing disengagement of young adults from church life?

Many of our young adults who have grown up in West find it difficult to integrate into the mainstream services after they have outgrown Young West. We explored and discussed how we might address this challenge.

We recognised that this is by no means a problem unique to us at West. Many churches are facing this issue in what is a growing cultural trend within the modern church. But the question remained as to how we would choose to address it within West.

Surely the parable of the lost sheep gives us some insight in to the crazy maths of God's kingdom. If it were me I would have written off the lost sheep as a marginal loss. Just one percent. I'd have focused on the ninety nine that remained and made sure they made it safely to market. But Jesus tells us that the good shepherd left the ninety nine all-present-and-correct sheep in the safety of the fold and headed off into the wild relentlessly pursuing the one who had drifted off. Surely this parable should speak into how we deal with our own wandering sheep. Especially if we can identify a recurring trend that highlights when the

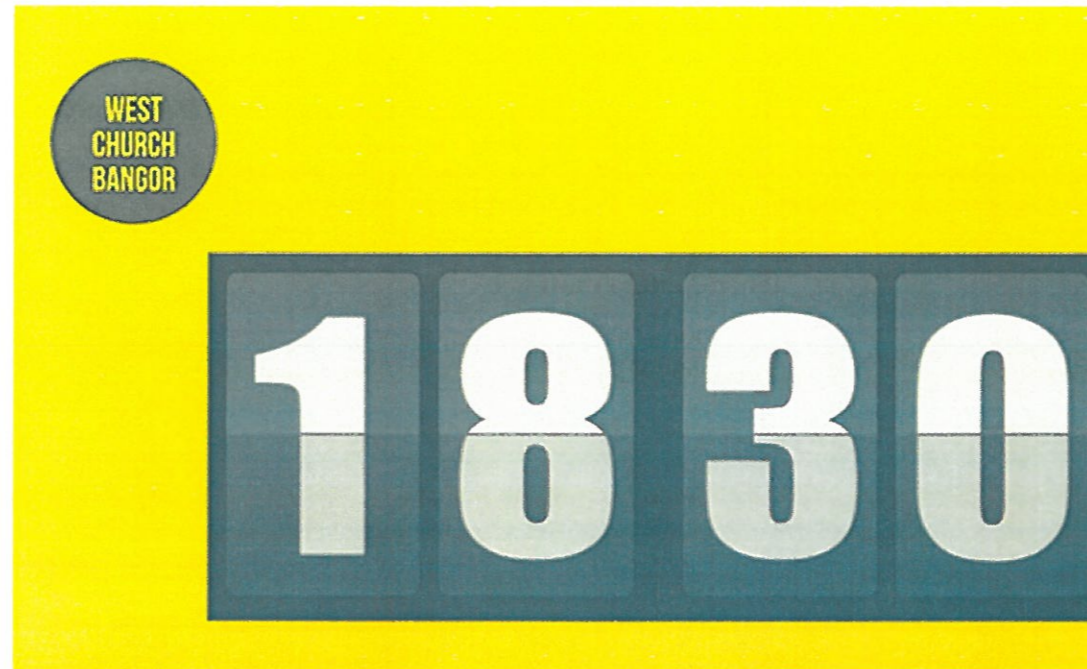
feet go wandering.

After much discussion and research we came to session with a proposal to revamp our existing 6:30 service and restructure it around the needs of young adults. The idea was that we would create a service that would be open and inviting to all ages but with worship and teaching that would be particularly relevant to the eighteen to thirty age group, and have a real sense of community. Worship; Teaching; Community, these would be the primary areas of focus of our experiment.

Session very bravely agreed to pilot this service for the first three months of 2018. We kicked off on 7th January and it has very much exceeded our expectations. It has been great to see how all ages are enjoying a fresh expression of worship and teaching at our newly renamed 18:30 service.

We have been meeting in the conference room with a creative layout suggested by our young adults, and it has been an exciting journey together. There has been a powerful sense of God's presence as we worship together. The worship has been delivered by a team of our own musicians under the mentorship of Ryan Griffiths. Ryan is the Worship Pastor at CFC in Belfast, but he is also the head of Worship Central in Northern Ireland. (Worship Central is a ministry to support and equip worship leaders that operates alongside Alpha from Holy Trinity Brompton in London). It's been great to see a new generation of musicians finding their feet in worship.

Although this new service is not going to be to everyone's taste, it has been really encouraging to see how many people well outside of the 18 to 30 age range are passionately enjoying the service. I want to thank Session for their courageous vision in helping us address this important issue. I also want to thank the



congregation for accommodating this change and getting involved in this fresh expression.

At our recent session meeting the decision was taken to continue developing this service until the summer. As we explore how we make this service sustainable in the long haul, I'd like to hear from anyone who has a heart to see the young adults of our congregation being encouraged and supported as they find their place in congregational life. We will need a bigger team of volunteers of all ages to make this happen Sunday by Sunday and your help and prayers would be much appreciated. You may find it noisy and it may take you well out of your comfort zone, but this could be just the challenge you are looking for.



1. **The exaltation of Jesus Christ**
2. **The overcoming of Satan's kingdom**
3. **A love of the Scriptures**
4. **People are convinced of the truth of the Gospel**
5. **There is an evident and expressed love to God and man**

"A work is not to be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men; such as tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of the body, or the failing of bodily strength. The influence persons are under, is not to be judged of one way or the other, by such effects on the body; and the reason is, because the Scripture nowhere gives us any such rule"

Observing the 18:30 by way of Edwards 5 characteristics I think the following could be said:

While many would say that the new service on a Sunday night is not a revival in the sense of the Great Awakening that Edwards was writing about, none the less the five characteristics may still be employed as a plum line from which to gauge a move of the Spirit of God.

It is still early days in the development of this service and I would not, and will not argue, that all 5 characteristics are manifest at this stage, but increasingly it would appear that they are becoming evident.

Some may argue that what has been experienced is emotion based on the music, music volume, the lighting, and for a good period of its history the Church has been hesitant in regard to emotion in worship. Edwards dealing with a greater emotional outpouring and the negative comments that resulted commented in this way;

1) Over the past number of weeks Jesus Christ has been exalter. This has taken place in the following ways:

a) During the worship (I recognise that for many there may well be an issue with the volume that has been experienced, but it is important to look beyond this and look at the substance of the worship) the focus has been encounter with Jesus Christ. The songs that have been picked, are songs that have exaltation and praise rooted in them.

b) The teaching has been focused on the Word of God and getting people into the Word.

c) It is evident that there is a hunger (something that will be touched on later in regard to the love of the scriptures), in people's hearts. The number of people attending each week is usually around 160. While the service was originally intended

cont'd over

The following article continues on from Andy Galbraith's summary of the 18:30 service...

'Thoughts on the 18:30 pilot'

by Rick Scott

For the past three months West Church has undertaken a pilot of a reformatted evening service.

So now the three months are nearly up, and as we reflect upon what has passed, what are we to conclude?

In 1741 during the Great Awakening, many people had an encounter with God and revival spread throughout New England and the British Isles. Jonathan Edwards (who was one of the leading theologians of his day) preached a sermon which was titled "The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God". Edwards used this sermon to comment upon the revival; what could be learned and what were the characteristics of a movement of God. Edwards noted five characteristics that were to be used to verify a true revival; a moving of the Spirit of the Living God:



with a focus for those in the 18-30 age group, people from all ages have been in attendance and are consistently coming each week.

d) The atmosphere is one where young people and old feel a sense of freedom as they sing songs of praise and adoration.

2) Overcoming Satan's kingdom: It is probably too early to see lives changed in regard to a turning away from sin. Indeed, some may hasten to add that only God knows a man's heart, but yet, in the lives of those who follow Him God produces the fruit of His Spirit which should be evident for all to see. However, as Edwards states, 'when the Spirit that is at work, operates against the interests of Satan's kingdom, which lies in encouraging and establishing sin, and cherishing men's worldly lust; this is a sure sign that it is a true, and not a false Spirit'. Certainly it is true from Scripture 'That no one who is speaking (I would include singing in this) by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit'. The very act of singing and praising in the manner that has been observed and the exposition of God's word is a clear sign that there is a turning away from the kingdom in which we all formerly lived.

3) A love for the Scriptures—this is probably harder to gauge but can be surmised by looking at two areas.

a) The numbers of people coming each week. This could be due to

worship or the newness of the service, but the fact that people are returning each week and are hungry to return is evidence of some sort of indication of love.

b) What this love is for, is better understood by hearing the comments made about the service - "really learnt from the Word", "really enjoyed the teaching". There appears to be first shoots of this love for the Scriptures emerging as the weeks have passed.

4) People are convinced by the truth of the Gospel – Of all the characteristics that Edwards mentions this is probably the most difficult to ascertain. It will only be in the weeks and months ahead and the noticeable difference in people's lives that the evidence of this characteristic will be able to be observed.

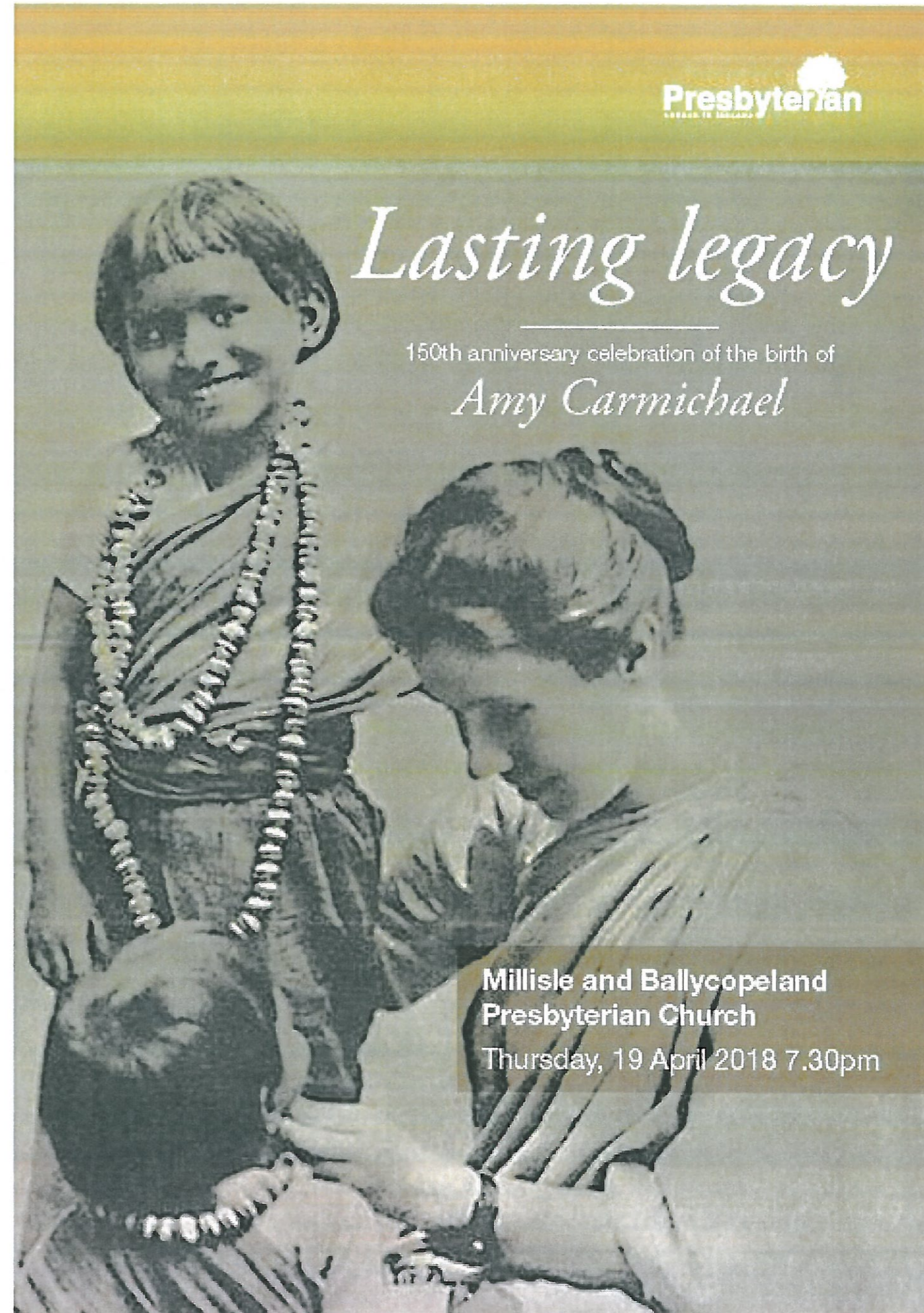
5) There is an evident and expressed love to God and man – Community (a love for each other) was one of the key foundations upon which this service was designed. As has been mentioned in the discussion of the other characteristics, there is an evident and expressed love to God via the worship, the adoration and praise, and the participation of those attending. The service is not solely made up of the 18-30 age group but is a service of all ages, a fact that excites those in their 18-30's. It is also clear that families are coming out and worshipping together as a unit, with parents commenting how their young people are really engaging

with this service. This was the underlying aim of the service. In addition, it is clear that for some who come to this service, that neither the worship style or the volume levels or lighting is something that they would naturally be fond of. Instead they come to support the underlying principle of the service. By their very presence, they are a practical demonstration of Love to God and man.

This has been a brief discussion of the 18-30 service. I would argue that it is apparent that the Spirit of God is working in this service, and that the Spirit is working in a new way from what we are used to. That it is a work of God, is further supported by the testimony of those who witnessed the last time God brought about an awakening of people's spirits in West. The testimony is, that while this is a new expression much of the characteristics observed are similar to that which was observed before. Not only in West but down through the ages.

These are early days and we may not all feel comfortable about aspects of the service but I feel that it is important that we should take stock of the observations that have been made above and allow the Spirit of God to guide and direct us. The challenge for us all going forward is how to daily love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

May God bless and guide you and may you know that Jesus Christ loves you.



Presbyterian
WELFARE TO THE GLORIOUS

Lasting legacy

150th anniversary celebration of the birth of

Amy Carmichael

Millisle and Ballycopeland
Presbyterian Church

Thursday, 19 April 2018 7.30pm

KIRK SESSION ACTION TEAMS UPDATES

Our five Actions Teams, within Kirk Session, continue to meet every other month and provide you with the following updates:

Discipleship

Maureen Bennett writes:

Chicken and Egg—which comes first?

Disciples and Church—which comes first?

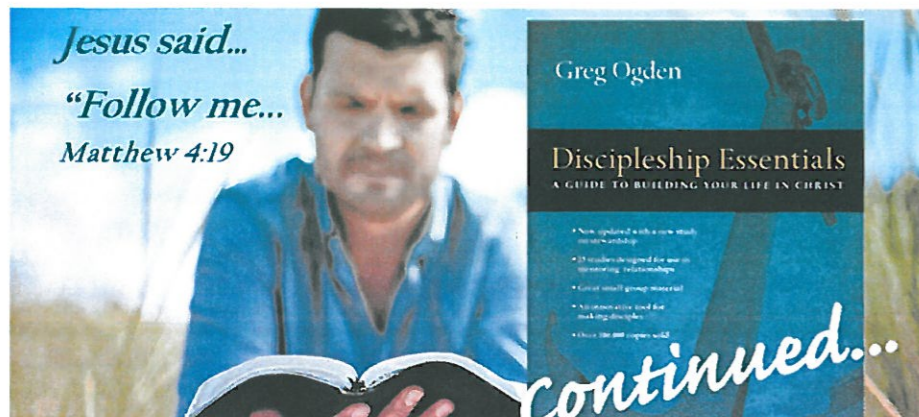
In his book, 'Building a Discipling Culture' Mike Breen says, "Jesus has not called you to build his church. In fact in all of the gospels he mentions the church only two times... One time he mentions it he says he will build his church. Our job, our only and the last instruction he gave us, was to make disciples. And out of this we will get the church. Out of this, the future will emerge, and out of this, there will be a missional wave the likes of which we have never seen before".

This thinking also underpins the work of the Cairn Community (<https://www.cairnmovement.com>) and has been the basis of some of our thinking here in West.

Greg Ogden comments in his book, 'Discipleship Essentials', "We grow in Christ as we seek him together. Jesus' own pattern of disciple-making was to be intimately involved with others and allow life to rub against life. By gathering in twos or

threes to study the Bible and encourage one another, we most closely follow Jesus' example with the twelve disciples".

One of the recurring issues raised by the Jubilee report based on questionnaire, interview and focus group responses among West members a couple of years ago, was a desire to grow deeper in relationship with Jesus and in an understanding of faith. Since then we have worked at developing our home groups and aligning their study material with that being taught on Sundays. Around a dozen members have completed or are completing the discipleship programme run by the C.S. Lewis Institute, which also involves an element of learning together in a small group. Over the last number of years, within the older members of Young West, leaders have been meeting with young people for this same purpose of moving beyond a consumer approach to Christianity, to one which builds authentic community through small groups or Triads, 'huddling' together in a regular and organised way to study scripture, trust one another enough to share life's ups and downs, to weep together, have fun together and pray together. In our small groups within the 'Freedom in Christ' and 'Alpha' courses, we have also seen



develop, something of this more intimate sharing of faith.

The Discipleship Action Team now feels the time is right to begin expanding such discipleship opportunities - Triads - across the congregation for those who might be interested.

Discipleship is

- an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow towards maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well. (Ogden)
- about a few i.e. a group of 2 or 3.
- about equipping others to eventually disciple others.

The approach we are suggesting is that of Greg Ogden's 'Transforming Discipleship' and 'Discipleship Essentials' practical workbook with the stated aims of growing deeper in Christ together and equipping disciples to disciple others.

The workbook covers the following topics:

Each of these study sections includes:

- (i) a core truth presented in a question-answer format
- (ii) a memory verse and accompanying study
- (iii) a field-tested inductive Bible study
- (iv) a reading on the theme for the week
- (v) questions to draw out key principles in the reading.

We have yet to finalise the material and some of the details but hope to launch the venture at an 'expression-of-interest' session sometime soon; however, here is some key information to help prompt your thinking and praying.

- (i) First and foremost this opportunity is for people who, together with some others, want to discover more of what it means to be 'in Christ' - that is true both of those who will lead or facilitate and those who will be participants.
- (ii) We hope to run with about 10-12 Triads in the first tranche.
- (iii) We will need 10-12 facilitators or Triad leaders and will be able to accommodate up to 36 participants
- (iv) Each person will be expected to

commit to 25 sessions each of about 90 minutes—it is important to try to stay within the time agreed.

(v) The 25 sessions could run weekly or fortnightly but either way, we would hope that both leaders and participants would commit to the course and recognise that for its duration, it might involve sacrificing something else.

(vi) Triads will not replace home or small groups, although those who participate may want to step back temporarily from their home group.

(vii) It is also our expectation that each participant will, on completion, take on leading a Triad of 2 or 3 (the multiplier effect) for a further 25 sessions.

(viii) Triads would be gender-based and agree together the time commitment and regularity of meetings, and to uphold the values of respect, integrity and confidentiality.

(ix) It is envisaged that leaders will meet together at the beginning, middle and at the end of the 25 sessions (Whenever that should be) and that they would form pairs or triplets for mutual support. No formal training is needed to act as a facilitator.

Cont'd on page 12



(x) Participation is open to all members of the church and all adults; young may lead Triads of older people and vice-versa or a mix of ages. (xi) The Discipleship Action Team will oversee the process and the logistics of it.

One of Jesus' last commands, after his resurrection, was to his followers. He said, "God authorised and commanded me to commission you : go out and train everyone you meet, far and near in this way of life. Instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I will be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of age."

If you would be interested in being a participant or facilitator you can register on **Sunday 25th March** with any of the Discipleship Team or speak with Maureen Bennett.

Mission & Outreach

Rev. Andy Galbraith writes:

Over the autumn of 2017 our Alpha team delivered another Course in the downstairs room at the Bryansburn Inn. This is the second course we have run off-site in recent years, and it proved to be a great opportunity to engage with some folks curious about Christianity and willing to explore more. Over the course of 11 weeks we had many fascinating and often challenging discussions about why we believe what we believe. It was a great opportunity to walk alongside individuals as they explored faith. The team were delighted when, by the end of the course, two of our guests had come to faith in Jesus. In addition to this, there were a good number of folks who have moved further down the road in their journey of faith. We pray that vital seeds have been planted which will bear fruit in God's timing.

The highlight of our Alpha journey was our celebration evening that doubled as a Christmas party. It was great to get the opportunity to hear people's reflections of their time at Alpha as we munched down mince pies and sang some carols together.

Christmas was another initiative that the Mission and Outreach team were exploring this year. We

Mission & Outreach Team

considered how best we could harness the missional opportunities that Christmas brings us. A big thanks is due to the working party from across the church who brainstormed how we could reach out to the community around us to proclaim the hope we have because of Christmas.

We concluded that the best way to do this would be a two pronged approach of sending out community Christmas Cards to every home in the district with a message of Hope at Christmastime. The cards would contain an invitation to a special outdoor Carol Service that would be held around an outdoor tree on our front lawn at West. All the necessary groundworks and electrical works were done in preparation for this event. (A big thanks to all who helped to bring it into reality!)

With Session approval this outreach event was held on Friday 22nd December. The elders were keen that the Christmas card initiative be an inter-church partnership, so we invited our neighbouring congregations of St. Gall's and Carnalea Methodist to partner with us in a spirit of Christmas unity. We divided up the local parish and, in the run up to Christmas, delivered hundreds of bespoke Christmas cards that bore a message of hope from the congregations, alongside

details of all the special services happening in each church over the Christmas period.

The Carolfest event kicked off with carol singing around the tree followed by a few closing carols in the church sanctuary around the indoor tree. The evening ended with mince pies and warm drinks in the welcome area with Christmas music booming. This event was a great first attempt at a Christmas community engagement, and maybe next year we can raise the bar higher!

Plans are currently afoot to see how we can make use of the outdoor facilities established over the Easter period...

Pastoral Care

Andy Heron writes:

We have a wonderful bunch of volunteers involved in various aspects of what can be broadly called 'pastoral care', ranging from serving coffee between services on a Sunday morning to supporting those who have lost a loved one. Currently, we are investigating the possibility of launching a 'drop-in' activity, for people to come and chat over a coffee, perhaps play some board games, watch a film together, etc. We are also looking at the Sunday morning coffee rota in conjunction



with the Discipleship Action Team, with the aim of ensuring that we have enough volunteers to maintain this important ministry (in the past we have had to issue urgent appeals for cover when gaps in the rota have appeared).

In addition, there may be exciting opportunities this year to develop ministry in two local care homes, where one of our senior care volunteers has already developed contacts with very needy residents. So there is plenty to be going on with in our desire to be obedient to Jesus' command that we all care for one another.

Youth & Childrens

Sonia Mawhinney writes:

Two key areas that we have been discussing and moving forward with have been our JClub Baby Room and a DivorceCare for Kids course.

We are delighted to announce that our JClub Baby Room is now fully operational in the Committee Room each Sunday morning. Parents are welcome to come and stay with their baby and listen to the service in the haven of the Committee Room. If you would be interested in meeting with the new mums & dads and maybe having the opportunity to have a little cuddle with one of the babies, please speak with Victoria Croft through the Church Office on 028 9145 9688. JClub Toddlers continues to run in the Meeting Room.



Every good and perfect gift is from above.

James 1:17



Megan with her mum Janeen enjoying our new JClub Baby Room



DivorceCare for Kids

DC4K provides your child or children with a safe and neutral place to gain an age appropriate understanding of separation and divorce. Each session is filled with

motivating and exciting activities including games, crafts, role playing and discussion time to help them process the divorce and move forward in their lives.

Where?	West Church
When?	10 week course beginning on Monday 16th April
Time?	To be confirmed
For?	Kids aged 5-12 years

If you would be interested in registering your child/children or if you would like to find out more, contact Victoria Croft or Kim Wright through the Church Office on 028 9145 9688 or by emailing office@westchurchbangor.org

BLESSED BY GENEROSITY

by Stephen Cully on behalf of the Finance Group

This year West Church has again been very blessed by the generosity of its members whose contributions have enabled us to meet the financial demands of running a large congregation, reaching out to the community and supporting missionary activities.

The following figures and comments are for the operating costs of West Church. Items such as special appeals and collections or money collected by groups within West and then distributed to the relevant organisations have been removed.



You may be interested to know

- We currently have 1099 families (2852 adults and children) on our books as members. There are a number of other families who regularly attend but who have not formally joined the church and as such are not recorded as members.
- Last year 644 families contributed by Freewill Offering to the No 1 and No 5 accounts. These are the church's main operational accounts from which our bills and salaries are paid.
- Contributions of £309,345 and £273,345 were given to the No 1 and No 5 accounts in weekly Freewill Offering envelopes or by standing order. This enabled a further £65,963 to be reclaimed from government through the Gift Aid scheme. Loose money in the Sunday collection plates totalled £36,648 but is not eligible for gift aid reclaim.
- In 2017 our income increased by 4% but our expenses increased by 8.2% compared with 2016. Therefore the surplus of income over expenditure in 2017 was only £2,742 compared with £20,377 in the previous year. It is clear that as the work and activities of the congregation increase, so the income to fund it needs to increase at a similar rate. This is a responsibility for each member of the congregation to consider.
- We currently have 14 employees in West Church. This includes pastoral, youth workers, administrative and maintenance staff, both full and part-time.
- 64% of our total expenditure went towards the cost of staff and was the biggest cost increase during the year which was mainly due to our need to call an Associate Minister.
- 13% of our expenditure went on the running and maintenance of the premises including office costs and heat and light.
- In 'round terms', it costs approximately £10,000 per week to run West Church.

Our members were extremely generous in their donations to the United Appeal giving £33,947 against a target of £34,213. This is the highest amount that our congregation has ever contributed and has made a significant difference. In previous years we have had to make up the

shortfall by using FWO donations and this has impacted on the church's other work. Our target has been increased this year and we hope for your continued support with this worthy appeal.

Please refer to page 14 & 15 of this magazine to read more

about the United Appeal to Mission for 2018.

Our members also donated over £5,000 to the World Development Appeal as a result of our collection on Christmas Day.

These figures are taken from the management accounts of the congregation and are subject to audit. The full statutory accounts will be available for the AGM and copies may be obtained from the office on request as soon as they are available.

The No 1 account also subsidises the Missionary Account by £1250 per month. This money is managed by our Missionary Interest Group to support our members in both long and short term mission and also the other missionary societies where there is particular congregational interest.

As a church we are incredibly blessed by the generosity and faithfulness of our members.

Operating Costs for West Church

Income	2017	2016	Difference
No 1 A/C Weekly envelopes & S/Os	309345	305434	3911
No 5 A/C Weekly envelopes & S/Os	78685	72454	6231
Gift Aid for No 1 & 5 A/Cs	69593	70000	-407
Catering	10264	15183	-4919
United Appeal	33947	23502	10445
Misc. Operating Income	26188	19581	6607
Totals	528021	506154	21867

Expenses

Salaries Inc. Tax	334056	301124	-32932
Utilities	19276	21840	2564
Stationery/Advertising	13028	12657	-371
Estate Mgt	35335	30978	-4357
Central Church Assessments	22689	21725	-964
United Appeal	34213	32350	-1863
Missionary Causes & Y&C A/Cs	19000	21400	2400
Catering	13968	16448	2480
Programmes/Courses	1211	926	-285
Misc. Operating Costs	32504	25982	-6522

Totals	525279	485431	-39848
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Overall Surplus/Deficit	2742	20723	-17981
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Some points to consider:

- As we grow many people who attend this church are not recorded on our books as members. If you are unsure if you are a member contact Cheryl or Wendy at the Church Office. They will confirm whether you are recorded as a member and, if not, explain how to become one.
- It is worth remembering that if someone wishes to be a full voting member of a Presbyterian Church they need to be a communicant and also have recorded givings. This can only be done if you have an allocated FWO number. If you do not and would like one, please contact the Church Office.
- If you are potentially eligible for Gift Aid please let the Office know. They can also advise you in regards to what makes someone eligible.
- Please remember in your prayers, the team of volunteers who give up their time to collect, count and manage the finances of the church.

If you have any specific questions regarding the finances of the church please contact any member of the Finance Group. The members are Jeremy Eves, Victor Stephens, Roisin Scott, John Poole, Milford Montgomery and Stephen Cully.

CELEBRATION AFTERNOON TEA



3Cs are holding

an Afternoon Tea Party to celebrate the Royal Wedding, which is taking place on the 19th May in St. George's Chapel, Windsor.

The proceeds of this event will be given to 'Beneath His Wings', a new Christian charity, run by Joanna Little.

Beneath His Wings was founded as a result of too many young people not having a safe place to call home. They aim to provide a family home where they can have a fresh start, tackle addictions, learn life skills and begin to transform their lives. Support is also provided to those in hostels or their own accommodation.

**Saturday 12th May 2018
2.00—4.00 pm**

A Note from Joanna

"For me the saddest part of working in Hydebank is seeing the young people be released and have nowhere to go and no support, then a day or two, maybe even a week or two they are back in, in a worse way. It completely breaks my heart seeing lives being destroyed in this way. What can break this cycle? I believe God's heart is to have a house where young people who leave prison, sometimes with little family support can come to live in a supportive environment."

As a child Joanna, came to West Church, along with her mum, dad and two sisters, when her dad, Alvin was the Associate Minister.

We hope that you will come along on the 12th May, enjoy a delicious afternoon tea, and support this very worthwhile charity.

Tickets are available now – minimum donation £10 and may be obtained from Norma, 9146 9913, Ann, 9127 0029, Ethel 9146 2666 or any member of 3Cs

Coming in 2018 DV an online magazine especially for Christian women in Northern Ireland

NO Christian Woman Today.

Equipping Christian women to renew their minds, serve the church, and create culture to the glory of God.

Being a Christian in today's society is challenging. Issues that didn't affect us just a few short years ago, are now part and parcel of everyday living.

We are currently looking for women who feel they can contribute to society, with maybe sharing an experience, book review, or maybe write devotionals. (Everyday a Journey)

We believe that God has a purpose for everyone, and the experiences should not be lost but shared. If you feel you would like to be part of this new venture, contact me, Ann King, on Ann@familiesfirstni.com. I would love to hear from you.

As women, we are the mainstay of the family. We need Christ's help every day.

Families and society are today in desperate need of truth, goodness and beauty. NI Christian Woman aims to strengthen the church by richly communicating the breadth of the true, good and beautiful Gospel.

Learn more at BeautifulOrthodoxy.com

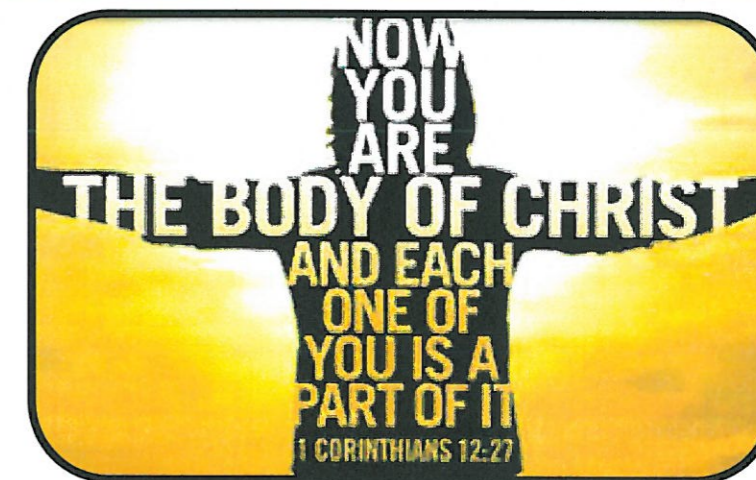
FELLOWSHIP IN CHRIST

by John McCroskery

Kirk Session has recently established an Elders Emeriti meeting which will take place on the last Friday of the month on a quarterly basis.

The purpose of the meeting is to bring those Elders who have retired together for informal gatherings where they can retain the bonds of fellowship in Christ in support for one another in practical and prayerful ways.

The group will also pray for matters arising in the Church and those in need. It is hoped that people will feel free to request prayer by contacting any member of the group.



Pictured back, (l-r) John McConnell, Hilary Guest, Gwen Dodds & Jay Russell and front (l-r) John Hewitt, John McCroskery, Reg Bates, Marion Macartney, Paul Shields and Lyla Graham



BUILDING EVERYDAY DISCIPLES

Every aspect of our Church's mission depends to some extent on United Appeal. Hundreds of projects and programmes at home and overseas are helping to advance God's kingdom, showing God's love in action to thousands of people. Thanks to the generous support that Presbyterians like you continue to offer, this work can flourish.

This year, the United Appeal target set by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to West is £34,818.

We almost reached our target in 2017 and did not have to rely on contributions from our operational accounts and it is our prayer that your generosity will allow us to reach our target.

United Appeal Sunday is on Easter Day however you can contribute at any stage during the year to this specific appeal using the United Appeal envelopes.



Investing for the long haul

Philip Whelton has been an Irish mission worker in Arklow Presbyterian Church, Co. Wicklow for 22 years.

As part of his role, Philip is involved in running kids' clubs throughout the year; a weekly community Bible study; a parents' and toddlers' group called the Coffee Dock; and a holiday Bible club every summer.

His work with children and young people has been a key focus for Philip. He says, "I'm just as passionate about it today as when I started. Every young person is different and each one has a story. We want the children to know that Jesus loves them, and that they belong - no matter what their background or circumstances may be like."

Minister of Arklow, Rev. Nathan Duddy is full of praise for Philip and the work he does.

"When people talk about Arklow Presbyterian Church, Philip's name will come up. To have that link in the community that has been built up over 20 years is fantastic for our church."

(Pictured) Philip's Wednesday Kid's Club to which around 40 primary school-aged children come straight from school to attend.



Irish mission workers work as evangelists alongside ministers and congregations across Ireland. The work is fully supported by the United Appeal for Mission. Short films featuring the work of Philip Whelton and Ruth Bromley and My Place can be viewed at www.presbyterianireland.org/unitedappeal

Exploring inclusive children's ministry

Children's ministry is of vital importance within our denomination because statistics show that most Christians come to faith before the age of 14.

Ruth Bromley is PCI's Children's Development Officer and runs events throughout the year to bless our covenant children. One such event is 'My Place', which explores how to include children with special needs in the life and ministry of our congregations.

Designed for local PCI ministers, elders, children's workers, parents and church members, 'My Place' considers the Biblical teaching behind the mandate to be more inclusive; the personal experiences of parents of children with special needs; and the wisdom of experts in the field of special education, as well as providing space to discuss ideas and ask questions.

Ruth says, "My Place is only possible to run because of the generosity of PCI congregations all across Ireland. Events like this help us understand inclusive children's ministry better, so we can be people and places of welcome for all."

By supporting the United Appeal for Mission, individuals all across Ireland can play their part in introducing children to the Christian faith.



"One of the most helpful things for parents of children with special needs to know is that their church family is asking questions about the best way to accommodate covenant children such as Rose... as a denomination we're so much stronger when we can tackle these things together."

Rev. Stephen Lowry is Moderator's Assistant, First Holywood Presbyterian Church, whose daughter Rose has special needs.

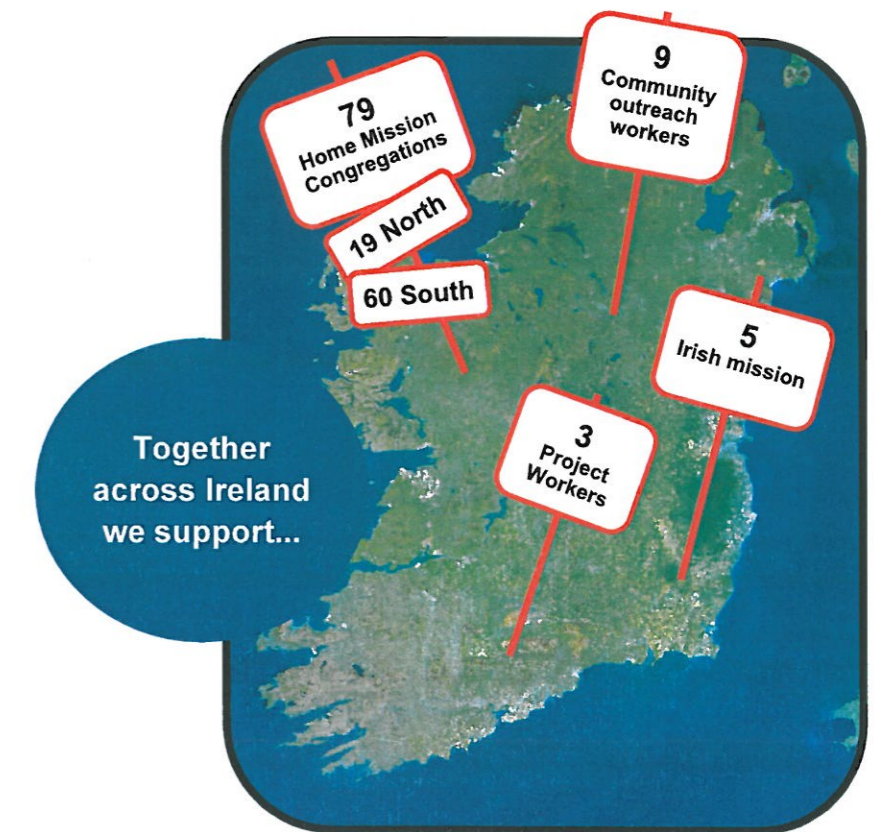


Thanks to your generosity, the United Appeal for Mission is able to support hundreds of mission projects and programmes at home and overseas.



2017 Appeal to congregations: £3,460,000/€ 3,943,400

To find out more watch the video at... vimeo.com/presbyterianireland/unitedappeal



UPDATE ON THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING POINT—supported by the United Appeal for Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

It has been some time since we updated you on the work being done at the International Meeting Point, situated on Belfast's Lisburn, so let's begin with an overview:

We are so thankful that God continues to send new people to the centre. Many of them have fled difficulties in their home countries and have endured so much to get here. It is a privilege to be able to help such people and demonstrate the Good News in deed and word. Most days we have well over 80 people in for lunch; recently the number has been over 100. We are so grateful to those who help cook in the kitchen, The English Language classes on a Tuesday morning and Wednesday evening are meeting a real need as people learn to converse in English. We thank God for the teachers and helpers who make this ministry possible.

Every day there is a Bible Study and on Thursdays it is in Farsi. What a joy to see people, especially Iranians, deepening their understanding of God's Word. May God use this group to reach out to new Iranians who continue to come to Northern Ireland, as well as to friends and relatives who are still back in Iran.

We organised two events which were a wonderful success. Back in September over 140 of us went for the day to Carnfunnock Country Park. It was a great day of fun, chat, and food. It was amazing to see families enjoying the space and the play areas and we were blessed with amazing weather. Some told us that they had never seen the sea in Northern Ireland before. Everyone enjoyed the BBQ and were so thankful for the day. Plans are

underway for us to go to Carnfunnock again this time in May.

Pictured below, IMP day out to Carnfunnock Country Park



On Christmas day it was brilliant to see over 120 people come into the centre for Christmas dinner. Families from many different countries joined in the celebrations and enjoyed company and friendship. As people gathered they drank tea and coffee and enjoyed chocolates before they tucked into their three course meal. Keith Preston (who



Pictured left is the IMP Christmas Day celebrations.

set up the International Meeting Point in 2010) spoke of the reason why we celebrate Christmas and gave thanks for the food. After the meal was over many lingered on and chatted and enjoyed getting their photo taken by the Christmas tree. We were able to give the children chocolates and presents and the neediest families were given hampers to take home. The friendships and conversations will be built on throughout the year as we seek to bring glory and honour to our Saviour.

But what keeps us working here is the work that God is doing in individual lives. Some of these people have come recently to Belfast, others have been here for a long time.

We had a great celebration in July. After 6+ years, Jalil and Ningshi were granted permission to remain in the UK. Jolil and Ningshi have been great volunteers and very much part of the IMP family. Their permission to stay is an answer to prayer. Jalil now has part-time work and Ningshi is volunteering in a school. Others like Jalil and Ningshi have got permission to remain and are now looking for employment as they continue to put down more roots in our community.

As ever, a number of those who



qualified people who are able to help. Through all the family's trials they have seen our love in very practical ways. We have also been able to share that it is in Christ alone that peace is found.

Ne* and her family are from central Africa and we have been able to help in various ways over

the last few years. Recently we have had openings to share the Good News with her and her daughter.

Er* from Eastern Europe is struggling to get a job. He is getting help from another Church regarding this. We have been able to share with him the hope that comes through Jesus.

We are very aware that as we work through asylum and refugee issues with many who come into the centre we are often not told the full story. As we seek to help and come alongside such people we need much discernment and wisdom. We need balance, to be gentle and gracious as doves yet as wise as serpents. We also look to the Lord for his daily protection and help as we work with everyone who comes in through our doors.

We continue to covet your prayers for the work in IMP:

- (i) Pray for the protection of staff and volunteers, there has been a recent threat of violence against a member of staff and it is a cause for concern.
- (ii) Pray that we will be able to cope with every increasing numbers,

most days now we are full to bursting, especially at lunchtime. (iii) Pray that someone will take over the delivery of left over food from supermarkets to IMP and other centres. This was a great bonus to people with low or no income and helped alleviate poverty. The SOS bus group cannot afford to run this ministry any longer.

(iv) Pray for Sharon, 75% of her working week is in IMP, the other 25% is in Windsor Presbyterian, The demand on Henry, Sharon and I is now so great that when she comes back on a Monday having missed being in the centre on Friday she faces two days work. Pray that God will keep her strong to carry such a heavy workload.

Lastly, we need your help with a practical matter. IMP has a computer suite that enables people to write emails, contact relatives back home and make CVs. Our machines are very old, in fact four of the ten have stopped working. They came second hand to us five years ago. We would like to raise financial support to enable us to purchase ten machines and a mono laser printer to provide a better service. If you feel you could help, please get in touch with me by email

(keith.keithpreston@gmail.com) or phone 07850 651137. Cheques should be made payable to PCI and forwarded into the West Church Office to forward on. Please mark on your envelope if your donation should be Gift Aided.

Thank you again for your on-going prayerful support of our ministry.

Keith Preston (IMP)

*name changed

“YOU WILL GO OUT IN JOY AND BE LED FORTH IN PEACE”

by Heather Thompson & Kim Wright

Several years ago God called Pamela and Ken Dobbin to set up a children’s home for children in need in Kenya. This when most people their age would be looking towards retirement. Their vision was of children whose hearts would be on fire for God as they went out into the world.

This vision has grown to the opening in the past fourteen years of three homes and three schools in three different areas each two hours apart - Ngaremara, Wamba and Ndikir.

Recently we returned from spending time with Ken and Pamela and the children.

‘You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace.’

Isaiah 55:12

As some of us met to pray before we left for Kindfund we were given these words amongst others and as the time in Kenya was passing we found them continually coming back to our minds. It was indeed a time of great joy and a time in which peace reigned in our hearts as we engaged with the children and their carers throughout the two weeks.

After 28 hours of travel we were so delighted to be met by Pamela, Ken and a friend, Gillian, before the last leg of the journey. How welcome we felt! And this sense of being in family continued throughout our stay. As we arrived, children welcomed us with their hands held out towards us and then sang their praise songs. Although the children have no material possessions they are full of joy and contentment. Everywhere, every day, there was singing - praising Jesus, telling Him that they loved Him, and drawing us into the feast of worship. ‘I love You, I love You, Jesus’ sung in English, then Swahili,



Ken & Pamela Dobbin pictured with their Kindfund family in Ngaremara

then Turkana with accompanying wiggles of the hips and clapping while jumping became our favourite, and a theme song for us personally during our stay. How wonderfully these children worshipped, prayed and recited memory verses. One child would start to sing and the rest would accompany. Then another voice would ring out loud and clear as a first line was heralded and, again, the others would join in. As prayer commenced children would voluntarily stand up and pray and as soon as one sat down another took their place. On one memorable occasion there was a hush as the last person praying sat, and, then, the most beautiful sounds of all praying quietly at the same time cascaded around the room. We will never forget the

Wonder, the presence of God as these children poured out their hearts. On one occasion we listened as each in turn stood and recited a memory verse complete with reference. Even little Anna aged two and a half was being encouraged to recite one! As it got closer and closer to Kim and me we were frantically recalling scripture with reference. A lesson well learned on our part! That day there were about 70 memory verses recalled around the room.

What really stood out for us was the very simple way of life without the distractions of social media and TV. Spending time playing with the children, worshipping, praying and eating together, and enjoying conversations brought freedom and enjoyment. It was all joy!

Springing out of this base of

committee agreed to begin schools on their three sites. There is a nursery school and classes for the older children in Ngaremara. In Wamba the classes are for the first five years of schooling. Additionally there are younger children from the respective areas in each home. The children in Ndikir are schooled there in their younger years and then continue on at one of the other centres. Since they are not always schooled in the area to which they belong they love to return ‘home’ for their school holidays.

As mentioned, there are three centres directly under the banner ‘Kindfund’ and the first of these is at Ngaremara - the first to be developed and six hours travel from Nairobi. When Ken and Pamela began this ministry they felt that God led them there, into what was barren and empty of life. Since they started in 2004 other dwellings have developed around them. Their water is pumped from the local town but needs to be channelled into the various water tanks by foot pump - a strenuous job. They have been trying to get electricity connected from the town for years but to no avail as the authorities wanted them to pay exorbitant prices. Imagine Ken and Pamela’s delight at the sight of an electricity

pole as they drove us onto the site. Of course we were given credit for it! Once the electricity is brought onto the site it will make pumping water so much easier and will give electric light to the buildings. Kenya has suffered drought for a long time and water has been in very short supply. That very night of our arrival some spots of rain fell! Not a lot, but some!

Travelling to Wamba is on tarmac for an hour followed by dirt track for two hours. We eagerly watched out for elephants and jaguars which are regularly sighted. We just saw the tracks through the undergrowth where elephants had broken branches and stumps as they walked through! However, we did see camels, ostriches, donkeys, goats, sheep, and baboons. Many times it was children who were herding the animals for miles to a distant watering hole. Often Ken and Pamela would take bottles of water to throw out to these children as they walked. On this route Ken pointed out where he had been shot at by robbers. The bullet had gone through the 4x4. By God’s grace they weren’t injured and were able to drive further along to safety before the car broke down.

Cont’d over

Heather & Kim with a Nursery class at Ngaremara



Wamba is further north and to the West of Ngaremara and, being surrounded by breathtakingly beautiful mountains, is a bit cooler with a gentle breeze at times. At night we were able to see so many stars lighting up the heavens. In Wamba, they have electricity and large water drums and so can keep a steady supply going. Having said that, one morning I was in the shower room having soaped myself and was about to brave the cold water when I found there was none! I called out to Kim to turn the kitchen tap off! But it wasn't on! I managed to get a small jug of water from a tap at a lower level and washed the soap off. That was the day I had a shower with a jug of water! It's amazing what little you can manage with. And that thought pervaded our stay.

The children each have a bed, a box with a few clothes, and that's it. Between them they have three or four skipping ropes and a football. They are happy and contented as they play together, picking up sticks and playing imaginary games, skipping, and kicking a ball around. Occasionally there is the odd disagreement but it is rare. Rather, we saw children caring for one another and including each other. Kim and I tried introducing new games like, 'What's the time, Mr Wolf' and we all got great fun out of these.

Saturdays were cleaning days for the children. They each pulled their mattresses out into the sunshine and draped them over bushes to air. (Although there is very little vegetation around Ken and Pamela have planted bushes and trees around in Wamba and the children water them each morning). The older children wash their own clothes and bed-sheets.

We had fun! And more fun! Together with two friends we had prepared loads of crafts and taken all sorts of craft items. The children loved everything but, my goodness, all at once they would be reaching their little hands up saying, 'Me! Me!'. We helped the older ones make brooches. Even the boys wanted to do this. The next day which was a Sunday many of these brooches adorned their good clothes as they attended the fellowship. The younger ones all enjoyed a story about the crayon box that talked and



The children enjoying simple ball games

followed it up making stick men. In Ngaremara, one evening we played a variation of 'stick the tail on the donkey'. Children and adults alike giggled and laughed as they groped around the room. This was such a success that we repeated it in Wamba and in Ndiker. Later that evening we talked to them about listening to God because God speaks to each one. We then handed out paper heart shapes (prepared beforehand!) and suggested that they get into pairs and pray for one another, asking God to give them something to encourage the person they were praying for. The room suddenly became quiet as they prayed and then wrote what came to them. Then they used what was written to tell the other person and to pray with them. Pamela was very touched by what one young boy had written for her. Truly God is in that place and these children are being given the best that there is.

We also took part in classes! On one memorable occasion we were to help the class with improper fractions (who ever thought of that name?). Kim thought she couldn't remember what to do so there was I, digging deep into my past to resurrect what had been familiar but now was as if in another world! We went along to the class thinking we were going to help any who were struggling and, instead, I was handed the chalk! Well! Enough said! It is forty years since I taught maths and probably fifty since I did

improper fractions! However, we got through it and the children enjoyed the change!

In Wamba we were given free hand during two classes to do what we liked under the heading of Christian Education (their text books on this are really good). We decided to talk about the fact that God speaks to His children and encourage them to listen. We then went round the classes praying with each. On both occasions the teachers were thrilled and told us that this was new to them. We really enjoyed getting to know some of the teachers and house mothers, both in Wamba and in Ngaremara. We only went for a day to Ndiker as it was far north and in the desert. Whilst there, one of the night watchmen came to Ken to show him a scorpion bite on his leg. When we were leaving Ken brought him along to the nearest hospital, saw to his treatment and gave him money to get a ride on a matatu (a form of taxi) back to the home. This is typical of Ken and Pamela. Whenever there is a need they will extend help out into the communities around the homes while being careful stewards of all that God has provided.

On the way we stopped at one of the local villages to pick up some paperwork details as Kindfund was helping to support one of the villager's daughters through college. There, we saw some young girls about 8-10 years old with large necklaces. Apparently these are a sign that the girl has been 'taken' i.e.

she designated to marry a particular man. This, together with the local practice of FGM and the consequent rejection of some children makes the work of Kindfund even more significant here. In Kenya they have passed a law allowing polygamy so some men have many wives.

As the children come to the end of their primary schooling they sit a national exam. Those who earn high enough marks can go on to secondary school with the potential for further study. Others will go to technical college where they learn a skill such as car mechanics. Once finished there they will be helped to find employment, sometimes back in one of the homes. At present John, who grew up in their home and had trained as a car mechanic, travels all the time with Ken because the vehicles have to be checked regularly on a journey to ensure roadworthiness. The extreme bumping and shaking on dusty conditions can play havoc on the vehicles. Also on site, is Esther, who grew up in the Ngaremara home and returned after training, and is now in charge of the ordering and distribution of food and goods to each of the homes.

At present there are about fifty staff working in the homes, each earning a little but happy to be in secure jobs and in a good environment. Ken and Pamela use their own resources and are extremely strict about the use of all funds. Every penny donated goes towards feeding, sheltering, teaching, and caring medically for the children. They don't ask for contributions directly but spread the news about what is happening in Kindfund, Kenya through a website and through

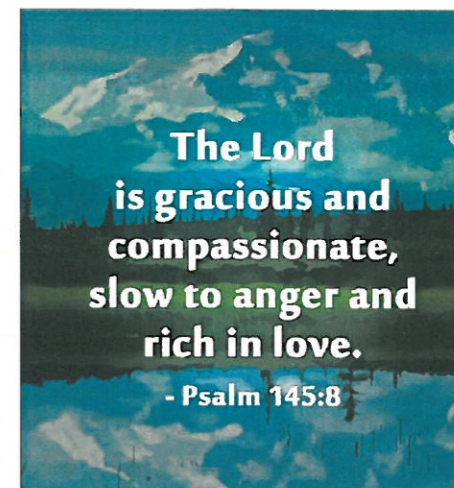
word of mouth. Some primary schools here have been interested to form a link with the children in the schools there, thereby learning a bit about each others' culture. Donations are such that they have sufficient to meet the next demand.

We laughed a lot - often at ourselves! We prayed a lot and were thrilled at the way that God directed our praying and thinking. Over and over we were given pictures/ scriptures that demonstrated that these homes are built upon The Rock - Jesus - and that they were safe in God's care. Day after day difficulties arose, each of which was met with immense faith, perseverance, and patience. Watching Ken and Pamela in action was affirming, reassuring, and gave assurance that these children were being given the very best - loads of love on a human level and loads of love on a divine level. And they knew it! We were given so many hugs, treated to so many smiles, and also had the privilege of praying with some children who were struggling.

As we left there were many sad faces and a few tears but the overriding thoughts were those of how much these children were loved, how secure they were in what otherwise is an extremely poor society materially, and what hope they each had for a good future.

We left with words of truth ringing out from our hearts - **The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in love** - a scripture which God had highlighted to us before we left Bangor for Kenya.

That night, as I slept, I 'heard' the



words, 'Enter into your Master's happiness' and responded with the words, 'Jesus, Jesus'. I felt such joy that we had pleased Him. The following morning Kim confirmed that she had heard me praising 'Jesus' in my sleep. How wonderful to know that He blesses our ways and encourages us so often so unexpectedly.

We were so aware of your prayers surrounding us throughout our visit. We stayed healthy, didn't get lost, were kept safe, and returned home to tell the tale! Thank you all so much!

If you're interested in finding out more about the work of Kindfund you can visit their website www.kindfund.com/ To God be the glory!



Pictured left, the children learning Scripture & above Heather & Kim on their arrival in Kenya

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TEARFUND INDIA ~ SAHAARA REPORT

One of Tearfund's working partners in Mumbai is Sahaara, a charity with which West is involved through our Connected Church partnership. The report that follows is their January 2018 Newsletter which highlights some of the key areas where our financial and prayerful support are providing much needed help.

Family teaches us to love, encourage and serve each other better. It's in a family that we put others first. In Christ we are family, and in the family of God, serving is far more rewarding than being served, giving is more joyful than receiving. And we do all this because Christ did it for us.

For whoever does the will
of my Father in heaven
is my brother
and sister
and mother.

Work in Homes

Anandalay Home & Mahima Home

- We had a successful Parents' Meeting on 26th October between the children in both our Homes and their parents. The children sang, danced and spoke about their time in Mahima and Anandalay. We were able to build relationships with the parents through this time.
- Our children had a wonderful time at the Annual Children's Day Programme organised by the District Collect.
- The registration of new premises for Mahima Home has been successful.
- One of our younger boys in Mahima, won second place in a "Best out of Waste" competition. Two of our pre-teen girls were also selected for singing in their school.
- Our two girls who had tuberculosis have now completely recovered. They have also recovered from their skin infection.
- An ex-beneficiary of Mahima Home has joined us as a part time House Parent for a short while.

Work in Institutions

Asha, Azad, Pragati & Prakash

- We provided legal aid to 6 inmates in November & December 2017.
- The Kalyan prison authorities shared photographs of all the medical camps that we have conducted in this prison for our official records, as we have a good relationship with them.
- A Skin Camp conducted in Kalyan prison benefited 165 men, 12 women and 1 child—with a full course of medication.
- A video in Marathi "Mythli" was screened for the pre-teen girls in Bal Kalyan Nagari (BKN) Children's Home about menstruation.
- We held an Activity Camp in Chembur Children's Home (CCH) and BKN during the Diwali vacations. The children enjoyed indoor & outdoor games, sandwich making, art and craft, drawing and jewellery making (for girls).
- With the help of police, we were able to escort 17 children to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) of Bhopal.

- The Gift Box distribution programme in December provided around 1000 children with presents.
- The Hepatitis B vaccination camp provided 16 visually challenged children with the 2nd dose medication.
- We conducted blood tests and routine urine investigations for 7 beneficiaries.

Work in Red Light Areas

Parivartan & Pratham

- Women in Bhiwandi and Turbhe have improved in their health after the Skin Camp.
- Two women have exited the trade—one to go back to the village and the other to join the tailoring course at our Drop in Centre.
- Awareness sessions held on "Waste Management" were a success as the children have put the guidelines into action.
- The Exposure Trip to the Naval Dockyard benefited 41 children. They had fun exploring the ship INS Gomati.

We thank you for your support towards the work we do!



OUR ROLE AS PUPPY WALKERS

by Ian & Ann Carnahan

Many of you who attend the 10.00 am service at West will be familiar with the sight of Ian and I leading a guide dog puppy across the front of the church, and later meeting up for coffee. So you may like to know a little about what we and other volunteers in Northern Ireland do in our role as Puppy Walkers.

A puppy comes to us from the National Breeding Centre in Leamington Spa at the age of about 7 weeks, and his or her training starts then. Our first task is to house train the puppy, and that involves taking him outside after meals, playtime or sleep and staying with him until he does what he needs to do. We spend a lot of time outside in the wind, rain and snow at this stage!

At the same time we start the process of establishing the dog's obedience when called. We do this using a whistle, calling the dog from other rooms in the house and rewarding him with a treat when he comes. At mealtimes his food is put down and he is held back from it until the whistle is blown three times. In a very short time, usually a week, the puppy has learned to wait for the whistle, without being restrained.

We spend a lot of time taking the puppy to safe places, such as shopping centres, IKEA, Decathlon and other friendly venues where there is no health risk, but lots of possible distractions, which the puppy learns to overcome. Lots of coffee is drunk at this stage, and lots of traybakes eaten. It's hard, but somebody has to do it!

At 17 weeks, having had all his vaccinations, he is ready for a free run. Our Supervisor comes with us this first time, and this is where the earlier recall training is so important, because the puppy has learned to return to you when he hears the whistle. From then on it's all systems



go: trains, buses, ferries, planes, shops, church, doctor's surgeries—everywhere we go the puppy goes too. It's great fun, and we absolutely love doing it.

When the dog is between 12 and 14 months he moves on to Forfar in Scotland for the second in his 3-part training, and we are left with broken hearts until the next puppy comes along. It's very painful, as you probably understand. We have nurtured this mad, naughty little creature into adolescence, and now he's leaving us. We always say that, just like our teenage children, just when they become fit to live with they move out and live with someone else!!

So why do we do it?

Guide Dogs' mission statement states "We will not rest until people

who are blind or partially sighted can enjoy the same freedom of movement as everyone else". Despite the focus on the dogs, this is a people charity. Talk to any guide dog owner and they will tell you the amazing difference their dog has made in their lives. We are also partnered with Blind Children UK, helping people with children who are born blind or with impaired vision or know that their child will one day lose their sight. We also offer a My Guide service, providing a sighted guide to help a vision impaired person gain confidence to get around.

Volunteering with Guide Dogs N.I. is great fun, rewarding and very humbling. Think about whether there is something you might enjoy doing with us, even with an hour a week, and speak to Ian or to me.

13

April
at 7.00 pm

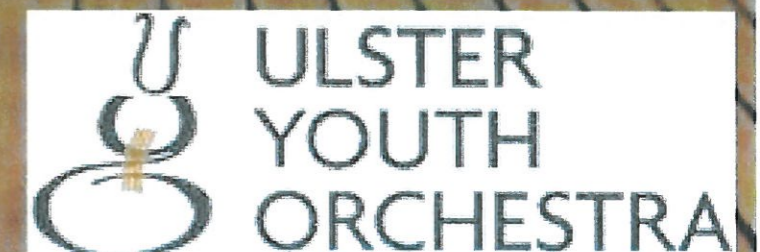


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Everyone welcome



REFORMATION 500 : ARE WE PART OF THE SOLUTION OR PART OF THE PROBLEM?

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‘Churches’, says Phyllis Tickle, the American theologian of Emergent Church, ‘go through a rummage sale every five hundred years or so’. I love that image. So, five hundred years ago, in 1517, we saw the tipping point in the great rummage sale of the Reformation.

Of course, the danger of Protestants is that we might say, ‘Been there, done that’, and forget the fact that the Reformation of the sixteenth century committed us to be a people who were always being reformed by the Word of God. The reality is that our particular Protestant attic has now become full of stud and a wee bit dusty, so we can’t always see the wood for the trees. But, in truth, we have become comfortable with things as they are.

We who rejoice in Luther and Calvin, Wycliffe and Tyndale, Cranmer and Knox, because they re-focused the Church of their day on the central truths of the Gospel, don’t always notice when the time comes for us and our ways to be reformed too!

However, it was always so. It will probably be the new Christian, the up-and-coming visionary leader, and the person who is hard to live with, who will ask all the awkward questions while the leaders, not least bishops like me, defend the *ancient regime*. So here goes a church leader trying to be a young whippersnapper!

Truth is this: none but the most esoteric are interested these days in the issues which have led to most of our denominational identities. When did you last hear a young person argue the pros and cons of church



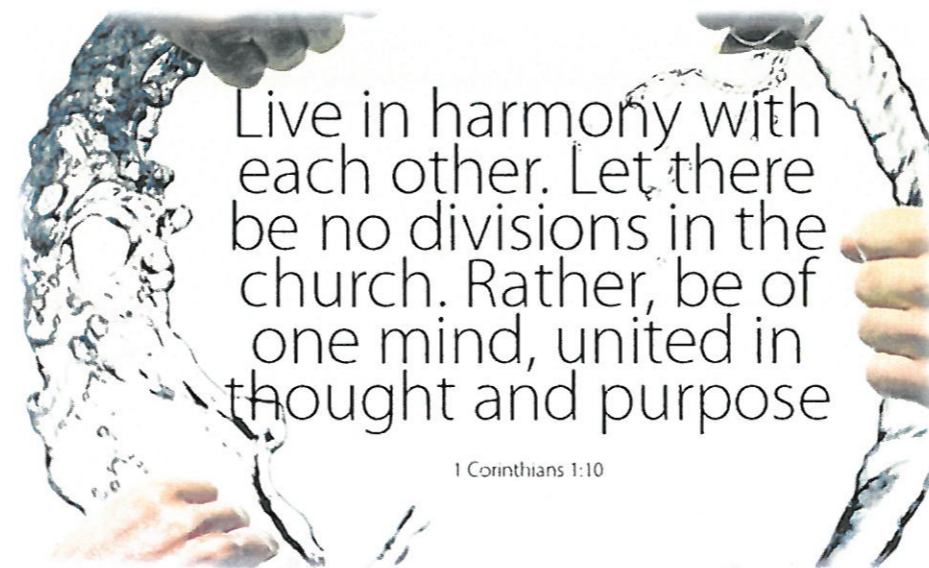
Denominations labelled by the answers once given: Congregational, Episcopal, Presbyterian. We have divided over it, as though the answer was ‘of the essence’ of faith.

Or when did you last hear a heated discussion on predestination and free will between a Methodist and a Calvinist, or even on the amount of water used in baptism? I come from a denomination where most people used to be baptized as infants with a little water poured on their foreheads, where nowadays total immersion of adults is quite common!

If we are *semper reformanda*, we might just look for a fleeting moment at what St Paul says in 1 Corinthians, and wonder if all our beloved denominationalism is really God’s way:

“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that

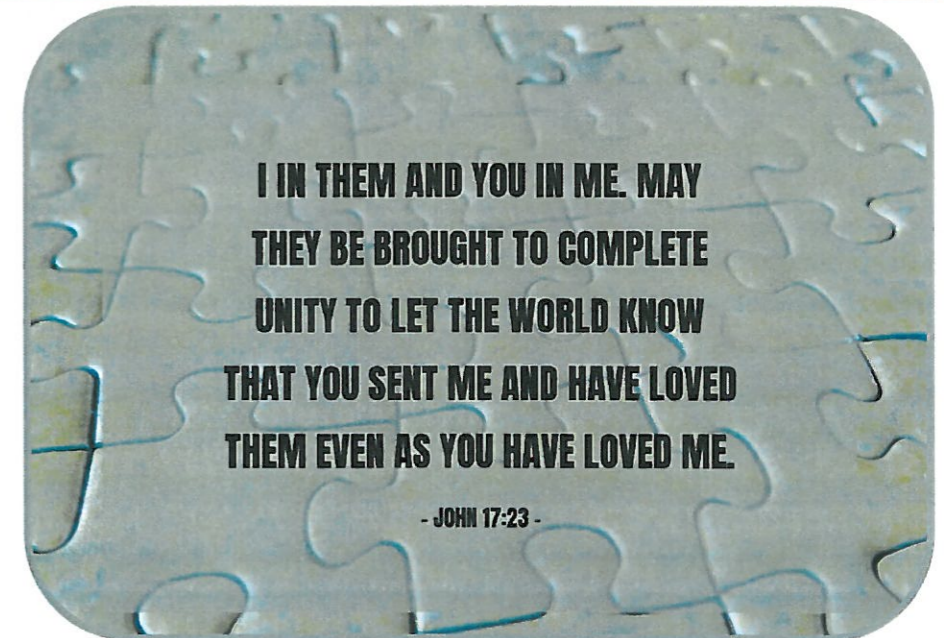
there be no divisions among you... What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul” or “I follow Apollos” or “I follow Cephas” or “I follow Christ”. Is Christ divided?”



1 Corinthians 1:10

Isn’t it amazing that the churches of the Reformation live comfortably with their divisions even though Christ prayed in his immaculately-timed high-priestly prayer, ‘That they may be completely one...that the world might believe’? But one of the reasons for the new reformation is that a new generation is not very much interested in these things. What is bringing a challenge is that they simply want to find communities of faith where God is palpably present, the scriptures are taught in a life-transforming way, and there is a level of real relationship and engagement with the needs of the community. Sadly, they often find that harder to come by in the institutional churches than we might think!

But I have been asked to speak of Northern Ireland—the most Christian region in these islands, which has sent out so many wonderful missionaries, raised up so many Church leaders, and yet finds it hard to emerge from deep-dyed and normalised ‘soft sectarianism’ with its roots



somewhere in the Reformation divisions, but not so much in core Reformation theology.

We have settled into a kind of distant co-habitation with very little relationship and intentional peacemaking. In truth churches, like politicians, can benefit from divided societies, because they create critical mass. If I were to look back over 20 years of being a bishop and say what has disappointed me most (even in myself), it would be the lack of real intentionality in churches with regard to peacemaking and reconciliation.

A new formation would lead to determined relationship-building, outrage at living in a divided society, the opening of our doors and hearts and minds showing the grace to others by which we have been transformed...free, plentiful, and offered gladly. It would lead to a ‘hard Gospel’ which learns forgiveness, because Jesus says that is the only way forward.

Learning forgiveness would bring so many of the famous ‘solus’ together: only by grace; only by faith; formed only by scripture (because human wisdom would say ‘Don’t go there!’); only through Christ who showed such forgiveness to us while still sinners; and because the goal of our lives is for the sole glory of God.

The question which remains to be answered in Northern Ireland is ‘Are the churches part of the problem in Ireland, or part of the solution?’ If we don’t become part of the solution very speedily, a new secular generation will rise up which will say ‘A curse on all your houses’.

There are just two areas in which a new reformation needs to happen. But reformations are costly, and we probably find it easier to look back to one 500 years ago, than to be part of one today. I hope not!

Harold Miller is Bishop of the Diocese of Down and Dromore in the Church of Ireland.

LIFE AFTER ALPHA - THE BIRTH OF A HOME GROUP

by Keith Morrison

On the evening of Tuesday 9th January, ten would-be home groupers arrived at West with not much of an idea what a home group was, but a very clear idea of what they wanted it to be. Friendship, fun and an opportunity to grow in Christ. Oh and food of course!

Fast forward nearly two months and the numbers have grown to fourteen. We've been studying the discipleship Essentials programme

together and enjoying rich and challenging conversations. Some of the questions asked have been brilliant and we're learning that no-one except God has all the answers!

This new group formed mainly, although not exclusively, after the last Alpha programme where the participants were keen to build on the relationships that had formed. It has been so encouraging to see such commitment and enthusiasm



in the group as we get to know each other and Jesus more.

Thank you Lord for the encouragement this new group is already providing. Can I ask everyone to pray for God's continued blessing on the group. Please pray for the depth of relationship and trust to grow and please pray for the guidance in identifying future leaders and finding a home to meet in when we are ready to spread our wings from the Prayer Room. Thank you.

ESSENTIALS



SHARING LIFE TOGETHER



Pictured above is Karen Elliott and William Annett with Jack at their wedding in October and below is Megan Jane Best, a daughter for Richard & Janeen and a sister for Samuel along with Megan and a very proud Rev. McMullen



LOVE PERU COFFEE MORNING

by Ruth Black



Love was in the air as the doors opened for the Love Peru Coffee Morning on Saturday 10th February. The Welcome Area was festooned with hearts and roses as many came to enjoy the coffee, traybakes, scones and fellowship. Grateful thanks are due, as always, to the wonderful generosity of the people of West for their kind donations of bric-a-brac, furnishings, toys, jewellery and plants which provided many a bargain for young and old alike. Our special thanks also go to June, "Stall Holder Supremo", for going the extra mile over recent weeks.

Beverley and the Peru Team are once again most grateful to everyone who supported the Coffee Morning. A total of £2350 (and still rising) has been raised. We thank you on behalf of the children in Casa Hogar and the Help Them To Smile Project.



Some pictures from the Coffee Morning to support mission work in Peru

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You may recall early in 2018 a notice was included in the weekly Order of Service about a mission team which would be made up from members of West, Ballygilbert and First Bangor travelling to India to see first hand the work that our Tearfund Connected Partnerships are supporting.

Due to time constraints including visas and vaccinations etc. the trip was postponed and the plan is now to form a team that will travel in November of this year.

If this is something you would be interested in or would like to find out more about the proposed itinerary which would include travelling to the Bihar and Mumbai regions of India, please contact Jane Richardson who will be delighted to chat further with you about this Mission Trip.



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OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

In the run up to Christmas JClub and Young West, along with our 3Cs group worked together to bring in items such as toys, school supplies, hygiene items and other items such as hats, scarves, hair accessories etc. to put together into shoeboxes in support of Operation Christmas Child. With everyone's generosity, we were able to send 54 shoeboxes to support this wonderful project linked with Samaritan's Purse. Thank you to everyone who supported this project! Further information can be found at www.samaritans-purse.org.uk

THANK YOU!

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Nick Cull
Nick Cull, Director of OCC UK

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Samaritan's Purse



Pictured above, you can see the shoeboxes being put together by Courtney and then the boxes ready to go.

Changes in Districts : New address

District

- | | |
|---|--|
| 103 Mr Richard & Mrs Rachel Cull & family | 501 Mr Andrew & Mrs Corrina Braithwaite & family |
| 104 Mrs Betty Crawford | 604 Mrs Pauline Brown |
| 402 Mr Christopher & Mrs Caroline Jessup & family | 803 Mrs Anne Millar |
| 501 Mr Jack & Mrs Dorothea Gray | |

Changes in Districts : Remove

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 101 Rev. Colin & Mrs Debra Anderson | 404 Mr James Mehaffy |
| 404 David & Jean Spencer | |

WELCOME to the following new members: District

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 202 Mr Alastair & Mrs Eschelle Love | 703 Ms Gillian Harris & Emily |
| 601 Mr Mark Thompson | 1201 Mr Peter & Mrs Elsa Welsby |
| 604 Miss Andrea McInnes | 1202 Mrs Elizabeth Forsythe |

The following children were brought for Baptism

- 21/01/18 Miss Megan Jane Best

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

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 21/11/17 Miss Pearl Geddis | 08/01/18 Mrs Margaret Downing |
| 06/12/17 Mr John Beatty | 09/02/18 Mrs Jean Warrick |
| 23/12/17 Mrs Rae Hyndman | 17/02/18 Mrs Margaret Gregg |
| 31/12/17 Mr Richard Cochrane | 23/02/18 Mr Brian Byers |
| 07/01/18 Mrs Maureen Murphy | |

HOSPITAL & PASTORAL VISITATION



If you have a family member in hospital, please do not hesitate to contact the Church Office (028 9145 9688). 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



Please also remember to let the office know if you have moved house, changed your mobile or landline or have a new email address.

THE GIRL WHO SABOTAGED HER OWN WEDDING!

(This article is a summary of one which appeared in the BBC news online)

This story is a true story of a young Indian girl being forced to marry by her parents.

(Although this does not come directly from our partners in India it gives an indication of the problems they face on a regular basis seeking to help young girls in this kind of situation.)

Neerie (not her real name) was only 13 when her father decided that she should get married to a 22 year old man. The law in India only allows girls to marry after the age of 18 so what the family were planning to do was illegal.

Neerie felt at first that as an obedient daughter she should marry this man but then she really felt she was too young to marry and that she wanted to have an education and become a teacher. Marriage would have meant a life of isolation. Her prospective husband lived a four-hour train journey away from her own family.

After getting married, life would have been spent only in this new home. Nobody would have allowed her to play, or talk, and she would have had to take care of all the household chores. Her in-laws would have made her do a lot of hard work and there was a high possibility of her having a child at a really young age. This was the last thing she wanted.

So why did Neerie's parents think it was right to marry off their daughter so young?

Neerie's mum and dad are loving parents to their five daughters, but life is a struggle. Her dad earns 500 rupees a day (£5.50) and his work is sporadic.

The family is from what is known as "the sweeper caste". In the past, that would have meant they were classed as the "untouchables" of



Indian society. Even today they are very much on the fringes of their local community and they only mix with other families from the same caste.

Neerie's mother and grandmother clear waste from houses in the neighbourhood. As is often the case with families from this background, the daughters have only received a little education. So marriage is seen as a way of having the them provided for and to ease the burden on the family. Not much thought is given to what life would be like for the young bride.

On the morning of any wedding there's a lot of preparation. Neerie's hair needed doing and her make-up had to be carefully applied. She needed her maroon wedding sari put on, as tradition dictated. The jewellery set aside for this special day had to be placed on her ears and nose and draped across her neck and her hands needed to be daubed with intricate swirls of henna too. There was so much to do. But with only a few hours to go until the ceremony, no-one noticed as the bride herself quietly slipped into the shadows of the family home to make one last phone call from a phone she had borrowed from her grandmother. It was not to a friend

or a caterer, or the wedding venue to check everything was going smoothly. Instead, nervously, Neerie dialled the number of a charity helpline. Too young to marry under Indian law, she wanted to stop her own wedding which was then only hours away. She was afraid but this was her last resort.

"I called up and I don't know who picked up the phone but I told them everything - that I'm young and I don't want to get married and want to study further. "I asked them 'Can you please do something that stops my marriage?'"

These charity workers are often in a race against time to save young girls from becoming child brides and it was a tricky challenge as they had to save a child in just three hours' time. Local police were scrambled and arrived at Neerie's house. The officers asked to see the paperwork - of which there was little - and after establishing that the bride was underage they warned everyone that the wedding could not take place. It was just in the nick of time.

Neerie was in her wedding dress and when she saw the police she gave a little smile, although she didn't say anything at that time. She knew that they had come to stop her wedding. She was happy then.

The trigger point for Neerie came on the wedding day when she felt she just could not go through with the ceremony. No-one knew then who had reported the wedding to the police, although Neerie is happy now for it to be known that she made the mystery call.

The police called Neerie's parents and grandparents into a room and explained that not only does the child suffer because of early marriage but they too could also face a punishment for this offence. So they stopped the wedding and the police took a written testimony from them promising they would not marry her before the age of 18. They were warned if they went ahead with it a second time then they would have to

serve a prison sentence.

As Neerie sits alongside her parents and recounts her story, she seems to bear them no ill will. But last year, as the wedding drew nearer, it must have been a really difficult time for her. She is not a natural teenage rebel yet somewhere within she found the strength to kick back against the plans her family had made.

Child marriage was banned in India in 2006 but it is still widespread. With its huge population, India remains the country with the most child brides, according to Unicef.

One of the charity workers sees herself as a big sister figure for girls like Neerie and admits to immense

job satisfaction. "In my career I have stopped several weddings and when I come into direct contact with these girls we often stay in touch forever. I feel real pride that I am able to help them salvage their lives and protect their futures. It makes me feel happy."

Whilst this story is totally separate from the work being carried out by our Tearfund Partners, you can see the impact various charities on the ground can make.

So do pray for those who work among these vulnerable girls and pray that many more of these child marriages will be thwarted.

The Faith Mission

Bangor Convention

Easter 2018 / 30 March - 3 April



Solid Bible Teaching



Inspiring Meaningful Worship



Refreshing Warm Fellowship



Renewed Spiritual Vision

The full programme is available at the Welcome Desk and this years speakers are as follows:

Jim Lyons: Pastor of Knockbracken Congregational having spent 16 years in the Faith Mission.

Derek Maxwell: Current General Director of Slavic Gospel Association preaching throughout Eastern Europe & Central Asia.

William McCandless: Retired after pastoring in many churches and ministered extensively, preaching & teaching in Africa & Pakistan.

Jeremy McQuoid: Teaching Pastor at Deeside Christian Fellowship, Aberdeen. He has written "The Amazing Cross".

Andrew Mullen: Associate Minister in Mourne Presbyterian

Robert Murdock: Pastored in churches in Northern Ireland and Canada and is currently Principal of FMBC in Edinburgh.

PROGRESS IN PERU

by Beverley Bryans

Casa Hogar

It was a real joy in my recent visit in November 2017 to see all the children so happy and well. A lovely welcome was received by the children performing the movie Frozen's 'Let it go' in English! The teachers put together amazing costumes from re-cycled materials (see photo on right).

I had the opportunity to go through each of the children's school books which were exemplary in the standard of work. I noticed such a development in confidence in the community children who joined the school for a small fee last March. More children are expected this year.

The official report to the Education Board in Huánuco highlighted the great need for the in-depth tuition the children from the home and community are receiving. Many had not been able to write their own name on arrival and have made good progress in this educational area. Two of the eleven children in the home have been diagnosed with dyslexia and are being given additional tuition to meet this need. Interactive performances such as Frozen, give the children good opportunity to develop inter-personal skills.

Marcus & Gloria are siblings and came to Casa Hogar Home 6 years ago. Their mother died when they were young and their father is serving a 25 year jail sentence. They have a grandmother who seeks a meagre living by selling food daily at the roadside.

Gloria (pictured right) is our local drama queen! From crying frequently on arrival (her words), she has changed into a very happy, outgoing young lady who would love to work with animals in the future.

Marcus (also pictured right) is now at the local secondary school (40 minutes walk each way). He is extremely intelligent and the teachers



give him additional tuition as it is hoped he will qualify for a scholarship in Peru with unlimited future career possibilities.

All the children recently spent time with a Christian Counsellor where post traumatic stress from their early years was identified in many, especially Gloria, Marcus and Jhony. It is such a privilege to see the children, through your faithful support, receiving individual love and attention, Christian input and to be part of a large, happy family growing and developing together in a safe place in peaceful surroundings.

Jhony (Pictured below) Please remember this fine young man in your prayers. He is now 17 years old and when I was there it was miraculous to see the care of local workers Violetta and Margarietta. In the space of 24 hours they had arranged a mechanic apprenticeship (his dream) for him in Huánuco along with accommodation and enrolled him for further schooling to make up lost grades as he had been abandoned in the jungle between the ages of 6-10 years when he was rescued by a pastor and brought to the home. Now he has 'a future and hope in God' with the other children.



What a happy time I had with the children seeing them open their Christmas gifts as a result of West member's generosity. They were thrilled with much needed new jeans and a special gift especially picked by Miriam.

Please pray for Miriam as she continues sterling work being house-mother and local Director of the work. It is a huge responsibility especially without her dear husband Secundo beside her. She loves the children dearly and as a trained Secondary School teacher herself, is well able to oversee the school and liaise with Education Authorities. We pray that local Peruvian houseparents may be forthcoming following the summer break during January & February to help Miriam in the home.



The Casa Hogar family

Pictured below—'Miriam felt 'so special' receiving her luxury bedding from a well wisher in West.



Pictured below—'I was delighted to be present as part of the revised local legal association CHLP on behalf of Faith Children Services. We pray this newly formed membership will be a great support to Miriam.'



Again it was a joy to meet up with the 'graduates' from Casa Hogar, and see the progress made into further studies and employment (pictured right).

A special time was spent with Eliazar, now a fine young man of 20 years running his shoe-making business, furthering his computer studies and proud member of a wheelchair Basketball team. Edgando, our translator's husband, visits him and his family weekly giving Bible Study. Eliazar is an active participant. Special gratitude to his sponsors from West members.

There is so much more I could say! Thank you so much for your prayers for health, travel, safety and fruitfulness all wonderfully answered. It is hoped to hold an information evening in the near future to enable a more detailed report.

'To God be the glory great things He has done, and continues to do'. To Him be all the glory. With much gratitude in Him for your partnership in the work and harvest in this part of God's Kingdom.

Beverley (Bryans)



For more information on the work going on in Peru, please contact Beverley on 07905 146942 or email bevbryans1@gmail.com
Donations are gratefully received via West Church office in envelopes marked Casa Hogar / St. Luke's Clinic or Peru or direct to Beverley. For Standing Orders, which are so helpful to maintain a budget especially for Casa Hogar, please contact Beverley.

PROGRESS IN PERU

Cont'd

by Beverley Bryans

It is said 'every picture tells a story!' The pictures that follow of the work carried out by St. Luke's Clinic during 2017 show how 40 children in the Amazon Basin, Peru were enabled to have a 'hope and future in God' through donations from West Church via George Muller Charitable Trust.

Severe cleft lip/palate in this area is mainly genetic. A care package of £250 enables closure of lip, and later palate, much needed psychological support for the children and parents, speech therapy and detailed orthodontic work.

Jesus said, 'In as much as you have done it onto one of these little ones, you have done it unto me!'

Thank you so much for your continued interest, love and financial support of any amount for this amazing work by local Doctors and workers, transforming children's lives.

Palate Repair 6 babies received primary lip care



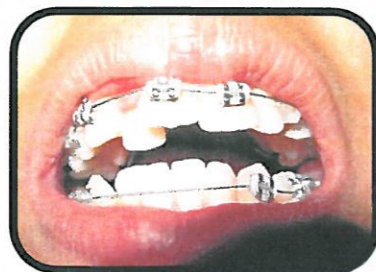
Speech Therapy 29 children receive weekly speech therapy



Psychological Support 29 children received 1 or more sessions with a total amount of 79 sessions



Orthodontics 15 children received orthodontic or orthopaedic treatment



Palate Repair 15 primary palate repairs & 19 secondary repairs



Check-ups by family doctor, ENT doctor & Paediatrician 120 consultations



Counselling & education 4 meetings for parents organised to give them support



Implementation of Youth Chamber Orchestra 17 children participating, playing the violin, cello & flute. 7 of them are cleft patients



Music Education 22 children participate in music education to strengthen facial muscles and gain self-esteem



On behalf of the San Lucas team, the children and their families, we would like to thank you for your support!



The king will answer, "Whenever you did it for any of my people..."



...you did it for me - Matthew 25:40

MAKER FUN FACTORY

by Sonia Mawhinney



The phrase 'Easter is early this year' keeps ringing in my ears! Indeed it is, and planning is full steam ahead for another wonderful week of mission amongst our children and teenagers. We are blessed with having 250 primary school aged children coming along each day, a very enthusiastic team of 100+ teenagers leading the mission, adults using their gifts to serve during the week and the prayer support of many people throughout our congregation. This year again we will be running 24/7 prayer from Sunday 25th March at 10pm through until Friday 30th March at 1pm. Please sign up for one or several 30 minute prayer slots throughout the week. Pray at home or the prayer room at West.

Here are a few prayer points for the week:

- Jesus said, 'Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these' (Matt 19:14). Pray that children and teenagers would come to know Jesus during this week of mission.
- Pray that we would know God's protection from the moment the kids arrive on the Monday morning until the very last moment on the Friday. Pray for protection from accidents and illnesses. Thank God that He watches over 'our coming and going, both now and forevermore' (Ps 121:8).
- Pray the words of 1 Cor 1:8 over the team of teenagers and adults who are serving together that there would be 'no divisions among us, but that we be perfectly united in mind and thought'.
- One of Paul's prayers for the church was that they would 'grow in spiritual wisdom and depth of love (Ephesians 3:14-20). Pray that the Young West leaders and adults leading the mission would be abundantly wise and discerning and filled with love for the children and teenagers they will serve during the week. Pray they would have supernatural strength and energy to last the week.
- As our teenagers step out into the local community during the afternoons sharing Easter eggs with invitations to our Easter services, picking up litter, visiting nursing homes, praying for people – pray that they would know their role in fulfilling Jesus' command to 'let their light shine before others, that they may see their good deeds and glorify their Father in heaven' (Matt 5:16). Pray the community would see Jesus through each of these teenagers as they put His love into action.

Thank you for all the many prayers you will pray and the words of encouragement you will offer to the team.



Remember you can also help out by bringing the team some buns / cakes/ tray bakes (NO NUTS PLEASE) or some fruit. It would be much appreciated!

Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.

Oswald Chambers



SUMMER EVENTS



SUMMER MADNESS: This year we are again taking a group of young people to Summer Madness on the ground of Glenarm Castle. The theme is 'Truth to Dare'. It promises to be an amazing weekend to enthuse, equip and engage our young people in their faith.

When? 29 June – 3 July 2018

Who for? Those in year 11+

What to do? Book your own ticket online at <https://www.summermadness.co.uk/festival/> and then let Andrew know you have booked.

YOUNGLIFE CAMP: Be part of a group of 100+ teenagers from Northern Ireland going to Loch Monzievaird in Crieff, Scotland for a week of adventure, laughter, friends and faith.

When? 14th – 20th July 2018

Who for? Year 10+

What to do? Speak to one of the YoungLife or Young West leaders and get your booking form and deposit in ASAP!



KEADY SUMMER MISSION: Easter Mission goes on tour to Keady in Co. Armagh for a week of summer mission! We are taking a team of around 25 teenagers and adults to help the Temple Church in Keady to run a week of mission for primary school children from the local area.

When? Sun 29th July – Fri 3rd August

Who for? Year 11+

What to do? Look out of the sign up which will be out after Easter Mission.

WYLDLIFE CAMP: A camp specifically designed for young people in years 8 and 9. Stay in a beautiful wooden cabin at the side of a Loch in Scotland. Games and activities galore. Fun every day. Time to make new friends, get to know your leaders.

When? 11th – 15th August 2018

Who for? Year 8+

What to do? Speak to one of the YoungLife or Young West leaders and get your booking form and deposit in ASAP



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF 3 GIRLS ON WORK EXPERIENCE AT WEST

Jessica Dorrian, Megan Jackson and Rachael

Hinds from Year 13 in Glenlola Collegiate School reflect on their week of work experience with the Y&C team at West

Monday

On the first day of our work experience, we attended Anxiety Training with our Young West Leaders where we learned how to spot and deal with anxiety in young people. We covered lots of different methods in how to handle panic attacks by keeping both the young person and leader feeling calm and in control of the situation. We recognised the importance of identifying negative thinking patterns which can lead to anxiety, the importance of helping the person to slow down their breathing and to focus on concrete objects and colours they could see and name around them. We also looked at passages in scripture and how to invite God to take control of the situation. We felt that training was extremely beneficial on a personal level in dealing with our own stress and anxiety, as well as us helping our friends around us.



Sonia & the girls leading school assembly at Grange Park Primary

my self-confidence as I discovered a new found love of being up-front, and sharing God's word with children.

Tuesday

On Tuesday morning we went to Grange Park Primary School and led their Key Stage Two Assembly on the theme of **Hope**. We told the story of Moses holding his arms up in prayer to God while the Israelites fought the Amalekites, through the use of costumes and props – including a very attractive Moses' wig, which took the internet by storm via Grange's Twitter Feed! We left the children with the message that they can have hope in God, remembering to **H** – Hold On, **O** – Obey, **P** – Pray, and **E** – Encourage. Leading the Assembly was a brand new experience for me (Megan), and as well as thoroughly enjoying it, it increased



Wednesday

On the Wednesday Megan, Jessica and I got the opportunity to go into Rathmore Primary School to help the Y&C team teach 3 separate P6 classes about 'Amazing Jesus'. We taught them about feeding the 5000 through a range of interactive activities and we even tried sharing out a packed lunch of ham sandwiches and crisps! Whereas our homemade lunch didn't go very far, we were able to speak about how Jesus performed a miracle using only one little boy's lunch. This gave me (Rachael) the opportunity to get to lead an activity independently and get to know the P6 pupils. It was a really good experience to be with the kids and be part of the team taking a lead role in the different activities.

On Wednesday evening I (Megan) got to help lead the P6 Girls' Brigade Scripture class and see some of the children who I had been with in school earlier in the day! I really enjoyed being with a smaller group of girls and got to help them learn the 10 commandments through different finger actions. By the end of the lesson, they knew them off by heart!

Thursday

On Thursday we started to plan out another school assembly which we would lead on the Friday. It was a lot of fun coming up with an initial idea and then working out how to tell the Bible story in a creative way for the children to enjoy and understand. We decided on the theme of 'fears' and planned to tell the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den. I (Jessica) was surprised at how much time it can take to plan and prepare for a 10-15 minute talk with children. We needed to be very clear about what we wanted to say and how to say it. We even did a 'dress rehearsal' so we knew to speak out to the children and not just to each other, to speak clearly and to project our voices right to the back of the room. Doing this really gave me the confidence to stand in front of the children the next day.

Our Girls' Discipleship Groups run every Thursday evening and so we got to plan and prepare for a prayer activity which we would lead in our own Discipleship Groups the following week.

Friday

Our school assembly in Crawfordsburn Primary School went really well and it was good to see the benefit of the planning and preparation the day before. I (Jessica) think this taught me that doing anything well takes both time and effort.

We sat in for part of the Y&C weekly team meeting and again was just reminded of how much goes on behind the scenes which we as young people never really see. It made me (Megan) so much more appreciative of all the work that our youth leaders and helpers do for us each week.

At Coffee Bar on Friday afternoon I was able to talk to younger members of Young West and find out more about them and what they enjoy about being part of the youth in church. I discovered that ministry in West is not only within the church but so much happens in the community. I (Jessica) was pushed outside my comfort zone and shown the importance of teamwork and communication to different age groups.

The 10 COMMANDMENTS

- LOVE **GOD** MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE
- DON'T LET ANYTHING ELSE BE MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU THAN **GOD**
- ALWAYS RESPECT **GOD'S** NAME
- REST ON THE SEVENTH DAY AND HONOR **THE LORD**
- RESPECT YOUR **MOM** and **DAD**
- DON'T HURT **ANYONE**
- BE TRUE TO YOUR **HUSBAND** or **WIFE**
- DON'T TAKE ANYTHING THAT DOESN'T BELONG TO **YOU**
- NEVER TELL A **LIE**
- DON'T BE JEALOUS OF WHAT OTHER HAVE
- BE **HAPPY** WITH YOU DO HAVE

Saturday

On Saturday night we went to WYLDlife and led a number of big hall games for the teenagers. We then had our full WYLDlife Club with messy games, singing, chatting and a short talk from the Bible. It was such a great night and I loved chatting and getting to know the younger teenagers in a casual and friendly environment. It was a real highlight of my week as I (Megan) really felt God working through me and challenging me to step out of my comfort zone.

Sunday

On Sunday morning in Young West, Jessica, Megan and I (Rachael) got the opportunity to get up in front of everyone and explain to them about our week and tell them about our experience in West. We found that there is always something going on in the church that we probably wouldn't even know about and had a much greater appreciation of all the effort that is put into the youth and children in our church and in our local community.

LET'S 'PLAY' MUSIC

by 'Miss Alison & 'Miss' Wendy



Painting, playing I-spy, crafting, construction, and playing with dough can all be important elements of childhood learning in pre-school. Formally or informally, however, it's possible also to use singing and music as an important aspect of childhood play and learning in any culture. Think about it for a moment and you'll soon realise that music is present in so many aspects of our lives: television, movies, worship, holidays, celebrations and ceremonies. And from birth onwards, parents instinctively use rhythm and song to inspire, calm and soothe their children, to express love and joy and to engage and interact with them.

When 'Miss' Ethel and 'Miss' Edna established the playgroup over 45 years ago 'Miss' Edna played the piano, providing the children with opportunities to sing and move their bodies to rhythms and to unconsciously establish good aural skills. Today, music still remains an integral part of life at Bangor West Nursery Playgroup (BWNP) and we seek to build on the children's natural instinct for song and rhythm by using music to promote learning and development. However, why is music so appealing and so well suited to young children?

Simply put, music has the capacity to ignite a number of areas of child development (and skills) that can contribute to a sense of 'school readiness'. Music and song helps little 'learners' with their social and emotional skills, language and literacy, motor skills and it can provide them with a sense of the world around them. Music and song also prepares the developing brain for achievement, boosts memory and can even improve abstract reasoning.

A former parent once asked a member of staff, "Do you have a song for everything?" The answer



'Music allows us to establish an emotional link with certain people, experiences, places and times that are of great significance to us'

was simple, "Yes, almost everything!" In pre-school we use songs as a way to signal it's time to change from one activity to the next, helping the children to learn schedules and what to expect next in the pre-school day. Music and song makes these transitions meaningful and fun as well as entertaining and productive.

However, at BWNP music and singing are not used simply for the purpose of transitions. The combination of music and movement is also used as a way to get children physically active. Whether it's soft and soothing or a lively tune, children feel rhythm in both a physical and emotional sense. Therefore, as early years practitioners we provide opportunities for the children to try new things with their bodies, while listening to music. Sometimes this requires the staff to model 'musical' actions but children quickly learn that movement can communicate messages and represent meaning. Simply by listening to a familiar tune, children soon learn how to

respond and perform pantomimed actions.

It is important also to understand that very young children are not always comfortable responding to questions that call for immediate verbal responses. Therefore, during music time, when questions call for responses through movement, children are able to free themselves from the limitations of their verbal abilities and develop a sense of confidence and spontaneity. At BWNP, however, not all music is experienced via a piano or a cd player. Sometimes the children 'create' their own music by using their voices spontaneously because they regard their 'live' music as much more compelling! At such a tender age it is nothing to do with musical talent, of course, but rather the joy of simply embedding children's musical experiences in a pre-school setting.

However, our musical activities rarely stand in isolation, because young children have an innate feel for building connections through songs that like into their experiences

of the real world. A recent activity with our children had us singing about sending a letter, and one child said that she had never posted a letter before. This was one of those delightful 'teachable moments' that our practitioners love so much, because it offered a spontaneous opportunity to link music into a 'real world' activity on behalf of the children. Needless to say there was lots of excitement when we took the

children to the post box to send their Valentine's cards home and, making music was never far away!

(See photographs below)

We sang, 'Stop, Look and Listen', as we waited to cross the Rathmore Road. When we saw a bus, we sang 'The wheels on the bus' and, not forgetting, finally, 'I sent a letter to my love!'

As we move towards March and 'Big Band' month, we look forward

to the Ulster College of Music paying us a return visit on Monday, 4th March. This visit enables the children to experience 'real musical instruments and to 'make' music. In addition to an array of musical instruments available for the children to experiment with, we also use recycled materials to create rhythm and song. All this culminates in the creation of our very own unique Bangor West Nursery Playgroup Band.



GIRLS' BRIGADE NEWS

by Cheryl Miller



This year has been another very busy session for West Girls' Brigade and at the time of writing lots of hours of planning and preparation are underway for our 39th Annual Display which will be held in Bangor Academy & Sixth Form College on Saturday 21st April at 7.00 pm.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of West, family and friends who have supported the work of our company both prayerfully and financially through our fundraising efforts.

In celebration of its 125th Anniversary, Girls' Brigade NI's designated charity for the last 2 years has been Fields of Life, initially with the 'I Am Girl' programme and more recently with a commitment to build a GBNI school in Kisoro, Uganda. As a company through 20p collections in Smarties Tubes this year and last, we have been able to support this project with donations totalling £4000. The school is well underway and it is great to know that West GB has played a significant part in helping this project take shape. GBNI also plan to take a team of girls out to Uganda once the school is up and running and it would be wonderful if we were to have a representative on that trip.

In the early part of this year many of the girls have been involved in various competitions and we were delighted that our Senior P.E. Team progressed to the Northern Ireland Finals which took place recently in Wallace High School. Many thanks to all the girls, parents and leaders who gave so much time to commit to these competitions—as a Company we are extremely proud of each and every girl.

Thank you all once again for your support over the year.

Cheryl



The Senior PE Team, (l-r), Alice, Sophie, Lauren, Rebecca, Rebecca, Ellie, Bethyn, Connie & Grace



Pictured above is Zara, Lauren, Hollie & Beth with an Assistance Dog. The girls also had visits from Cats Protection & Assisi as part of the Service section of their badgework



The Juniors (pictured above) also visited Oakmont Care Home just before Christmas to sing carols to the residents. Pictured below are some of our Brigaders who enjoyed a night out at the Red Berry.



Above left is Emily who took part in the Brigader Solo PE competition with Loren and above right is our Explorer PE Team with Jade



A WARM WELCOME TO ICELAND

by Brontë Cromie

While my dad and brother opted for a skiing holiday in Germany, myself, my mum and my sister Zia decided to go on a girl's holiday in Iceland. We spent the first day adjusting to the cold temperatures by drinking gallons of beautifully made coffee, gathered our bearings of the capital city of Reykjavik, and then headed to our Airbnb which was on the outskirts of the city. Our extremely friendly Icelandic host welcomed us, gave us some tips on "Iceland's Must Do's", and we finished the day eating pizza and watching a movie, tired after an early flight.

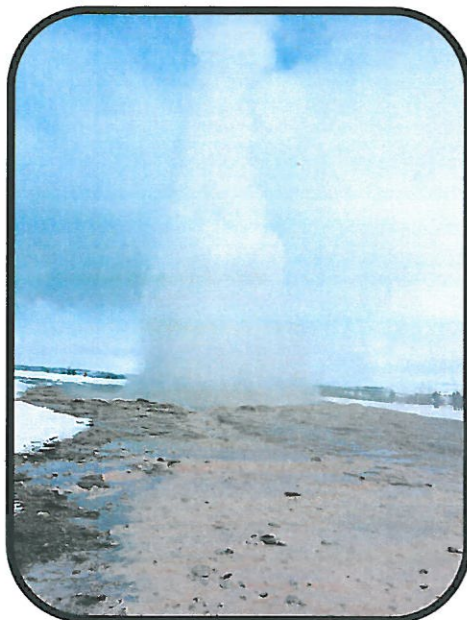
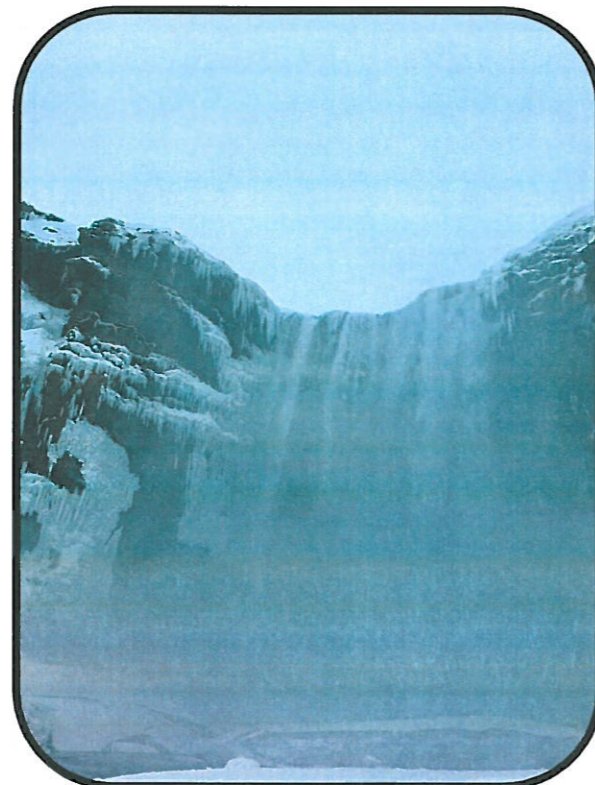
The next day we were picked up by a coach early in the morning and we started our tour of the Golden Circle. The first stop brought us to the place where the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates meet. However, the snow had fallen so heavily you could only make out a slight gap in the ground. Nonetheless the scenery was beautiful! We then moved on to see the geyser, (pictured below) a natural spout of hot water. Not only was the experience of watching the gush of water soar 30 metres into the air



Brontë, pictured left, with her mum and sister Zia

incredible, but the natural underground heating warmed us up in the -4 degree weather. Before

stopping at the Blue Lagoon, we visited the Gulfoss waterfall (pictured below). Again, the views were



stunning.

However, the Blue Lagoon was absolutely the highlight of the entire trip. We were in the water by 5.30 pm, just before sunset, and stayed until dark. The temperature in the geothermal pool was perfect, and it didn't feel to busy at all. We cleansed our skin with the natural face mask that was provided, drank strawberry smoothies and watched the sun set over the snow-covered mountain tops. It was utter bliss. I would go back to Iceland just to re-live that experience again!

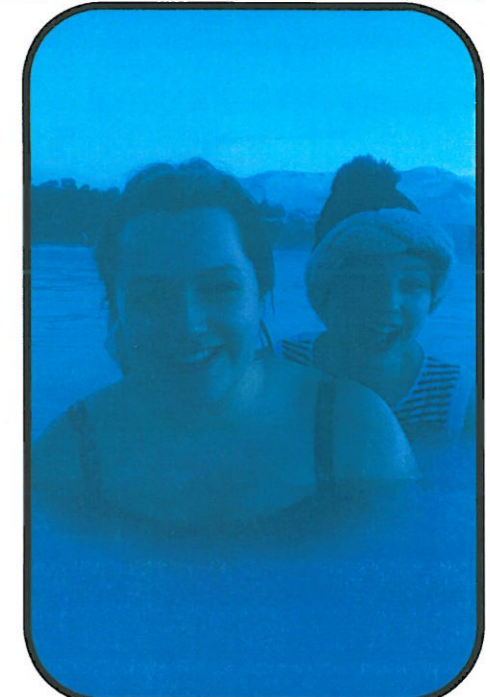
Iceland was a fantastic experience. The people were welcoming (although quite pessimistic at times), the food was great, the coffee even better, and the sights were utterly breath-taking. The best thing about Iceland is that a weekend is the

perfect length of time to do everything you want and need to do.

If you have the chance to go, I would 100% recommend it.



Pictured right, Brontë & Zia enjoying the Blue Lagoon



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"THE DIFFERENCE IS OUR EXPERIENCE"

2018

THE JOURNEY WITH MUM : LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

By Barbara Carnew

Sometimes in the journey of life we find ourselves walking along a road we would not choose for ourselves. A road that is dark, unknown, uncertain. We may wish to turn back or turn off that road because it brings experiences that are painful but there's no turning back, no diversion, no alternative route to take. This narrow way hedges you in and there is no other way to go.

This has been my experience since coming back to Northern Ireland with my husband Les after living 30 years overseas.

Our main reason for returning to Northern Ireland was to support my mum in her nineties who was showing early signs of dementia. This decision was mutual knowing in our hearts that the Lord had a special call to a new ministry of caring for my mum in her older years. We were aware that over the next few years mum would gradually need more help as dementia progressed and I wanted to be here for her and also for my sister who was taking an ever increasing responsibility for mum's support. Not that mum ever asked for or demanded any support. In fact, quite the opposite, she is a fiercely independent lady and is totally unaware of the amount of care she needs and gets. Her constant mantra over the years has been ... 'I can do it myself!'

Unfortunately a fall and fractured hip in July last year exacerbated the dementia leading to a deterioration in her mental and physical health and resulting in many distressing moments for her and for us. After 6 weeks in the Ulster she was discharged to a care home where she remained for 10 weeks demanding every day to go home totally unaware of her increased dependence.

In spite of advice from the care home staff my sister and I felt that we really wanted to try mum at home, hoping that in her own surroundings she would settle down and regain some independence. However, unfortunately this did not happen. We found that mum needed virtually 24/7 care. Life as we would plan it has gone out the window - normal life is on hold. One could say there is a new normal which is not normal ... in fact I ask - 'What is normal?'

This narrow path, full of twists and turns, is so uncertain from day to day that it is impossible to plan ahead. Days consist of organising life around mum, being on call, visiting and now she has been discharged home trying to settle her into a routine with carers she doesn't want and a situation that confuses her. Nights of broken sleep, days trying to keep her active physically and mentally. Ever adjusting to her moods and changing needs.

We are constantly coping with abnormal behaviour...mood swings...confusion...wakeful nights...so many changes in the person we love but who at times seems to have turned against us with accusations and verbal abuse; who is repetitive, angry, afraid and depressed, trying to remain in control and frustrated because she's not!

I know many people of our vintage are in similar circumstances watching a loved one - parent, husband, wife struggling with this horrible disease called Alzheimer's; feeling that you are gradually losing that loved one and having to cope with the different person they are becoming. Also dealing with your own emotions and feelings get me down. Feeling trapped in an endless tunnel with no light at the end. Feelings of helplessness, not

knowing what to do, how to react, how to help mum in her confusion. Feeling hurt by criticisms and accusations. Angry with mum's negative behaviour then guilty because of my own negative reactions.

I feel sad watching dear mum lost in the confusion of her own mind, once so intelligent and active. Trying to comfort her, sobbing because she doesn't understand what is happening to her. Bereaved because we are losing the person she used to be and the relationship we once had. Now she has become 'the child' and I am 'the mother'!!!

One feels apprehensive about what may lie ahead knowing that this road is a downward path of no return. Also concerned that my own memory is becoming quite shambolic and forgetful and afraid that I am merely further back in the same queue!!

BUT BLESSED IS THE ONE WHO TRUSTS IN THE LORD, WHOSE CONFIDENCE IS IN HIM. THEY WILL BE LIKE A TREE PLANTED BY THE WATER THAT SENDS OUT ITS ROOTS BY THE STREAM. IT DOES NOT FEAR WHEN HEAT COMES ITS LEAVES ARE ALWAYS GREEN.



How to cope, how to walk along this narrow path is the daily challenge. One thing I have come to accept is that life is **NOT** 'on hold' - this IS life...for now...a season that will pass in its time. In EVERY trial there are lessons that can be learned in no other way. So I ask - 'Lord, what do you want to teach me in this experience?'

In EVERY season God will produce fruit in our lives if we remain attached to the vine. Jeremiah describes the person who trusts in the Lord and who puts their confidence in Him as being like a tree planted by the water sending out its roots by the stream. This tree does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and it never fails to bear fruit (Jeremiah 17: 7-8). Jesus says, 'If you remain in Me and my words remain in you, you will bear much fruit this is to the Father's glory' (John 15: 5 & 8)

I have found that accepting God's purpose in the NOW brings peace, contentment and even joy in the midst of trials. Life with mum is not all doom and gloom. There are precious glimpses of sunshine in the midst of the shadows, At bedtime when we sing well loved hymns - 'Jesus loves me', 'the Lord's my Shepherd' her spirit is touched and she prays in her simple child like way. When a friend visits and mum is in good form and her amazing ability to socialise and quick wit and laughter come shining out we treasure those precious moments when she is back with us again.

In the midst of it all, God's word gives hope, direction and comfort. He says "I will never leave you or forsake you so I confidently say, 'The Lord is my Helper, I will not be afraid'". Truly He is my Helper day by day. He says 'My grace is sufficient for you'. And it is! 'My strength is made perfect in weakness' I know my weaknesses only too well, but also I experience His strength. He says 'All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose'. What is His purpose?

For mum - that I am here to support her as she walks along this narrow, dark path and especially to point her to Jesus who is our Light, and our Hope. Reminding her that Jesus is



Pictured above is Barbara, with her mum

preparing that special place for her at the end of the journey.

For Liz, my sister, that she sees God's hand in our situation as He provides for mum's on going care. We are now preparing to move her into a residential home, a move mum herself is actually asking for, something we never thought possible and a miracle in itself.

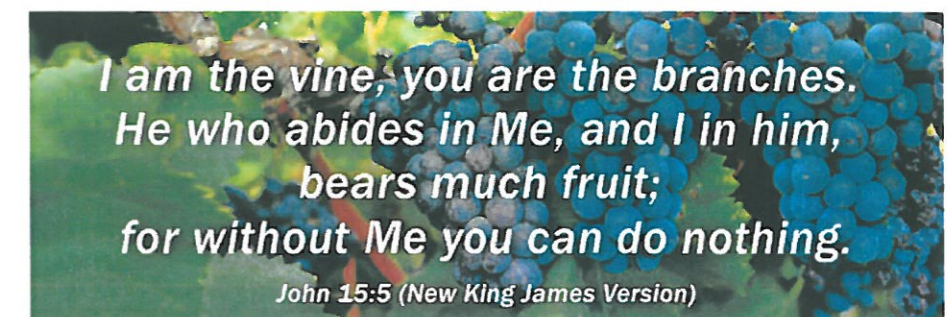
What is His purpose for me? Ultimately that I become more like Jesus. So how will that change take place?

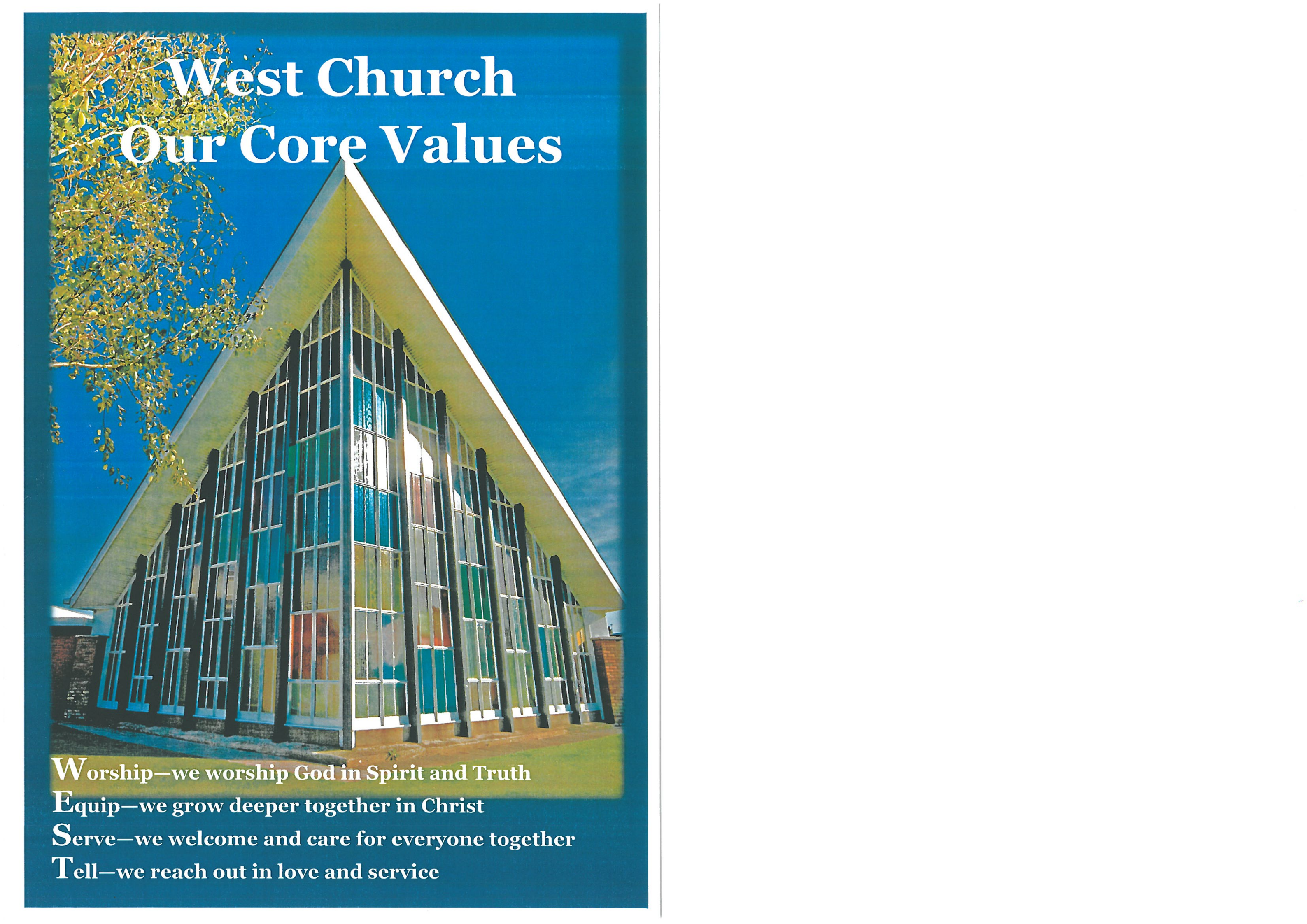
As I abide in Jesus, His Holy Spirit supplies all I need in my ministry to mum.

His love, His patience, His kindness, goodness and gentleness, His long-suffering; His power enabling me to control my selfish will, all His beautiful fruit. Thus the transformation takes place as He works in my life.

Accepting this situation is a daily discipline and I'm not always good at it but slowly I am learning, allowing His Holy Spirit to change me one day at a time and to produce in my life - the fruit that will glorify Him.

PS. Mum has now moved into a residential home. We thank God for this provision and believe that this is the very best place for her at this stage of her life.





West Church Our Core Values

Worship—we worship God in Spirit and Truth
Equip—we grow deeper together in Christ
Serve—we welcome and care for everyone together
Tell—we reach out in love and service