

YOUR WINTER EDITION OF

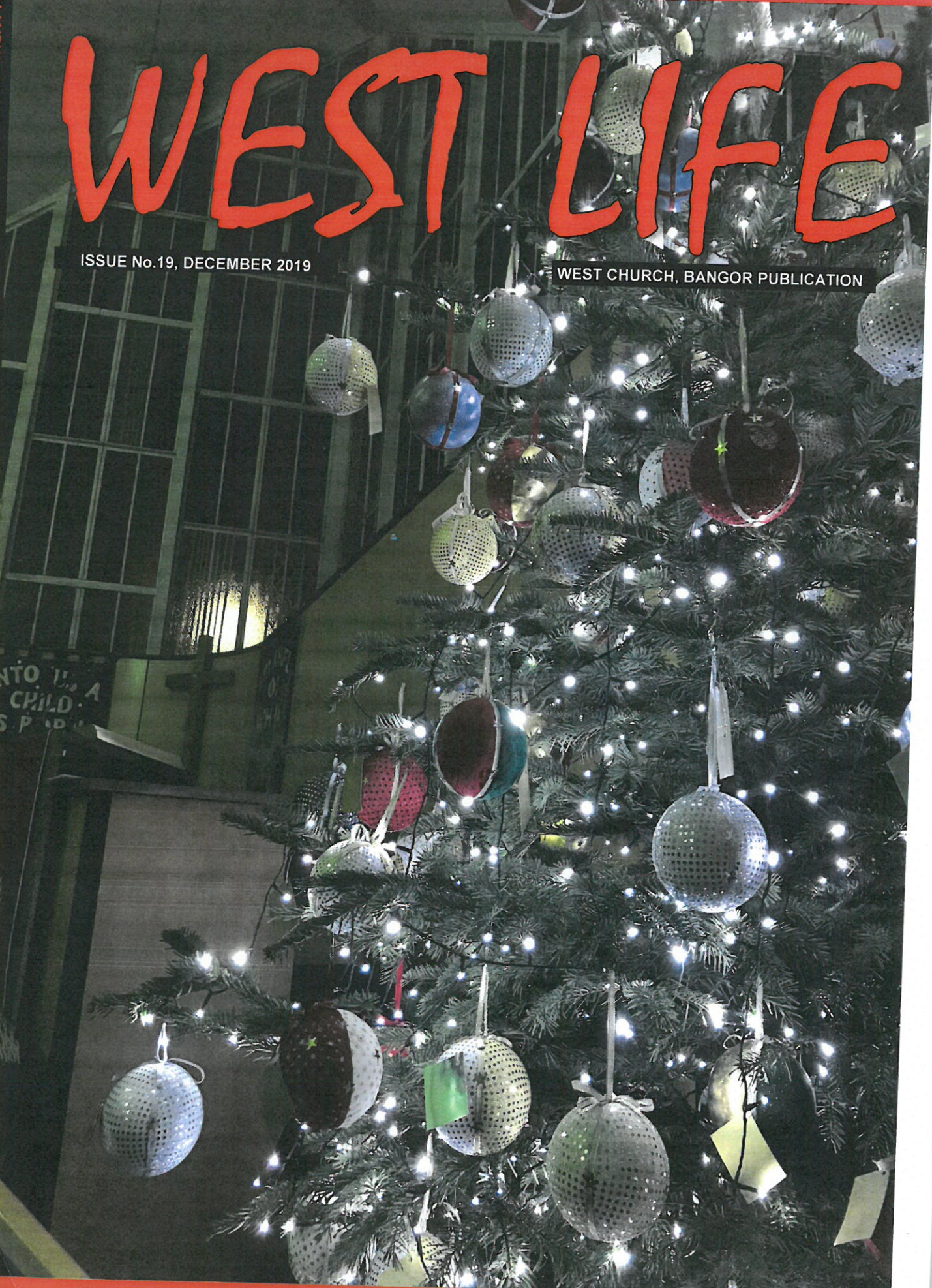
WEST LIFE

ISSUE No.19, DECEMBER 2019

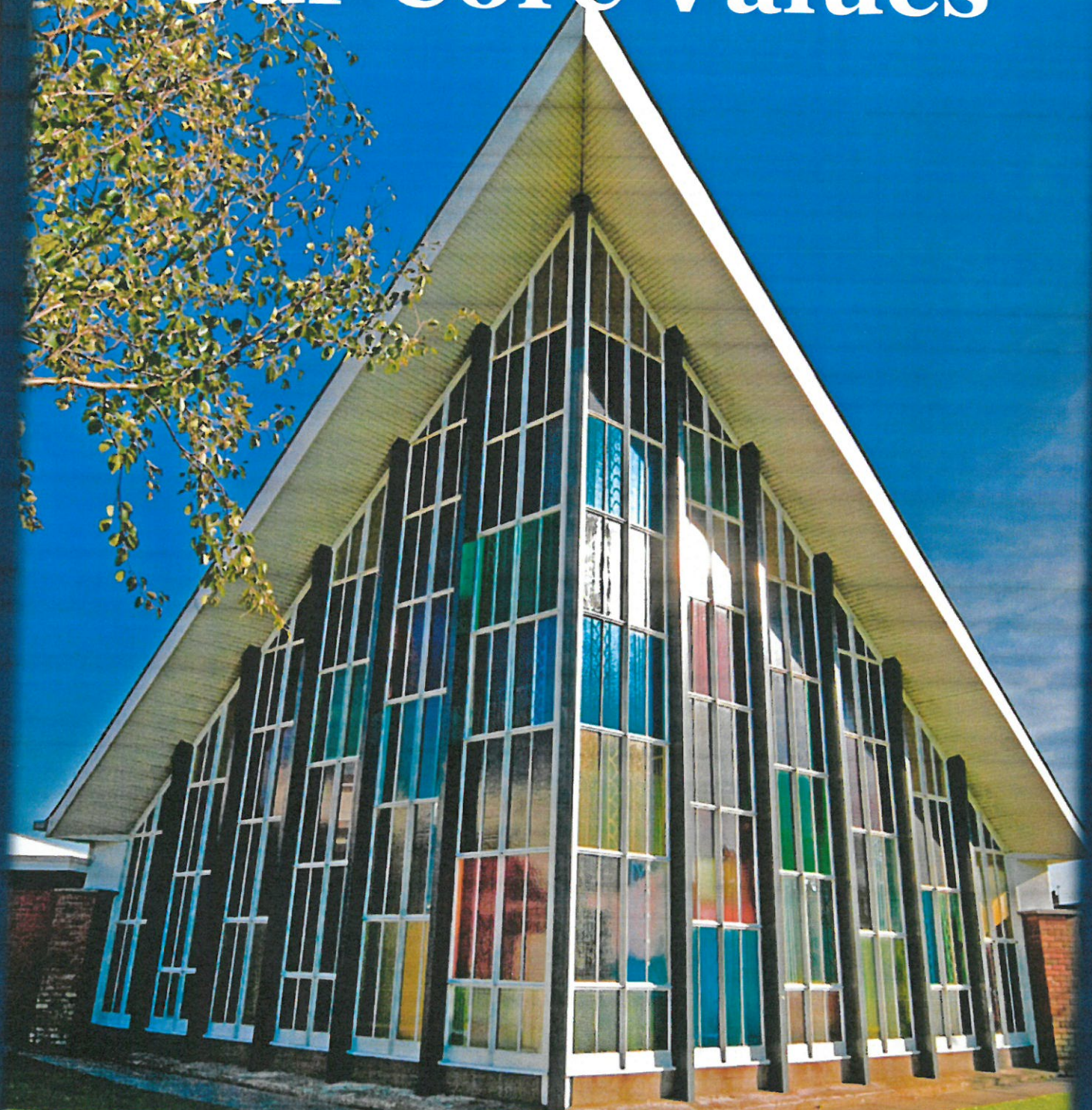
WEST CHURCH, BANGOR PUBLICATION

ONLY INSIDE YOUR WEST LIFE / FIRST WORD / CHRISTMAS PROGRAMME & EVENTS / COURSES & GROUPS / YOUTH & CHILDREN / WORLD DEVELOPMENT APPEAL

INTO THE A
CHILD
IS P...



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

West Church, Bangor — Welcome, directory and contents

WELCOME TO YOUR WINTER WEST LIFE

Reading through this Christmas edition of our congregational magazine, I was looking for a common denominator. There are so many good articles focusing on subjects as diverse as serving as a chaplain in the RAF, being loving and caring foster parents and being involved in Christian outreach. If there is a unifying thread, then it is showing the love of God in action. And all the pages combined are but a sample of the living faith being shown by many members of our congregation.

As always, I want to thank Cheryl Miller in the church office for her hard work in collating and editing



*Love
came down
at Christmas.*

Westlife as well as all those who help reduce production costs by being so willing to place advertisements. Please support them! At Christmas, we are of course reminded of the greatest story of love in action. In the words of the traditional carol: "Love came down at Christmas, Love all

lovely, Love divine; Love was born at Christmas – star and angels gave the sign".

Charles McMullen

CONTENTS

4	First Word
5-6	Christmas at West
7	Election of Elders
8	Gift Sunday
9	Life in the Spirit
10-11	20-20 Vision
12-13	RAF Chaplain
14	Considering Grace
16-21	Prayer at West
22-24	World Development
25	Patchwork Group
28-30	Women's Ministry
32-33	Home Groups
34-35	Profile
38-40	Tides
40-48	Mission Updates
42-43	Camino
44-45	Mission to Lebanon
46-54	Youth & Children

Directory/Contact Details

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Telephone: 02891 459688**

Minister:
Very Rev Dr Charles McMullen
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Telephone: 028 9145 4338

Associate Minister:
Rev Andy Galbraith

Minister Emeritus:
Rev David Bailie

Pastoral Associate:
Andy Heron

Pastoral Assistant:
Very Rev Dr Roy Patton

Pastoral Assistant:
Rev Jim Hagan

Trainee Deaconess:
Louise Davidson

Youth & Children's Worker:
Andrew McClelland

Youth Worker:
Harry McBride

Children's Worker:
Victoria Croft

Director of Worship:
Gillian Caughey

Senior Church Administrator:
Cheryl Miller

Church Administrator:
Wendy Dobbins

Finance Officer: (part-time)
Stephen Cully

Clerk of Session:
Lindsay Conway

Deputy Clerk of Session:
Maureen Bennett

Church Officers:
Ken Macartney
Martin Yardley
Lin Montgomery

Sunday Service Times:

10.00 am, 11.30 am & 6.30 pm
Crèche and JClub (up to P7) available
during 11.30 am Service

10.00 am Young West (Yr 8+)

11.45 am #Café church

8.00 pm Deeper (Yr 13+)

DOESN'T TIME FLY

by Very Rev. Dr. Charles McMullen

This has been a year of breakneck change. I hesitate to make even an oblique reference to the state of our national politics, because there are updated headlines almost every hour of the day. Even the most ardent politicos can hardly keep up with the latest developments. For others, the predominance of Brexit and even the convoluted manner in which a general election had to be secured at the beginning of December, have been a counsel of despair and a complete turn-off! The title of a local sitcom comes to mind: "Give my head peace"!

Sometimes I hear people talk about their personal lives in terms of not knowing what day of the week it is. "Doesn't time fly?" they say. And there are regular observations about it being no time since the summer and hardly a year since last Christmas! It won't be long, of course, until there's a wee stretch in the evenings!

For me personally, it has been a year of two halves. Although I enjoyed my many varied experiences as Moderator of the General Assembly, I was very relieved to step down officially from the role at the beginning of June. As I have discovered, there have still been one or two engagements, including later that month, a welcome trip to represent our denomination at the Irish Methodist Conference in Cork. Once the study was tidied with orders of services, newspaper clippings, correspondence and souvenirs being shoved into the study cupboards, we were off to Sorrento for a glorious fortnight of total relaxation and recovery. Both of us enjoyed and benefited greatly from a long summer break this year.

Then, since mid-August we have loved returning to our spiritual home at West. Everyone has been so typically friendly, warm-hearted and encouraging. I am indebted to our outstanding pastoral team which

continued to lead the place forward during my absence and the support given to them by everyone in the congregation. Having said that, it has taken me time to settle back, a little longer than I expected. There is the strangest combination of everything being exactly the same while at the same time being totally different. I have noticed in particular such a growth spurt among children during my absence!

In a constantly changing world, it is good to be reminded of continuity. One of our beautiful church banners which was made to celebrate the millennium, which is unbelievably already twenty years ago, has these favourite words so comforting and reassuring: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

As Christmas approaches, inevitably generating its own whirlwind of activity, may it be a time to remember Jesus Christ who came into this world so that we might have life in all its fullness. He is the One who holds everything together in such a sea of constant change. "We look at (Jesus)

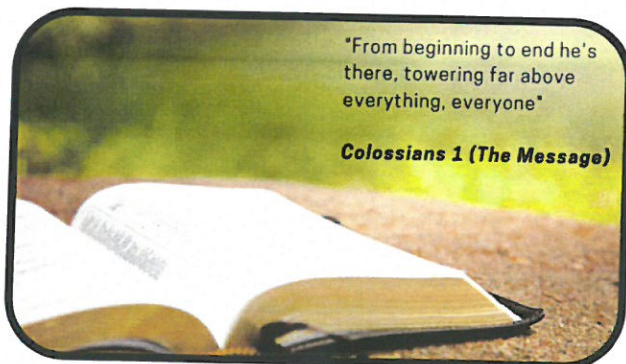
*Jesus Christ
Is the same Yesterday,
Today, and Forever.*
- Hebrews 13:8 -

and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank of angels – everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together up to this very moment.....He was supreme in the beginning and – leading the resurrection parade – he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone" (Colossians 1, The Message).

Barbara joins me in wishing you all the blessings of this particular season in your lives and that ongoing sense of the Lord's presence, peace and power as the days of the new year stretch out before you.

"From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone"

Colossians 1 (The Message)



Christmas at West

- 1st December (1st Advent)** A Book of Pictures ~ Sprouting Branches
10.00 am, 11.30 am, Cafechurch 11.45 am & 6.30 pm 'Share : Hope for the future'
- 8th December (2nd Advent)** A Book of Pictures ~ An Invitation to All
10.00 am, 11.30 am, Cafechurch 11.45 am & 6.30 pm with Olga Nel
- 15th December (3rd Advent) "Gift Sunday"** A Book of Pictures ~ Written in your Heart
10.00 am, 11.30 am, Cafechurch 11.45 am & 6.30 pm with Stuart McAlpine
- 20th December "Carolfest"** from 6.00 pm see notice on following page
- 22nd December (4th Advent)** A Book of Pictures ~ Turning your face to God
10.00 am, 11.30 am, Cafechurch 11.45 am
6.30 pm Carol Service with seasonal refreshments
- 24th December "Christmas Eve Communion"** 11.15 pm
- 25th December "Christmas Day celebrations"** 10.00 am
- 29th December** A Book of Pictures ~ Concluding Reflections
10.00 am, 11.30 am, Cafechurch 11.45 am **NO EVENING SERVICE**

A FUN NIGHT FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

CHRISTMASFEST

Celebrating

CHRISTMAS AT WEST

6.00 PM FOOD.CRAFT.
PHOTOBOOTH.PARTYBUS.

7.15 PM CAROLS.
COFFEE.MINCEPIES.

DECEMBER 20 2019

JOIN US & CELEBRATE THE TRUE MEANING
OF CHRISTMAS

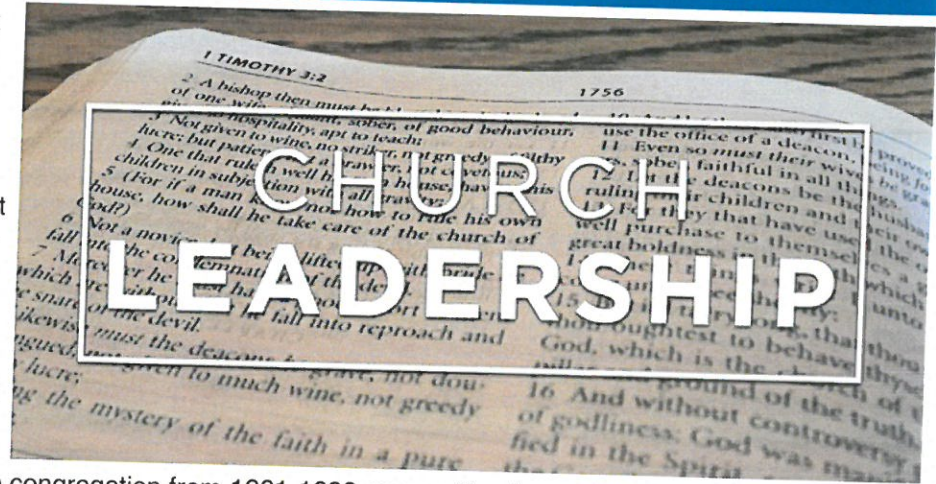
A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERSHIP

by Very Rev. Dr. Charles McMullen

The time has come to enlarge the Kirk Session of our congregation. This is the ruling body of any Presbyterian Church in Ireland, which has spiritual oversight. It is a long number of years since we last had an election and we are looking to supplement the excellent team we already have with a new generation of leadership.

In the new year we will be guiding you through every step of the process, which will culminate after at least six training sessions in a special service of ordination for those chosen by voting members of the congregation.

West Church Journey, a history of the congregation from 1961-1989, was written by our Minister Emeritus, Rev David Bailie. In it he draws attention to a similar election in 1983 and the kind of people needed to fulfil this very exciting and challenging role. In 2020, as we pray and look around to try and identify potential elders, his article is timeless and unsurpassable in stating the necessary requirements.



- ◆ We need committed Christian people
- ◆ We require people of pure heart who seek God's glory first.
- ◆ We seek people who know Christ as their Saviour and openly acknowledge Him as their Lord.
- ◆ We need people who warmly desire to bring others to faith in Christ.
- ◆ We need people of genuine prayerfulness.
- ◆ We need people of some Christian maturity.
- ◆ We seek people who are ready to venture obediently as the Spirit leads.
- ◆ We need people of responsibility, who are ready to stick with a job, and do it diligently, not being afraid of hard work.
- ◆ We need people who love others with warmth and affection.
- ◆ We require people who believe in the Church and will be loyal to it –its institutions, its leaders and its members.
- ◆ We need elders who know how to work and worship with others, to enlist and inspire others, to find their place, give their service, use their gifts for the up building of the whole body of Christ, and for outreach and service in Jesus' Name.
- ◆ We need elders who are ready to have their vision enlarged and their enthusiasm kindled, as corporately they wait upon God. The elder becomes a member of a team.
- ◆ We require people who are different from one another, so that a genuine team is built up, and that all the God-given facets of our congregational life, in its richness and diversity, are represented.
- ◆ We need people who love our reformed tradition with its emphasis upon the Word of God and the importance of loyal and regular participation in our Sunday services.

THE ABBA TRUST CHRISTMAS APPEAL

by Margaret Bailie

Here we are again in the run up to Christmas. How quickly time passes! At the time of writing (end of October) Cadbury's has launched their Easter chocolate! Halloween is no sooner over when Christmas decorations are in the shops and we are being bombarded with adverts for all the latest gadgets and toys.

With the changes in benefits system more people are struggling to put food on the table, never mind buy presents. Imagine the stress of having to try to provide a good Christmas for your children if the wage earner has no job or if you are a single parent with two or three children who each have a long wish list. We are very aware of the poverty and great need in our town and this Christmas, more than ever, we need your help both in providing toys and food for those less fortunate than ourselves. Please help us to show the love of Christ at this time.

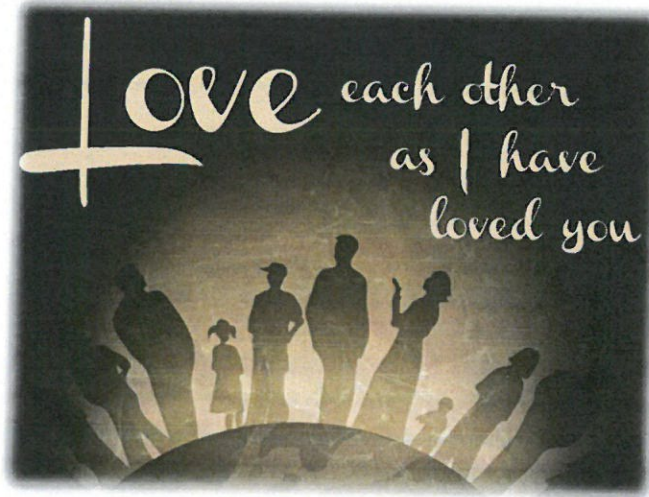
Our aim is to provide assistance to homes where there is hardship. We will buy each child a new item of clothing and also provide a toy for Christmas Day. This is where we again need your help. **On Abba Trust Sunday, 15th December**, we would like the children in the congregation to bring to church a new toy

which we can then pass on to these children. Parents and grandparents can help us by encouraging their children or grandchildren to enter into the true meaning of Christmas. Help them to be part of this effort which can make such a difference in many homes on Christmas Day.

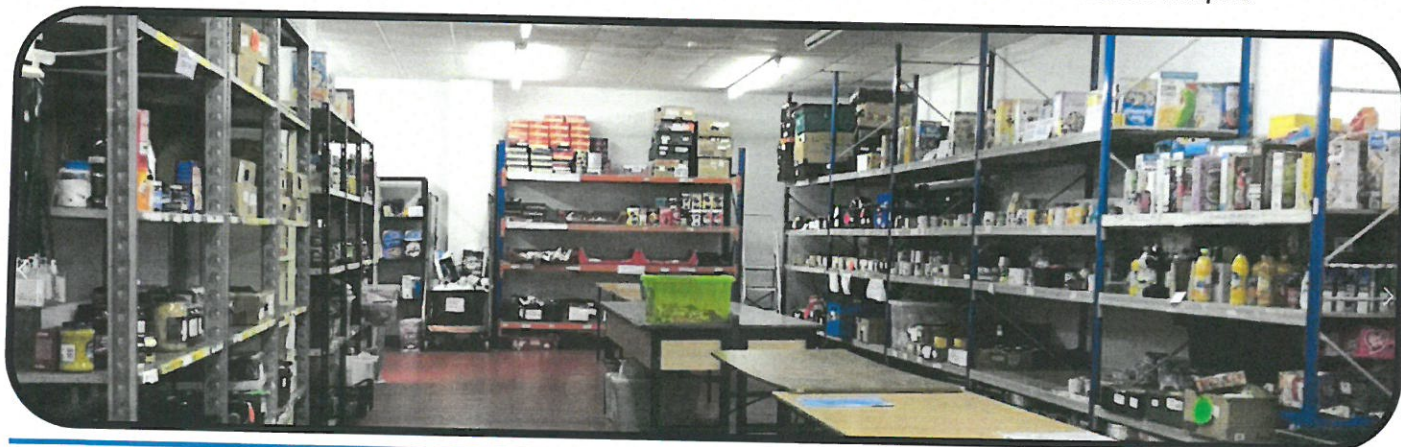
The toy should be wrapped and labeled with the age and sex of the child for whom it is suitable. The ages of the children we are helping are from birth to 16. The children will have an opportunity to leave their gift at the Christmas Tree during the service. We endeavor also to put in a small gift for mum.

Storehouse North Down will also be putting together around 300 hampers during the week beginning 9th December and **we would ask that Christmas treats be left in the trollies in the Vestibule before 9th December.** These will then be delivered to families in need in our community. West Church members have been every supportive of Storehouse and this is much appreciated. If you could perhaps bring along extra groceries in the run up to Christmas it would be most welcome. Any contribution, no matter how small, will be greatly appreciated.

Finally, it is quite a job sorting out everything we receive and we will be doing this on **Sunday 15th December at 2.00 pm in the Rathmore Hall.** If you would have a couple of hours and be willing to help, please do come along.



An insight into the Storehouse premises and the need to have these shelves filled for Christmas hampers



RENEW YOUR WALK WITH GOD

by Very Rev. Dr. Charles McMullen

In his book "Church in the Market Place", George Carey, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, describes how he reached a low spiritual ebb in his Christian faith: "...the experience of Christianity had somehow disappeared from my life. The great truths of evangelicalism had lost their fire and their power to convince. To all intents and purposes I was all right, but I knew if God did not intervene soon my whole Christian existence was finished. It was that desperate....."

In desperation he began crying out to God: "Lord, you know the mess I am in right now. And yet I owe you so much. I thank you that you met me years ago when I was a lad of seventeen. And I thank you that you called me into Christian ministry and empowered me for your service. But Lord, I have become so busy in your service that I have lost you somehow. I have been so self-centered and interested in doing what I want that I have forced you out of my life. I cannot live a hypocritical life any more. Unless you fill me again with your Spirit, I cannot go on."

He continues: "Such was my prayer and nothing dramatic happened – no thunderclaps, no wind, no fire; but it was Elijah-like because God spoke to me in a still small voice. In the calmness of that Sunday evening there was an amazing quality of peace about the room. It may sound trite, but it was so true that in that peaceful atmosphere Christ came again into my longing life and claimed me as his own."

Many of us have gone through phases in our lives when we have felt spiritually dry or empty, weary or burnt out. On the other hand, there are other times on our spiritual journey when we simply want to take time out of busy schedules, or have a desire to renew or refresh our walk with God.

The Life in the Spirit seminar has been running regularly in West Church for about fifty years. During that period, we have witnessed many people experiencing a fresh, spiritual dynamic, a quickening of faith or a warming of heart. Countless participants have felt energized and have gained abilities to serve in the love of Jesus in new ways. It's a wonderful tool as well for coming into the heart of the congregation and making lifelong friendships.

Over a period of ten weeks or so there are devotional manuals to follow, the opportunity to participate in group discussion and to explore assurance of salvation, the person and work of the Holy Spirit. It is a very relaxed atmosphere and a wonderful opportunity.

The seminar begins on Tuesday 7th January 2020 at 7.30 pm in the Prayer Room. Please sign the list on the church notice board in the Welcome Area or phone the church office on 028 9145 9688 for further details.



If you have a family member unwell or in hospital, please do not hesitate to contact the Very Rev. Dr. Charles McMullen or the Church Office (028 9145 9688).

We have a good chaplaincy service in all the major hospitals but there may be gaps in the system. With such a quick turnover of beds, it can be very easy to miss someone. 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.

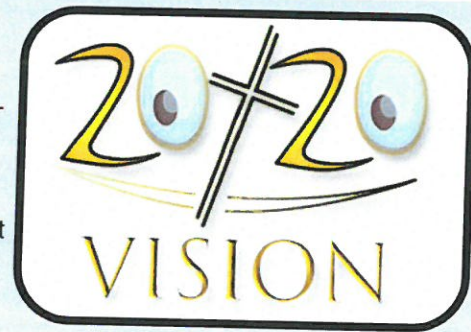
In a Pastoral emergency outside of normal office hours please contact Charles by telephoning the manse on 028 9145 4338 or on his mobile 07725 581176.

BRINGING OUR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE INTO SHARPER FOCUS

by Rev. Andy Galbraith

The year 2021 will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the formation of West Church. Very soon we will be starting to plan special celebrations.

We want to use the new year to help bring our congregational life into sharper focus – 20-20 vision. What does all of this mean for our worship, discipleship, church community, ministry and outreach as a congregation? At the time of going to press, we have various ideas for the new year, including a sermon series entitled SHARE.



Some time during the early hours of Friday 13th of December, Huw Edwards will announce on BBC 1 who has won the general election. In the moments that follow that news will be spread around the globe. The party that has won the election will find themselves celebrating and their leader will make an emotional statement to the global press on the significance of this amazing election result.

The news will travel fast, and it will creep into all of our conversations that coming Friday morning. "Did you hear the news?" "Did you watch the coverage?" "What do you think of our new Prime Minister?"

Sharing big events like that is not difficult. It invades naturally into our everyday narrative. In fact, it would be harder *not* to talk about it at all! Can you imagine how difficult it would be just making it through the 13th December without having had some conversation along the way about the pros and cons of our new Prime Minister, be it Jeremy Corbyn, Boris Johnston or Jo Swinson. Let's face it, those conversations are going to happen, and it won't be hard to find an opportunity to express our opinion about what has happened.

But here's the strange thing: as Christians we carry the greatest news story that has ever impacted

the planet, but yet many of us feel nervous and ill equipped to share our hope in Jesus in an authentic and conversational way. It is much easier to talk about BoJo keeping or losing the keys to number ten. We may love to hear stories about powerful evangelists whom God is using to impact the world, but yet we struggle to see ourselves as everyday evangelists in the location where God has placed us.

To address this situation, we will be participating in a seven week program in the new year entitled "Share". Share is a resource that has been developed by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to encourage members of our congregations to be able to share their faith with a greater confidence and a healthy dose of realism. Over the course of seven weeks, we will spend time in our Sunday services exploring how we can grow more courageous at articulating our faith with those we chat to day and daily. There will also be a wealth of resources for use in home groups.

I'm anticipating that through our engagement with this exciting resource we would develop a greater sense of expectation that God can work in and through our everyday conversations - no matter who we are.

Share is structured around three big ideas:

1. Building Relationships

This will explore how outreach is relational. Many of us hate cold callers, and many homes I visit have a 'no cold callers' sticker on the front door but yet we love to open the door to our friends. Our relationships provide an open door to the gospel that we can prayerfully seek opportunities to employ.

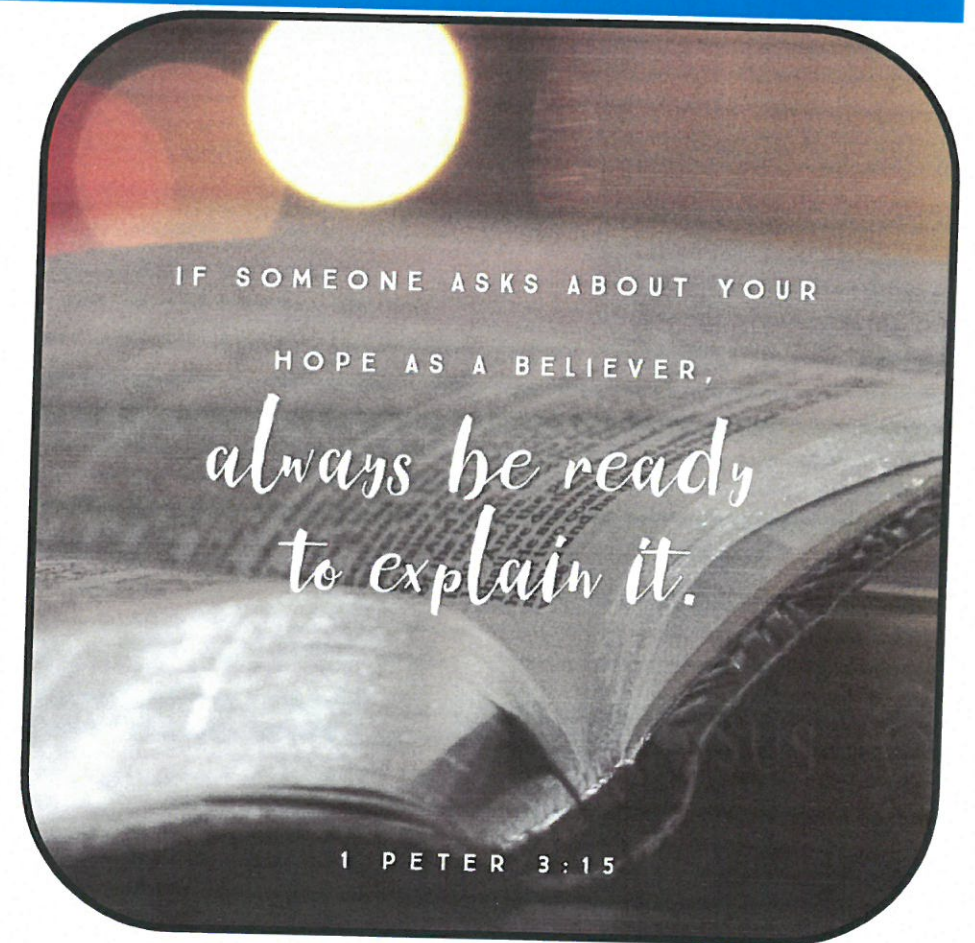
2. Cultivating Community

This will explore how *we all* have a vital part to play in the church's of specialists and experts. How might we cultivate a community around West that we are comfortable to invite folk who aren't believers into, and that they would want to experience?

3. Inviting Encounter

This final section will focus on increasing our motivation in sharing the gospel and explore how we can gain confidence in inviting the people we care about to encounter Jesus.

We will address each of these key topics in a Sunday morning sermon, and then unpack them further in our evening services. Our evening services will include an opportunity to discuss the issues raised in the talks around small groups as we wrestle with how all of this can be applied personally into our lives.



As we journey through this series, we would build a better understanding of our own unique local context in Bangor West, with the challenges and opportunities that brings. What would it look like at West if we had an undeniable culture of outreach in everything we do together as a church?

But let's face it, when it comes down to it, it is always going to be easier to talk about evangelism, than to actually roll up our sleeves and do it. This SHARE series will only be effective at transforming our vision and practice of evangelism if we as a congregation wholeheartedly engage with it. So I would encourage you to commit to attending our services during the course of this seven week program. Come out to the evening services, even if it isn't your normal habitat and be open to exploring how together we can be more effective at sharing the greatest story ever told.

1 Peter 3 v15 (NLT)

If someone asks about your hope as a believer,
always be ready to explain it.
But do this in a gentle and respectful way.

A STEP OF FAITH INTO THE UNKNOWN

by Rev. Dr (Sqn Ldr) Philip Wilson

Charles McMullen writes:

RAF Chaplains have this wonderful mission statement: "Serving the Royal Air Force Community through Prayer, Presence and Proclamation. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has currently three full-time chaplains in this branch of the armed services - Revs Michael McCormick, Jonathan Newell and Dr Philip Wilson. At the beginning of May, I had the pleasure and privilege of visiting Philip, his wife Hannah and daughter Beth at their base in England. It was a brief and fascinating insight into the family life of those who are on what is basically a front-line for Jesus Christ. I was very impressed by the commitment involved as well as the high price paid by long periods of separation from family and friends. There are undoubtedly many exciting opportunities to share the Gospel of Christ and to offer all kinds of pastoral aid and help to members of the armed services, but also a very lonely side as there are not too many opportunities for fellowship.

While visiting Philip, I encountered Jonathan Newell who showed me around the training college and students' quarters, as he was approaching his final fitness test before fully qualifying. The following day, as I was about to board my flight back to Belfast, he sent me a wonderful text to say that he had passed!

Barbara and I have benefited from Philip's ministry in the past - as others in West undoubtedly have done - when he was minister of Bushmills congregation (2006-2014). It has been a joy getting to know Philip and he has responded very positively to my suggestion that as a congregation we might like to adopt him and remember him prayerfully and practically. He sends this fascinating letter with contact details for anyone who would like to receive his prayer letter.

Charles



Being a minister and wearing a military uniform can be a strange combination. Few other chaplaincies are like it. The hospital chaplain neither wears surgeon's gown, nor patient's pyjamas; a prison chaplain neither guards buildings, nor lives in a cell. Yet military chaplains go where the soldiers, sailors or airmen go, live where they live, and receive almost exactly the same training (except how to fire a weapon, for we do not bear arms). Then there is the inescapable fact that those to whom we minister often use lethal force. What does one say to an anxious pilot who is unsure in a candid moment whether it is dozens or hundreds of people he has killed during his long career?

This combination, PCI minister/RAF Chaplain, has been my vocation since 2014. After an assistantship in Malone and over seven years as minister of Bushmills, my wife Hannah and our daughter Beth (now 8) embarked on a step of faith into the unknown. We have moved house three times and I have spent considerably longer periods away from home than a lifetime of evening meetings in congregational ministry could ever muster. We have made many new friends - and said goodbye to them again, as we keep on moving on. I have baptized babies, married couples and officiated at funerals. I have had pastoral conversations with hundreds of service people and their families, covering everything from marital break-down and post-traumatic stress disorder to allegations of injustice. Presently, a young pilot is seeing me to discern whether God is calling him to full-time ministry, perhaps as an evangelist, or should he stay in the RAF.

You'd be surprised how many people in the air force have a sense of vocation.

My present posting allows the opportunity to impact on the lives of Officer Cadets - the future leaders of the air force. They are mostly a young, highly intelligent, physically fit, supremely motivated group. I am part of a team (Anglican, Methodist and Baptist) who get alongside them on exercises and in the classroom, where we teach beliefs, values and ethics. It is a wonderful privilege and we were honoured when Charles McMullen came to pay a pastoral visit in May. It was then that he suggested that Bangor West might be interested in finding out more.

This season of Remembrance can be busy for us. Yesterday I hosted a "Messy Remembrance" event for the first time and over 40 turned up. Parents said they found it really useful to let small children observe what military sacrifice is all about. Next week, I'll have a congregation of about 300-400 when the Station has a full Remembrance parade. Then, it's Christmas with as many carol services and child events as any civilian church could ever imagine, when we reach out with the Gospel



message big time.

Once Christmas is over, I am deployed to the Middle East: four months away in a desert where 50 degrees Celsius is not unknown. I will visit RAF personnel in five different countries - in locations which are complex and perhaps hostile. It is my family who make the sacrifices - often not choosing to show how difficult it is. Stiff upper lip and all that. It can at times be lonely, yet God gives us the strength. We really value your prayers and if you'd like a prayer

letter at Christmas, please email me on philipwilson@hotmail.com



Pictured left, Philip with his wife Hannah and daughter Beth along with photos of Philip in his military uniforms.

PRESBYTERIANS AFFECTED BY THE TROUBLES

Charles McMullen writes

When I was Moderator of the General Assembly, I spent a morning talking to families of survivors from The Troubles in the Castlederg area of Co. Tyrone. It was a deeply sobering, harrowing and moving experience as Barbara and I were told the tragic stories of over thirty murders in this close-knit community. We were shown a happy wedding photo of bride, groom, bestman and bridesmaid. Only the bride survives! It was a brutal campaign against the local community.

We also went to Bessbrook, Co. Armagh, to spend an afternoon visiting relatives of those murdered in Kingsmills. I shall never forget seeing photos of loved ones who are lovingly remembered and never forgotten.

It was altogether a reminder to me that there are many people in our congregations who bear the scars of our sad past and live with the pain of sorrow on a daily basis. Their voices are seldom heard and I was impressed by the quiet dignity.

We need to be mindful of those in our congregations who have poignant memories of our Troubles, including members of the security forces who served diligently often under such duress.

"Considering Grace" tells the story of Presbyterians affected by The Troubles. Reviewing the book in The Presbyterian Herald, Sarah Harding writes: "There are numerous accounts of heart-breaking tragedy, unbearable pain, remarkable courage and incredible forgiveness."

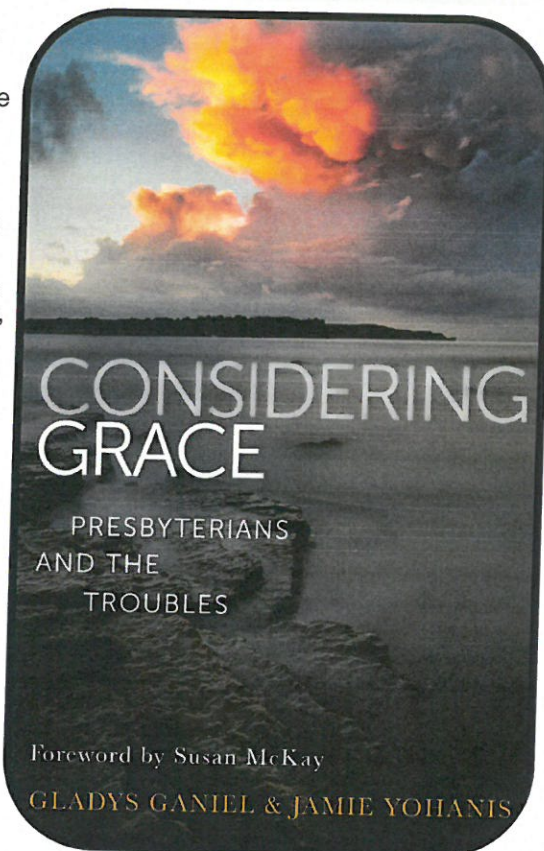
This year's Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. William Henry and the Convener of the project, Rev. Tony Davidson,

have commended the publication in the following way: "Considering Grace records the deeply moving stories of 120 ordinary people's experiences of the Troubles, exploring how faith shaped their responses to violence and its aftermath.

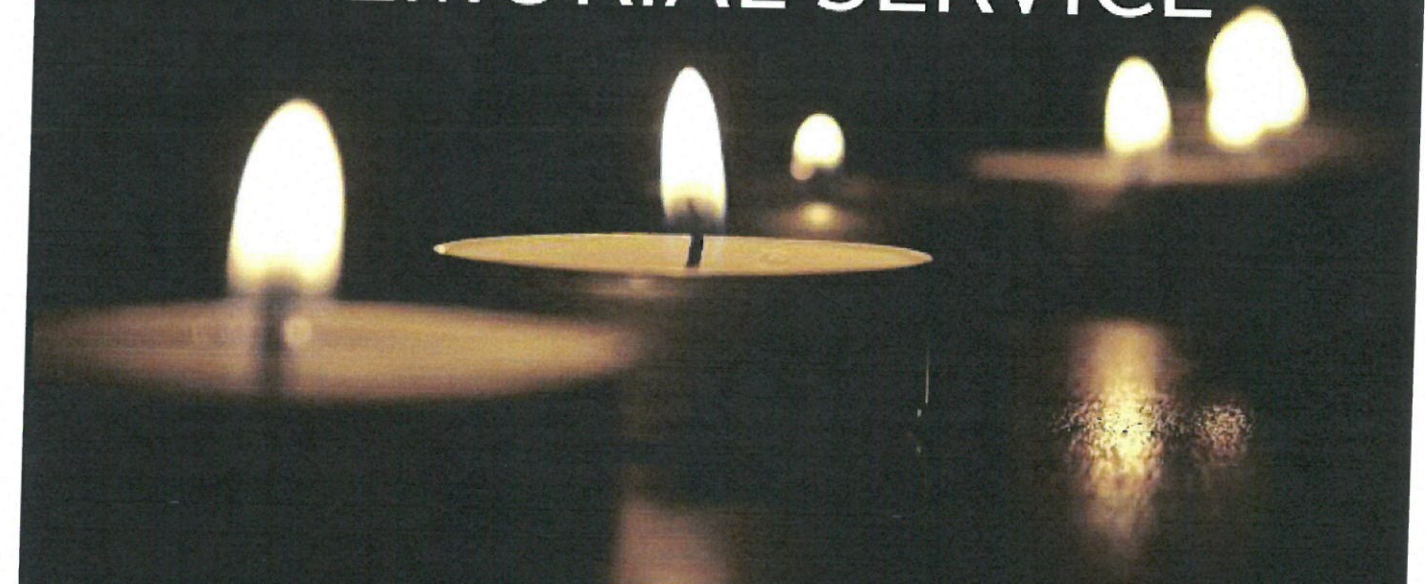
Presbyterian ministers, victims, members of the security forces, emergency responders, healthcare workers and 'critical friends' of the Presbyterian tradition are among those to provide insights on the wider human experiences of anger, pain, healing, and forgiveness. What is clear is that there is no single Presbyterian voice or perspective on the past - the stories are exceptionally diverse. These stories are told as a means to offer healing and forgiveness within congregations and to equip the denomination as it seeks to contribute to the future." A study resource to help congregations unpack

the themes emerging from *Considering Grace* is being developed and will be available in spring 2020. It will help local churches think through how they care for their own members, and how they might make a contribution to the wider discussion about the past in order to shape a better future. The resource will also be used in the training of new Ministers.

To order your copy of *Considering Grace* (available for £12 + postage) and to register your interest in the congregational resource, please go to www.presbyterianireland.org/consideringgrace Here you will also find a link to a series of videos from public figures, both inside and outside the Presbyterian Church, who speak about their personal experiences, as well as the role of the Presbyterian Church during the Troubles. Alternatively, the book can be purchased from the Church Office at £12. Again to quote Dr. Henry and Rev. Tony Davidson: "As the PCI Vision for Society statement reminds us, "we seek a more reconciled community of peace with each other, where friend and foe, working together for the common good, can experience healing and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ". *Considering Grace* is part of our contribution to this process and we commend it to you."



HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL SERVICE



West Church

Shoah Memorial Service

Tuesday 28th January

7.30 pm

Speaker: Rev. David Kale
from the Belfast Synagogue

“BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I GOD”

Introduced by Very Rev. Dr. Charles McMullen and written by Ken & Sandra Douglas

Oasis

*a pleasant or peaceful area or period in the midst of a difficult or hectic place or situation

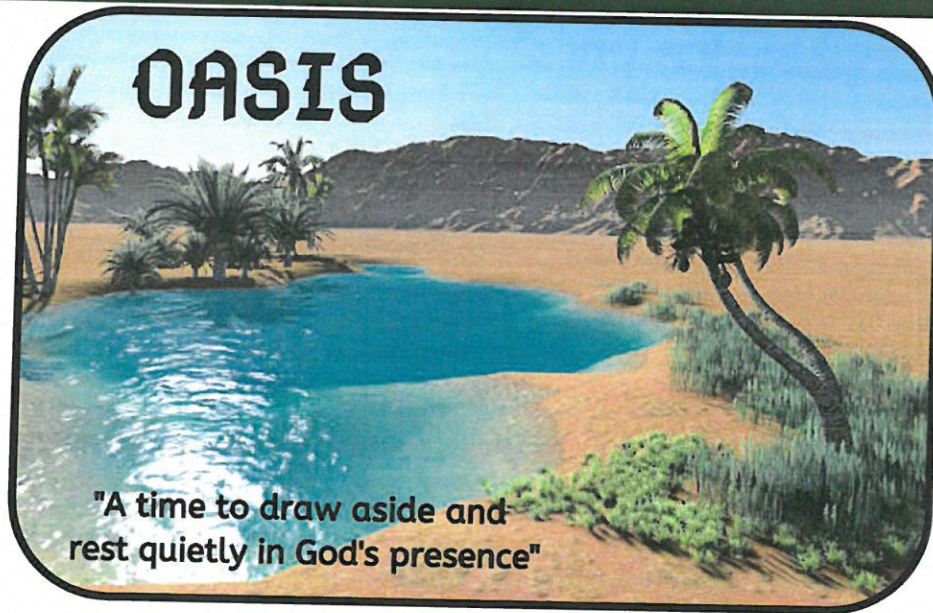
synonyms: refuge · haven · safe haven · retreat · sanctuary · sanctum · shelter *of rigid foam into which the stems of flowers can be secured in flower arranging.

A new monthly prayer initiative has been started recently in West called Oasis. It is an opportunity for people to come and sit quietly in the beauty of the Sanctuary for an hour. Our lives are often so busy, which makes it difficult for us to find time to sit and be still. This is dedicated time for God's people to enjoy and to soak in God's presence.

The idea of an oasis for flowers is also revealing! As we cultivate God's presence, we become "imitators of God. Therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (Ephesians 5:1-2).

I am glad that Ken and Sandra Douglas have pioneered this special ministry for us and have agreed to become its facilitators.

Very Rev. Dr. Charles McMullen



"A time to draw aside and rest quietly in God's presence"

What Oasis means to our congregation...

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Mark 1:35

"But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." Luke 5:16

"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside and spent the night praying to God." Luke 6:12

In Mark 6:31 Jesus says to His disciples, "Come with me to a quiet place and get some rest."

Psalm 46:10 tells us to "Be still and know that I am God..."

There is no shortage of verses from the Bible referring to the times Jesus Himself withdrew from crowds to commune with God and to be still in God's presence. Even though Jesus is God's son He knew how necessary it was to talk and to listen to His Heavenly Father so that He would be able to carry out His ministry according to God's guidance.

The world in which we live does not make it easy to be still, let alone try to include God in the stillness. No matter what age you are, life is full of busyness and full of numerous and different issues and problems with which we as individuals all have to cope. We may offer up arrow prayers to God asking Him to help us, but how often do we really take the time to draw aside and spend quality time with God in silence?

OASIS at West may not give you the type of solitude that Jesus sought when He drew away from the crowds but it does give anyone who truly seeks peace and silence, the opportunity to sit quietly in the Sanctuary and soak in God's presence.

What happens between YOU and GOD is the focus of OASIS.

- Praise and Thanksgiving?
 - Saying sorry for your sins and asking forgiveness?
 - Praying for yourselves and others?
 - Just waiting on God?
- You decide unless God has other ideas!

OASIS lasts for one hour. There is a very short introduction and then those who have made the effort to come into the Sanctuary and draw aside can sit in silence for as long as they feel the need. You can come when you want and leave when you want. That's the joy of having OASIS in the Sanctuary as no one is disturbed and no one has to contribute to the evening or feel vulnerable.

Why not read the testimonies from some of those who have drawn aside and come along to OASIS. May they encourage and inspire you to try out the OASIS experience for yourself.

Perhaps you would convey to Session our appreciation that the sanctuary was opened so that we might worship Him who is our Sanctuary within the sanctuary. We are blessed at West to have many and various opportunities to meet for prayer and to listen to God. However, the distinctive characteristic of Oasis was the emphasis on private, personal silence in the presence of God and in the presence of other brothers and sisters in Christ who were also silent before Him. An incidental reminder that we share our Heavenly Father.

Chris' one word report is 'PEACE!' Actions speak louder than words - on each Tuesday he jumped off a train straight from work without dinner and headed directly to West, such was his haste!

Catriona and Chris Ritchie

I was asked if I could set up Audio Visuals (AV) for the first Oasis, so I agreed after being told that it was only a set up and I need not stay. So the first night I set up AV and decided to stay for a while just to see what was needed but as I sat quietly in the presence of the Lord I found a real peace in my soul. I then realised that this was something which I was neglecting in my life just being quiet in His presence. As the weeks went on, rather than finding it just another meeting to be involved in, it has been a precious time with the Lord.

It is not a time to pray for everyone and everything but a time when God can speak to me, not commands or rebukes but rather peace and encouragements.

Would I recommend Oasis to others? Yes I have! I believe in such a busy world we need to take intentional time with God so that we can hear the still small voice instead of God having to sound the trumpet to get my attention.

Bill Wamsley

Just in case any of you think that OASIS is for more mature people only, read these wise and encouraging words from Cal Ritchie aged 21 who has experienced the silence of OASIS.

"As a young person my view is that our minds are constantly occupied by video streaming services and social media. Often our first reaction to quietness or a free moment is to interrupt it by immediately looking at our phones. Undistracted stillness and silence in the presence of God has been practiced throughout the history of the church. I believe this ancient wisdom is sorely needed by our generation. It gives us time to contemplate and to experience refreshment and peace from God in our unreflective and fast paced lives."

- this initiative truly provides a personal OASIS for each of us to be refreshed from life's daily challenges - all those who have availed of this opportunity will have appreciated the amazing tranquility and peace available in His presence - our testimony verifies this with that peace continuing to last way beyond the time spent in the Sanctuary - an opportunity has opened up with this initiative to encourage all in our local community and beyond to experience this for themselves.

Anonymous

I believe that the Oasis quiet evenings in church are a beautiful and excellent idea. Sitting in the silent, dark church is restful, and the Lord has told us that wherever two or three are gathered together He is there. During Jesus' time on earth we know that he often sought solitude to pray, sometimes taking 2 or 3 disciples with him. Therefore it seems that the Oasis evenings are God inspired and something that is obviously needed in our church family.

Ann Carnahan

It's a simple concept but sometimes difficult for people to access. Some may feel intimidated by the perception of others being more "spiritual" than them, or something being expected of them. Being held in the large sanctuary, with people free to come and go as they will, I would hope that in time not only members of West but others in the community would feel able to come and "Be with HIM."

Joy Ward

BE IMITATORS OF GOD, THEREFORE, AS DEARLY LOVED CHILDREN AND LIVE A LIFE OF LOVE, JUST AS CHRIST LOVED US AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR US AS A FRAGRANT OFFERING AND SACRIFICE TO GOD.
- EPHESIANS 5:1-2 -



I can clearly remember that Christmas morning in the eighties when I received my first handheld electronic console game - it was Space Invaders! I spent many hours that winter advancing through the levels. That game is long gone - but I still wrestle with space invaders - and I think you do too.

There are so many things that invade the space of our lives, and this can have a negative impact on our souls. It can be such a challenge to find space to have uninterrupted time in the presence of God. The invaders are relentless! What we need is a distraction free environment where we can learn to spend uninterrupted time in God's presence. If we sincerely want to grow to be more like Jesus, then we need to learn the disciplines of solitude and silence.

That's why I love the idea of Oasis...
Rev Andy Galbraith



Thank you Andy (Galbraith) for catching the vision and supporting me in introducing Oasis into West Church.

Thank you Cheryl for your continuous support in spite of the hassle I've given you!

Thank you Bill for doing the AV for every OASIS to date! God is no man's debtor and how wonderful that He has blessed you as He has. Thank you to all who have encouraged me and supported me with their prayers in what I have always believed was a God given vision. So thank you to my family, my House group and those who have become regular OASIS attenders.

"We are so afraid of silence that we chase ourselves from one event to the next in order not to have to spend a moment alone with ourselves, in order not to have to look at ourselves in the mirror." Dietrich Bonhoeffer

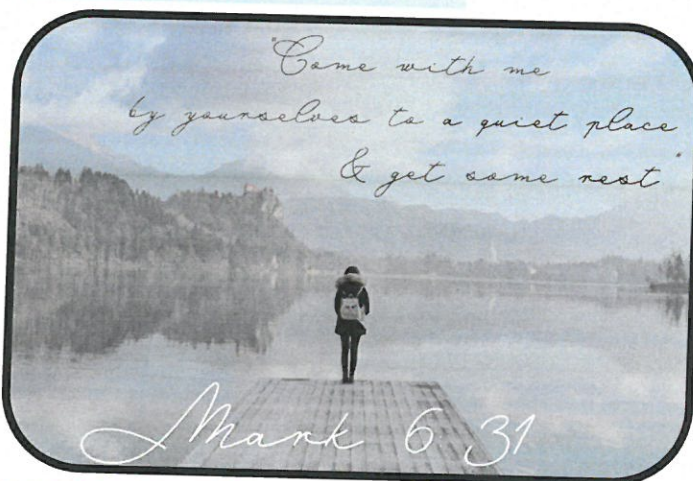
Could it be that you are the type of person described by Bonhoeffer?

The next OASIS gathering will be held on **17th December at 8.00 pm in the Sanctuary**. Does anyone need to be told that the run up to Christmas is a very busy time? Why not pencil 17th December into your diary and that evening, draw aside for a short while from all the commercialism that Christmas has become. Spend time in the Sanctuary with the greatest Christmas gift you will ever receive.

May each reader be blessed by reading this article. Maybe you too will be inspired to come along to a future OASIS gathering and "taste and see that the Lord is good".

Every Blessing for this special season and in the New Year!

Sandra & Ken



Calm Waters

I was on a journey in a boat not going anywhere, so I asked for directions, and I ended up there. It was the biggest storm I had ever seen, I couldn't escape it, it came directly at me.

The waves were so big they battered my body, and when I awoke I saw I was broken in two, not knowing what I could do. The storm raged on and I felt so weak, that all I could do was hold onto the rock.

Still the waves crashed on and the sky seemed so bleak, and then I saw different waves over my family too.

All this pain yet I could not cry, I held onto the rock and shouted, show me why!

I could not hear the voice that helped me before, was I to drown, where is the land, just please help me understand!

Then it happened one day, the tears made me shiver they flowed so quickly I thought I would cry a river. The storm subsided, and the waves seemed like toys, and what I was holding seemed to be a floating buoy. It marked the way home, I still had a choice,

and now I heard that familiar voice.

It was gentle and loving, the words my friend had to say, I will remember them to this very day.

He told me 'That although the sea was raging it would never overwhelm you.

For I always held you in my arms, and I would never let you go. My love is deeper than the sea and higher than the waves, and from the day you gave your life to me, you have been forever saved.'

Jay Flood-Coleman

Notes:

A brain-hemorrhage had left me, a new father, in hospital with left side paralysis. The worst experience at that time was not being able to hold my baby girl, Danielle, in the way that I wanted to. The poem recalls that emotional agony, and also the pain, or waves that were sweeping over my family because of what had happened to me.

I began to see that there was still a way forward, if I would just trust in what God could do with this episode in my life. With the emotional release came the knowledge that God was always near me and always will be.

PRAYER MINISTRY SEMINAR

by Heather Thompson

Through His death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father, Jesus has provided the way for us to be released from any imprisonment caused by grief, sorrow, sin, fear, guilt, pain, unforgiveness, worry, resentment or bitterness, by wounds, sicknesses or physical infirmities, whether in mind, heart and spirit or in body. He invites all of us to partner with Him in bringing healing to everyone. When we offer ourselves to be channels of such blessing to others many wonderful healings take place. "This is The Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23).



person may need a bit of encouragement and insight before being able to receive release.

We will be exploring the following topics:

- Who we are in Christ, our position in Christ, and how that impacts how we pray.
- The promises that are held out to us in Scripture.
- The importance of waiting on the Holy Spirit for empowerment before ministering, and of listening for guidance and following through on it.
- Some of the processes towards healing: repentance and forgiveness; release from oppression; healing through laying on of hands and anointing with oil in the Name of Jesus; thanksgiving.

In the past, when such courses have taken place, the participants have been greatly blessed by being together and receiving from God, and in finding that God gives insight and ministers His healing through them.

For further information please see me or contact the office (028 9145 9688). There will be a sign up sheet on the notice board near the time. If you wish to bring a packed lunch tea and coffee will be available.

Heather Thompson



A leaflet entitled "Ten Finger Praying" is now available on the information rack in the Welcome Area. It lists the established prayer times and suggests some topics for prayer.

THE PRAYER ROOM AT WEST

by Heather Thompson

Please feel free to come and pray any time in the Prayer Room with the exception of Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and Wednesday mornings when Seminars/Bible studies are taking place. There are a number of prayer meetings throughout the week to which everyone is invited and also many times in the week when the room is available for private meditation and prayer.



Young West Prayer is attended by those who want to pray for Young West services and initiatives.

Missionary Interest Prayer focuses on praying for those from our congregation who are on mission, whether long term or short. This is also an informative time in which news from our missionaries is shared.

Pre Service Prayer is devoted to praying for all participating in the evening service and in seeking God for what is on His heart for His people.

Samuel Hub is an opportunity to worship and invite God to tell us what is on His heart so that we can partner with Him in our prayer. Prayer can be about West, local churches, Bangor, N Ireland, anywhere in the world! We go without an agenda other than seeking God for His.

Prayer for Israel is exactly that. Up to date information is shared and those present invited to pray accordingly.

Oasis is a time of seeking God personally.

United Prayer covers personal prayer requests or concerns, and prayer for local and national issues.

During the time allocated for the **Persecuted Church**, information is shared about the countries where Christians are persecuted with a view to praying for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Street by Street is a combined initiative of members of West Presbyterian, Carnalea Methodist and St Gall's Church of Ireland in which teams of four go from door to door on a fortnightly basis inviting prayer requests from local residents. Other teams pray for this outreach at base. Those participating take part no more than twice in any one term so as to facilitate all interested. The three churches are enjoying serving together and are now on their second visit round Bangor West. This ministry is confidential and has been well received by many who have eagerly made requests and voiced appreciation for this service and for the fact that all three churches are working together. Others who do not feel the need at present for such prayer are respectful in declining. On average we receive twenty five requests in any one night. These are then prayed through by those on the Street by Street team for the following fortnight. Simultaneously, all three congregations are invited to pray during this same period for the streets visited (see order of service). If anyone is interested in participating please contact Catherine Bell on 07730 783028 or Heather Thompson on 07974 014230.

Quiet Contemplation (formerly called Listening Space) indicates that those coming to the prayer room during this time take the opportunity to pray privately and seek God for themselves and their own concerns.

Prayer Meetings in Prayer Room unless specified otherwise

Young West Prayer
Every Sunday at 9.30 am

Missionary Interest Prayer
1st Sunday of every month at 11.15 am

Pre Service Prayer (Committee Room) Every Sunday at 6.00 pm

Prayer for Israel
1st Monday of every month at 7.30 pm

Samuel Hub
3rd Monday of every month 7.30pm

Street by Street (West, Carnalea and St Gall's)
Fortnightly on Tuesdays at 6.30pm

Oasis (Sanctuary)
3rd Tuesday of every month at 7.00—8.00 pm (apart from December which is at 8.00 pm)

Prayer Fellowship
Every Wednesday at 8.15 pm

United Prayer
Every Thursday at 8.00 am, 2.00 pm & 8.00 pm

Persecuted Church
1st Friday of every month at 2.00 pm

Quiet Contemplation
4th Friday of every month at 1.30pm

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES BY 'FARMING GOD'S WAY'

FARMING GOD'S WAY

WORLD DEVELOPMENT APPEAL 2019

A Fragile and Dangerous Place:

Prone to natural disasters. 1.5 m people affected by drought. 2.1 m people without sufficient access to food. 27% of the population unemployed. An uneasy peace between government and opposition forces.

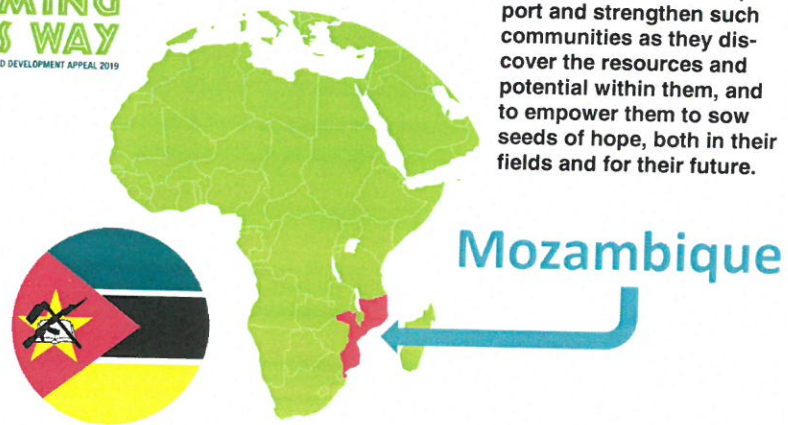
This is Mozambique!

Yet, Horácio Valoi, who works with Tearfund partner CEDES (Comité Ecu-ménico Para O Desenvolvimento Social), says, "The land that God has given us, it has everything". And the smile that spreads across his face says even more about the hope and confidence he had for the future.

In the rural communities of Mozambique farming in semi-arid conditions with limited water resources is unspeakably hard. As Horácio bluntly states, his main objective is for families not to die of hunger. Yet, together, the people of the community with which he works are discovering fresh hope as they apply what they learn from the Bible to their local context. They are looking to the future with confidence as they learn farming techniques which enable them to become more resilient and to understand that, by working together in sustainable ways, they can play a crucial role in shaping that future.

The World Development Appeal 2019 aims to support and strengthen such communities as they discover the resources and potential within them, and to empower them to sow seeds of hope, both in their fields and for their future.

FARMING GOD'S WAY
WORLD DEVELOPMENT APPEAL 2019



'FORGET THE FORMER THINGS' The principles of conservation agriculture are radically different from the western techniques which farmers in Mozambique have been using for generations. The resources needed are simple and available and 'farming God's way' is ecologically friendly and benefits the farmers.

Inhassoro district lies within the cyclone region of Mozambique. Even if the cyclones do not come, communities in the area are vulnerable to strong winds and heavy rains, which can cause flooding, or low rainfall which contributes to drought-like conditions.

Eking out an existence through subsistence farming in this fragile and dangerous place is hard work but through Tearfund's partner (CEDES), communities are discovering within themselves the resources and the capacity to do more than that.

They are, together, learning how to adapt their farming methods so that

they can be more resilient in the face of the challenges that come their way. And conservation agriculture techniques are not only bearing fruit in terms of the harvest that is reaped from the land. They are also bearing fruit in the lives of families, communities and neighbourhoods. For people are being empowered to use the resources they have to shape a more hopeful and sustainable future. A future where one can dream of more than merely 'existing'.

Through CEDES, and under the aegis of Tearfund, Horácio was trained as an 'umoja' facilitator. 'Umoja' is a Swahili word meaning 'togetherness' and the 'umoja'

process sees a trained facilitator lead community Bible studies. Through the studies, members of that community are enabled to focus on identifying and using the resources they have to lead and control their own development. This removes the sense of disempowerment that can accompany being dependent on an external donor.

Tearfund also recognizes the potential within local churches to take a lead on development issues within the communities in which they are located. Through the church and community transformation process, 'umoja' helps churches to understand integral

mission. Local churches come to see how important it is that they look after people's spiritual and physical needs in the communities they serve. They even begin to identify and take the lead on sustainable development initiatives.

The World Development Appeal video this year tells the story of how conservation agriculture or 'farming God's way' has been transformative for the community with which Horácio works. Working with family units, households have been trained in sustainable farming techniques which generates a small surplus income. This can then be reinvested through self-help groups which, in turn, generate small businesses in the neighbourhood. Relationships within families are improved. Relationships grow between families and the church as people interact in the Bible studies. And the community is developed from within, becoming an example others can learn from.

Horácio's prayer is that God will not take him away from his work with this community until they reach their full potential. As you prayerfully and practically support this year's World Development Appeal, you can play a part in helping communities in Mozambique and other fragile and dangerous places unlock the potential within them to sow and nurture the seeds of a more sustainable future.

The World Development Appeal video can be viewed at <https://www.presbyterianireland.org/Resources/World-Development/2019-World-Development-Materials.aspx>
A Special offering will be collected at our Christmas Day service to support the World Development Appeal. Envelopes will also be available from the Church Office.

Cont'd

MOZAMBIQUE:

Precarious Peace: Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony, gained independence in 1975 after 10 years of war. It then suffered a period of civil war until a peace agreement was reached between government and opposition forces in 1992. In 2013 the opposition withdrew from this agreement and the country experienced further instability with over 11,000 people displaced. A new peace deal was signed in 2018. Mozambicans hope the upcoming general election might deliver long-term peace for their country.

Poverty: Mozambique is still one of the poorest countries in the world despite the best efforts of government and development agencies to reduce poverty. It was ranked 181 (out of 188 nations) on the Human Development Index.

Prone to Disaster: Mozambique is very vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods, cyclones, and droughts due to its geographical location. As such, food security is a major issue for this fragile state.

Problem Investment: Mozambique has maintained a high average GDP with annual growth at around 6.5%. But this growth is externally driven and benefits the external investors rather than helping to change life for the country's poorest people. Whilst poverty indicators have shown some improvement in urban areas, rural areas remain marginalized with poor access to services and sufficient food.

Promise: All of these factors threaten the development gains made in the past 22 years... but through the work of Tearfund's partners, like CEDES, there are also seeds of hope.



'A MEASURED APPROACH' Crops are planted with precise spacings to give them the best chance of survival. They are fed using natural organic fertilisers and crop rotation ensures that the land stays healthy and reduces the incidence of pests without the need for harmful chemicals.



'RELATIONSHIPS RENEWED' As CEDES works with households and they come along to Bible studies at church and become part of a farming co-operative, relationships are changed—within families, between families and the church, between the church and the community.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Learn: Please use the resources provided by World Development, available online at www.presbyterianireland.org/world-development. Find out more and learn how lovely it is when God's Word reaches out through the local church and calls forth a shared response from the local community to bring the seeds of hope they hold for their future to fruition, and how relationships and neighbourhoods reap a harvest of benefits.

Pray: Prayer is a vital activity in the communities where Tearfund and Christian Aid work and partner. Use the information available through this appeal to pray knowledgeably for the people involved.

Give: The 2019 World Development Appeal highlights partner communities in Inhassoro, Mozambique, with a secondary focus on Bangladesh. The emphasis is on the long-term challenges and the capacity-building required for good and sustainable development in fragile places, with an emphasis on food security, but also recognizing the 'trickle down' effect of such development work on community relationships. Your giving will enable organisations like CEDES and others to support some of the world's poorest people, seeding the hope of a more secure future, where communities work together to enjoy the fruit of the resources and resilience within them. Funding supports projects, including their monitoring and ongoing evaluation.

'...AND A BLANKET!' The seeds are kept covered in 'God's blanket' - a natural mulch made from last year's plant debris or peanut leaves which are naturally high in zinc. This mulch helps maintain water content in the soil and reduces soil erosion.



A TIME TO SEW

by Olive Byers

A few people have expressed an interest in starting a patchwork group in the church so I thought I would tell you a bit about my patchwork journey. I discovered patchwork and quilting over 40 years ago when I made my first patchwork item, a cot quilt for my first baby. Over the next few years I made some quilts but then about 15 years ago it became a serious hobby.

It began to take over my life until I became aware that it was in danger of becoming an idol. For some time I struggled. I knew God had given me this talent but how could I stop it taking His place in my life and instead use it to bring glory to Him? I prayed about it and continued sewing but now each time I make a quilt I do it as unto the Lord (Col. 3:17). One day I came across a verse which I have since made into a picture to hang in my workroom. "The Lord will bless you in the work of your hands" Deut 16:15. Sometimes I give the quilts titles with a Biblical verse, e.g. one which had a heart in each block I called, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also".

There are just so many beds one can cover with quilts so I have now started to make smaller wall hangings and art quilts. In 2010 I was at a concert in the Ulster Hall when the famous pianist, Nikolai Demidenko, played all 24 of Chopin's preludes. As I listened, spellbound, I wished I was an artist so that I could capture them on canvas. Then I thought, "I'm a textile artist so why not explore translating them in fabric?" I bought a CD of the preludes and, at home as I listened again, I sketched or jotted down ideas of pictures that came into my mind as each piece played. I decided to make a mini quilt, A4 size, depicting each prelude.

In 2012 I applied to the Tyrone



Guthrie Centre for a period of residency so that I could concentrate solely on the project. It is a grand old gentleman's residence in Newbliss, Co. Monaghan, surrounded by lovely grounds. Sir Tyrone Guthrie left it to the State for the use of artists and the like. The Board meets twice a year to consider all applica-

tions and to my surprise and delight my application was accepted. I shouldn't have been surprised since each stage of my application had been rooted in prayer.

I went for a week in April 2013 and once I had my studio set up I put the CD on. As I listened, the creative juices just started flowing. The previous year, as I played prelude #7, I could visualise a swan floating gracefully on water. As soon as I saw the lake at the front of the house I knew that was going to be the background for my swan. Prelude #4 reminded me of death, yet it was an enjoyable piece. Easter came into my mind; Good Friday with the cross, a tomb and teardrops, but then the great joy that Easter Sunday brought. I managed to complete seven of the preludes that week and since then I have returned a



number of times and have now managed to finish the series. I haven't decided how to display them yet; whether as a quilt or in book form; another matter for prayer.

I once attended a seminar on banner making run by PCI (Presbyterian Church in Ireland) and subsequently made a few banners for various committees and the church I was then involved with. When I became a member of West I joined the Banner Group. I thank God that he gave me this talent which I can use to serve Him in this way and that it can give pleasure to people while bringing glory to our creator God.

A quilt is created from patches which are joined together to become blocks. The blocks are then stitched together to become the quilt top. It is then layered with wadding and a backing and the whole thing is then quilted to hold all the layers together and to add another dimension. When I look back at my life it is a bit like a quilt. The patches were all the influences in my life while I was growing up. These patches became blocks when I responded to the Lord's call in my life and became obedient to Him. Those blocks are now being joined together to make a quilt top as I learn more about Jesus, love Him more and serve Him in different areas. It will only be in heaven that I will become a perfect, beautiful, quilted piece of work.

If you would be interested in being part of a Patchwork Group here in West, please contact Jane Richardson or the Church Office.

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

What is the Freedom In Christ course? The Freedom In Christ (FIC) approach to discipleship will transform the way Christians become fruitful disciples. The course is focused on firstly establishing every Christian in the sure foundation of their identity in Jesus and then gives them the tools to break free and stay free from all that holds them back - a strategy for on-going transformation.

How long does the course run? The Freedom In Christ course has been revised and updated and now runs for 10 weeks with teaching by Steve Goss, Nancy Maldonado and Daryl Fitzgerald. There is also a ministry component known as the Steps to Freedom In Christ which is presented by Steve Goss and Neil Anderson.

What does the course offer? The Freedom In Christ course offers you everything you need to make disciples who bear fruit, and fruit that will last!

Why does it work? Good teaching on its own is not enough. Although the key to freedom is know the truth (John 8:32), simply telling people the truth doesn't mean that they really know it. The FIC course has a kind and gentle ministry process to help people repent of past sin and resist the devil. For many this "clearing out of rubbish" is the key to the teaching falling into place.

When does it start and how do you register? The new course begins on **Thursday 16th January at 7.30 pm in the Conference Room.** You can sign up at the church noticeboard or contact the office on 028 9145 9688 or office@westchurchbangor.org



What some Freedom In Christ leaders have said...

"Increasingly, new Christians are carrying huge amounts of spiritual baggage, hurts and strongholds. Traditional discipleship material focusing on growth, gifts and giving was not getting through. We still need those crucial foundation studies, of course, but it seems almost impossible for them to find good soil if people do not first deal with deeper issues. In the past year we have used the FIC Discipleship Course after Alpha and in our evening service. We have seen folk suddenly being propelled forward at a rate unseen before. This is no weird "see a demon everywhere" course but a very balanced, biblically-based, well-presented course that God is powerfully using. I would not hesitate to recommend it as an immediate follow-on course to Alpha." **Sam, Pastor & Alpha Regional Adviser**

"We would highly recommend this course, especially for new Christians. The comments most often received from individuals are: 'I wish I had known then when I first became a Christian'; 'The teaching is so easy to understand'; 'No one has ever explained things this way before.'" **Sandra, Community Church Glasgow**

"It has been fantastic to see people grab hold of the truth of who they are in Christ in a fresh way and this course has been a great tool to enable that to happen." **Jim, Pastor, Mid-Sussex**

"and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."



John 8:32

"We consider the FIC course to be the best material on the market to build Christians up in their walk with Jesus. It encourages personal responsibility and helps people to go deeper with God and discover His blessings. The impact on our church and community has been enormous." **Adrian, Camberley**

SERVING IN A SPECIAL WAY

Charles McMullen writes

Mrs Pamela Brow has intimated her intention to step down quietly at the end of the year as our flower arranging Coordinator. We are deeply indebted to her for providing magnificent displays in the church over a long number of years. Since the cross was installed at the front of the sanctuary, the weekly displays at its foot have been particularly beautiful and outstanding - truly an inspiration in themselves and an aid to worship. The words of the hymn "O love that wilt not let me go" come to mind:

*"O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be."*

Pamela has a radiant Christian faith and a deep desire to serve her Lord in this special way. She has spent many long hours often in a freezing church, pruning and arranging flowers. She is creative and sensitive to the leading of the Spirit; talented and versatile. I have found her always approachable and willing; faithful and dependable.

In a letter to the church which we received in the summer, she wrote:



"I love doing the flowers, and I especially love the interaction with all the generous customers, and the opportunity to commemorate their loved ones on occasions important to them. Their flowers glorify the sanctuary, and are then delivered in bunches to those in need. The photographs I give to the customers each week are often sent to family members away from home now - sometimes far away.

There have been all the specials along the way and we are very grateful to Pamela for providing and looking after all the plants at West. She has helped to provide stunning Harvest arrangements, Advent wreaths and candles, as well as the Sycamore Christmas party table centres. The list is undoubtedly much longer!

Our thanks not only to Pamela, but to all involved in beautifying our sanctuary Sunday by Sunday throughout the year. We are delighted to announce that Mrs Rosemary Laird will be taking on Pamela's role.

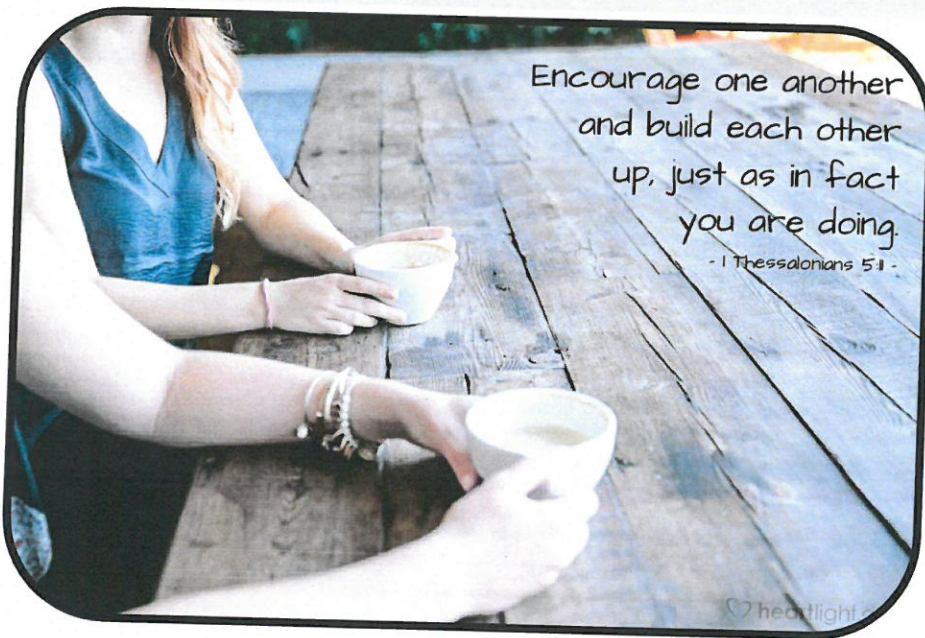


BUILDING AND ENCOURAGING

by our Trainee Deaconess, Louise Davidson

I cannot believe that already I have been in West Church for almost six months. Where has the time gone? I feel as if I have settled in well and I have got to know many of you, though not yet all of you – but I'm looking forward to meeting you all before too long.

The Lord has often reminded me of the verse in 1 Thessalonians 5.11: "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing..." And as a fellowship of believers I have witnessed firsthand that you have done this with me, and so I want to thank you for your help, encouragement and support as I have taken on the role of a trainee deaconess in West Church with a focus on developing Women's Ministry. I hope in turn that I will live out my calling through this verse to encourage and build you up - helping you realise more and more that you are loved, important, remembered and have purpose as you serve Jesus and others, using the gifts He has given you. He wants to use us all to serve Him and others and that may mean at times getting out of our comfort zones, being obedient to Him. Yet He places other people around us to encourage and build us up to do what He is asking. I believe that God knows His people are in need of encouragement and support which is why I think that this verse is imperative to our daily walk with Him.



So what have I been involved with since September in West?

I have had the privilege of visiting some of you in your homes, as well as meeting up with some of you for a chat and a coffee, just to listen to how life is going for you at the minute. I have been very honoured and humbled that you are allowing me into your lives and giving me opportunities to read God's Word and pray with you.

On Saturday 21st September we had a Women's Breakfast (healthy, of course) which was attended by around 60 ladies. Our speaker, Rev. Dr. Liz Hughes, reminded, encouraged and challenged us to "rise and shine" for Jesus. This was a great morning of food, faith and fellowship, many new



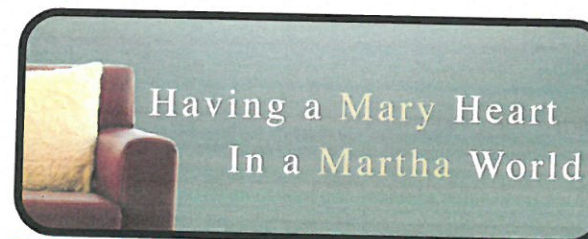
friendships were made and old ones were rekindled. For me it was just a delight to see women coming together - a few commented that they really enjoyed sharing breakfast with a time of praise and teaching from God's Word. There are two more breakfasts planned for the new year, on 11th January and 16th May.

On the third Thursday night of the month, women of all ages - 'Girls 2 Grans' - have met for a Bible study where we have looked at women of the Bible - the lives they lived as individuals and how they fitted in to God's bigger picture and plan. Many of these women in the Bible, like women of today, did not find life easy. They feared God, lived faithfully and were obedient to what was required of them. They did what they needed to do. I believe God empowers all women to be strong and follow His call and that is why I think it is important that we gather as women to study the Bible together, giving us a great opportunity to put distractions to the side and discuss the issues we face today as women and how God's Word can inspire us to live strongly, obediently and

faithfully as followers of Jesus.

Every six weeks, on a Tuesday evening, **Chapters Book Club** meets and the format has been that we all read the same Christian book before meeting to discuss what we liked, disliked or found challenging about the book. Chapters Book Club provides a thoughtful space for us to come together as women to discuss and wrestle with important matters of faith and God has spoken to us through the books we have shared.

Again, women of all ages and stages have come along with one common denominator - a passion for reading and a desire to learn from authors and each other how we can go deeper with Jesus. After reading the book, *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*, by Joanna Weaver, God gave one of the ladies in the group the words of this fantastic poem, entitled 'Jesus is Here'.



Jesus is Here

"Jesus is here," said Mary
"I want to hear Him speak,
He tells me things I need to know
And shows me where I'm weak".

"Jesus is here," said Martha
"There's so much work to do
And look at all these people!
I'll have to feed them too".

"Jesus is here," said Mary
"I want to hear some more.
I'll wait until He's comfy
Then sit at His feet on the floor."

"Jesus is here," said Martha
"What am I going to do?
Jesus, tell Mary to help me,
She'll maybe listen to you."

"Martha, I'm here," said Jesus
"Don't be fretting. You see
Mary has chosen the better way
So come and sit by me.

My time with you is short and so,
I need to tell you why
My Father sent me here to earth
To suffer, bleed and die.

But first I need to gather in
The weak, the poor, the lame,
The outcast and the prisoner
and tell them all my name.

I am the Name above all names,
The one to set you free,
So come and listen while I'm here;
The best is yet to be".

On 21st October we hosted an evening of **Pudding, Praise and Testimony** in Home Sweet Home in Donaghadee. Fourteen women came along and Rhonda Morrison

gave her testimony which was a very real, honest and compelling account of how God had worked in and changed her life. We were all encouraged and challenged by this. Beulah led the praise and

we sang our hearts out, and of course, we indulged ourselves with puddings. (I think they were fat free!)

At the September meeting of PW I gave my testimony and a short devotion, and have managed to attend some more PW gatherings. I would really encourage women of all ages to attend what is a great night of fellowship with many interesting speakers. I have also been leading one of the Girls' Brigade Bible classes for Brigaders (age 14-18 year olds). This has been encouraging as the girls have been very willing and eager to listen and engage as we have been studying the Psalms. I also have been involved in facilitating a quad group where three ladies and I meet, usually once a fortnight. We have been using a resource published by PCI called 'Proximity' which provides a relevant and challenging content for the context of relational discipleship. We have been exploring the Seasons of Life. These have been great times as they help our spiritual growth as well as developing friendships.

By the time you read this we will have had our Quiet Day at Drumalis, led by Clare Watton, which facilitated a time for women to draw aside from the busyness of life to spend a little time listening for and being attentive to God's voice. We are also having a morning out to the Potting Shed in Comber and a shopping trip to Dublin in December.

You may have heard about our Shared Threads day - Connections Women's Ministry was given an opportunity to get involved with Shared Threads which again was embraced by many women in the congregation and we got involved by helping to make sanitary products for girls and women in countries where sanitary items are not available. We plan to have another two days in the new year.

Cont'd over

A few things are planned for the New Year...

'Girls to Grans' will continue to meet on the 3rd Thursday of the month.

The dates for 2020, 7.30—9.00 pm:
16 January 'Woman at the Well'
20 February 'Mary & Martha'
19 March 'Mary Mother of Jesus'
21 May 'Fearfully and Wonderfully Made'

Chapters Book Club dates, 3 December, 29 January, 10 March & 5 May

Women's Breakfasts There are two more breakfasts planned for the new year, one on Saturday 11 January and the speaker will be Sonya Anderson who is the Deaconess in Shore Street, Donaghadee and the other on Saturday 16 May.

Women's Weekend On February 8-10 there will be a Women's Weekend with a biblical exploration of the theme "*Anchored in Jesus*" which will help recharge, refresh and encourage you as we have fun and fellowship together while focusing on Christ. It will be held in Murlough House and will cost approx. £100. This will include meals.

'On the sofa with...' These evenings will have an interview style, asking a few women whom you may know from the church a few questions about their life, work and their relationship with Jesus. The dates for these are Monday 20th January with another date late spring to be confirmed. Come along to these and bring a friend!

Mugs & Muffins Coffee Morning on Monday 17 January between 10.00 - 11.30 am. Come along for a morning to chat with one another over a mug of tea/coffee and a muffin.

Connections Women's Ministry has a full programme ahead. I would encourage women to come along to any of the evenings or mornings planned as it would be great to get to know you all more - even if you can only attend one thing it would be great to see you. It is my prayer that all women at West will continue to encourage and build each other up, just as you have been doing.

May you all know God's love and peace this Christmas time as we remember Emmanuel - God with us, not only at Christmas time but always"

Louise xxx



Thank you to everyone who donated to United Appeal throughout the year. We have managed to reach our annual target, set by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of just over £36,000.

If you haven't yet donated and would like to, please use the envelopes in the seat backs in the church or office counter, You can also contact the office for details of our United Appeal account. It would be great to get a head start towards our 2020 target!



Celebrating 100 years

West Church has its 3rd centenary! Mrs Margaret Stevenson, celebrated her 100th birthday earlier this year and we extend our love to her in this her special year.

Happy Belated Birthday Margaret.



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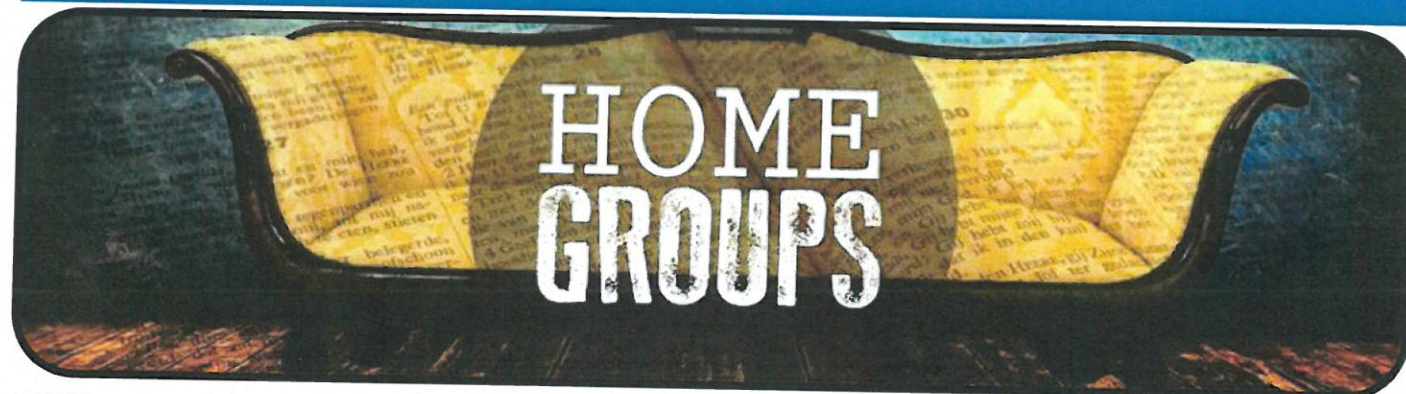
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A PLACE TO STEP OUT OF THE RAT RACE

by Maureen Bennett, Discipleship Action Team



In many ways, home groups or small groups are to the main church family, what cells are to the body. Cells are the building blocks of life and the fundamental unit of structure and life in all living organisms.

As a church family we meet together to worship but it is in the smaller cell that we grow, pray and are spiritually nourished. We all face different circumstances which are painful, disorientating, celebratory or disappointing; but it is good to be able to walk with one another at such times, dig into the Bible to learn what it has to say, to pray together and to learn from one another.

Most small groups meet in homes (hence the name) but there are some that meet in church and when we start a new group, the venue tends to be church. Often new groups spring out of an Alpha course although not exclusively so. It is anticipated that another new group will begin in January 2020.

Most groups meet fortnightly and have a facilitator and a host. The main components of the gathering are fun and friendship, study and prayer and of course, some food and drink. Some groups also have a time of worship and most arrange social events from time to time. Many help with the tea and coffee rota between the Sunday morning services. At least one group has an annual retreat, while another

collectively helps with Sycamore Club. A few of the groups grew out of a shared interest such as sailing or a shared identity such as young mums. Perhaps there is another that could be birthed in this way—artists, footballers, cooks, golfers, techies or just hungry disciples of Jesus.

The facilitators tend to meet a couple of times each year and share highlights or occasionally some issues their groups may be experiencing; responses to the various study materials from the recommended list are also discussed.

Leaders and members of the groups were invited to offer some comments on why they were involved. You will see the recurring threads of friendship, support, prayer and the opportunity to learn together from Bible Study.

Comments:

- House group means friendship at a deep level, hospitality given and received, worship (we are fortunate in having guitar and ukulele players); the great privilege of praying together; reading God's word, sharing our insights and encouraging one another through life's ups and downs.

- A source of strength, of warmth, of love for Jesus and each other.

- It's a place where we can step out of the rat race and be honest and accepted for who we truly are. We can share our struggles and know we are not alone and are truly supported and cared for.

- We can connect with one another and pray for our individual needs.

"No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main".



John Doone 1624

- Apart from the craic and the warmth of the group, I really appreciate the preparation of those who lead, often with an unusual and thought provoking twist.
- I was nervous before I joined the group but I felt the bond within our group straightaway. It feels a safe place to share and everyone is really genuine, a special group of people brought together by God.
- Our group has bonded very quickly and has a special unity that is God-given. We are free to share needs and hurts as well as things that cause us to rejoice. I really love this special group and everyone in it.
- Home groups are a great way to get to know more people from church and develop friendships with other believers. We also receive wonderful teaching from the Bible from our leaders, leaving us with food for thought; we are able to express our own thoughts or queries regarding the Bible passages we are studying, and in a safe and welcoming environment.
- Words about the small group (Ephesians 2:22) and to Him you too are becoming built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His spirit.
- Great studies; great challenges; great encouragement; great leadership; great people; great camaraderie; great craic; great suppers.
- Home groups provide a facility to study and discuss a theme in a way that allows people to express how the study and discussion impacts them, which is not possible in a congregational meeting.
- I look forward to the Bible Study as it opens up our minds—we can be stuck in our own mindsets.
- It's great craic and fellowship once a fortnight and in between. It's great to help lead this bunch of men.
- A place where, as a group of men, we can regularly take time out of our busy lives and study God's word, pray for one another and those we know while sorting out the world and enjoying the banter between us (and the supper is great!!).

DIVORCE *Care*

Find help and healing for the hurt of separation and divorce

DivorceCare is a support group for people who are experiencing the pain of separation and divorce, and its purpose is that those who come to find help for their hurts, discover hope for the future, and experience God's healing through it all. Many are struggling alone and often feel stigmatized or even rejected within. The DivorceCare programme takes a Biblical approach to separation and divorce and related issues such as reconciliation, remarriage, forgiveness, and the effects on children and families.

The next DivorceCare course begins on Thursday 2nd January 2020 at 7.30 pm in the Committee Room. You can sign up on the noticeboard or contact the church office and further information is available at www.divorcecare.org

We are also currently considering running another DC4K (DivorceCare for Kids) programme which is a great help and healing for children. If you would be interested in finding out more about this programme please contact Vic Croft or Kim Wright through the Church Office.

HOW OVER 35 YEARS OF FOSTERING HAS CHANGED OUR LIVES

by Mandy & Bill Johnston

Having just said goodbye to our lovely cuddly one year old foster daughter, who we have had with us since 12 days old, I felt compelled to write down some of our experiences in moving children on...especially to adoption.

We have fostered for over 35 years, starting when our oldest 2 daughters were 6 and 3. We had some struggles with having our own babies and felt very blessed and privileged to have 2 healthy girls.

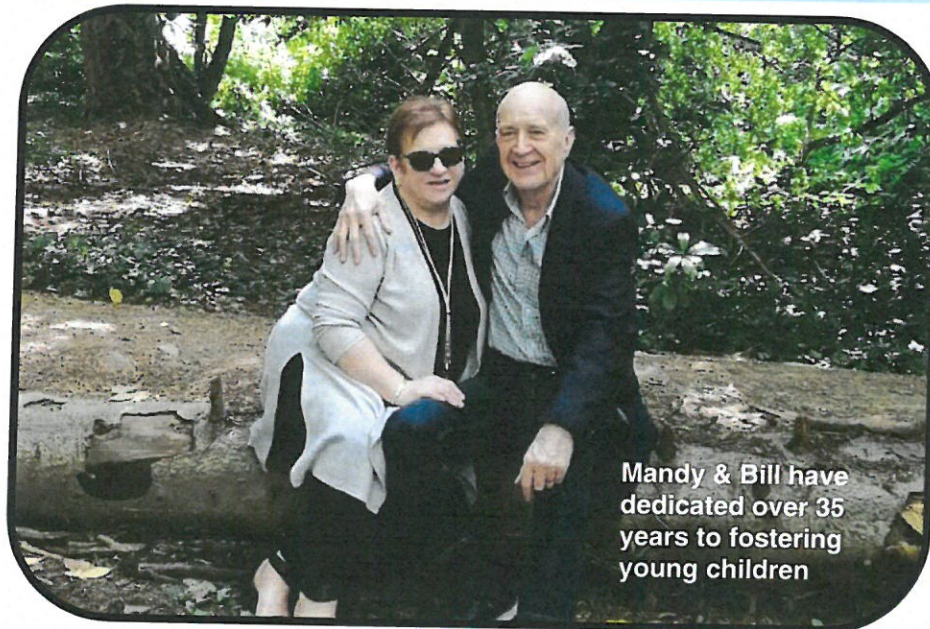
After a period of childminding and hearing more and more about the need for foster carers, we took the plunge, initially caring for 'pre-adoption' babies. In those days that was generally for around 6 months!

We, as a family, enjoyed the whole experience so much that we progressed to helping in the short term and 'emergency' side of things which resulted in a very large family and a couple of house moves!!!!

Over the years our greatest pleasure (and pain) is in welcoming a young baby, sometimes from the day of birth, or toddler into our family and preparing it for a stable and secure future with an adoptive family. The knowledge of giving that child a firm attachment which they can successfully transfer to a forever family is extremely rewarding.

The most common statement that I hear from people who speak to me about our babies is, 'I couldn't do what you do as I could never part with them'. My response is, I never part from them in my heart but I have the satisfaction of knowing they are growing and thriving after having the most difficult start in their lives.

We will never forget any of our children—we lost count years ago but it must be around 80. We are thrilled to still have many of them coming to visit and many others whose adoptive parents write or



send cards at Christmas with little photos and updates. We so appreciate them all taking the time to contact us. We have been to weddings, welcomed new babies and been invited to some special birthday parties!

Preparing a child for a move is never easy. If they are still under a year it is easier but not without its trials. Babies are totally dependent on their 'carer' and form a natural bond because that's what they do! We cannot 'switch off' or 'stay detached' as some may suggest we have to do to get through the process! We love them and nurture them just as if they are our own. Preparing young babies for a move is more about preparing ourselves and then the new family. We work hard on the relationship with adoptive parents so that we can transfer the little important things about their new baby to avoid upset and frustration for both them and the baby. Writing details down in a little notebook before the first meeting about routine, types of cry, sleeping habits, brand of bottle, how they like to be held when feeding (we have had

had some babies that have a particular preference to which arm they prefer!) - all these help everyone with transferring the little bundle with as little trauma as possible.

In recent years I have discovered the wonderful app that does photo books and free prints! Nowadays having devices that take photographs any where, any time is a big plus for us as we can have a very good record of baby's development and progress. These, along with a memory stick, provide the picture history that is vital for the child's life story.

Memory boxes are very useful. You can pop little things like their hospital name bands or their first shoes, first outfit, lock of hair, favourite baby toy etc. Also any little gifts from birth parents or relatives are important to add. It's a good idea to keep cards, letters or anything that will be a link to their birth story.

I think perhaps the really tough and emotionally draining part of moving on is when a child is old enough to have some understanding of what is happening. This depends very much on the child's personality,

past experience and age. Two year olds can all be very different in their response to introducing a new family. Some can be very sociable and others may have had a trauma in their early days which has possibly left a reluctance to trust new faces.

This is where the importance of building a good rapport with the incoming family is vital. We have found acting skills that we didn't know we had! When we are aching inside with the thought that this child that we have grown to love will be leaving us is a few short weeks, it is hard to pretend to be happy and excited!

The same can be said for the conversation that has to be had with this child. Some little ones are more understanding than others and it is up to us, with the support and guidance of the social worker or adoption team, to pitch that little chat with the right amount of enthusiasm and excitement.

We have been so impressed over the years with the support from our adoption social workers who are very in tune with all the different strands involved with making a successful adoption placement. They will take time to get to know the child and our family and use appropriate toys and books to drop little suggestions about new family. Very often adoptive couples are encouraged to make videos or photo books to tell a story of them and show their house and the child's new bedroom etc. This is a particularly useful tool for us to use when having 'the conversation'.

Welcoming adopters is very often easier than we think! We have made some lifelong friends and have been very touched by the obvious joy that these children bring to people who have lots of space in their hearts for a child who deserves a happy life.

They usually meet with us first

away from our home to enable lots of chat about the child and we are there to answer the many questions that they always have. Then the couple will come to meet the child in our home. This is always a little nerve wracking as no one has any idea how the child will react! The atmosphere is something that we know is very important so making sure the child senses a relaxed and calm mood with the knowledge that everyone is friendly and happy around them. This is where the acting skills come into play again!

The emotional roller coaster can continue for anything from a few days to two weeks depending on how things progress. Every day we muster from somewhere, the enthusiasm to let the child know we are excited for their day ahead, outings or trips to their new home.

When the final day comes to say goodbye we are at a point where we need it all to be over. It can be very draining and holding it together is exhausting. It is so important not to show upset. However it is also important to still show how much you love the child, they need to feel a sense of permission to love their new family but still know they are loved by us.

We have usually managed to move all their belongings by degrees throughout the introduction week so there is not a mountain of toys or clothes to move on the last day. We will have had a little party for our family to say goodbye the night before so a gift of a toy will be going with them with a letter from us to go in their memory box.

The final goodbye is short and we say goodbyes in as controlled a mood as possible. The moment after the car drives off is when it all spills out. We have some quiet reflective time and then take ourselves out for a coffee or just a

drive! No words are spoken for quite some time but the first text or phone call from either the couple or the social worker to reassure us that all is well gives us all a boost, then my link worker will contact us to sympathise. My parting words with her are usually to ask when the next one is arriving!

One of our special memories will be a baby that was placed with us on the day they were born. This baby was very stressed and took a lot of work to decrease the levels of anxiety present. The child thrived and had a high level of parental contact. We worked with social services, contact centres and got to know the family. It was our great pleasure to be able to see that family move on after much input from various agencies, to a place where they could care for their little one themselves. In today's fostering circles it is rare but thankfully it does happen. We are privileged to have been a part of that process.

As Christians we always believe that the children placed in our care are meant to be with us and we accept our role as an opportunity to share God's love with, not only the child, but the natural family too. Sometimes all we can do is pray into the situation, but we strongly believe that nothing we do in His name is ever wasted and even if we never know the end of the story we trust that God's hand remains firmly in place over their lives. I am writing this in between placements so probably that's why I can! I could write dozens of stories about the happy and not so happy experiences of our fostering career but I'd rather have a bundle of gurgles, burps and everything else that comes with a small human!!!

Bill and Mandy Johnston

A TRUE STORY OF COURAGE IN CONGO

Glynis Rickard shares her thoughts on the visit of Maud Kells

“What am I doing here?” I asked myself as I sat among many elderly gentlemen at the Men’s Fellowship one Friday morning in October. Yet from somewhere I had picked up a flyer for this meeting and knowing nothing about Maud Kells, for some reason I just felt compelled to go.

After tea, coffee and a chat in the Welcome Area everyone moved into the church which was well filled and the meeting commenced. There seemed to me to be a quiet bond between the men. They prayed for one another and certainly enjoyed their praise. I loved “When peace like a river” and “Be Still and know” (I had never heard this one) were sung - I found these both quite moving. It was also good of them to allow women to come along to this special occasion.



Then up she stepped...this small elderly lady dressed in a floral dress and white jacket, rather unsuitable for autumn I felt. Well I thought I could talk, but for nearly one hour she hardly stopped to draw breath. She had us riveted to our seats, listening to every word about her life and work in Congo. A life truly well lived and all in obedience to God.

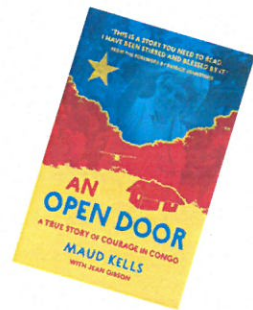
Two things struck me - the first was that as a young girl, when she first became a Christian, she committed herself fully and unselfishly to serving God and others. The second was how God led her through her nursing training, equipped and protected her to do His work.

We also discovered there was a reason for the clothes she was wearing. When war broke out two planes were sent to get the missionaries out, but they would only land

if there was a white sheet on the ground to show it was safe. A hostile crowd removed the sheet as the planes approached so the pilots turned away, but at the last minute someone was quick thinking enough to tell Maud to take the white jacket she was wearing and throw it on the ground. To everyone’s relief the planes landed and they were all rescued.

As for the floral dress, it too had a story. She had been wearing it one evening when she was attacked whilst walking home. I loved her good Ulster spirit when she thought, “You won’t scare me. You won’t get the better of me.” So she wrestled with the gunman and in the process she was shot in the shoulder. Hence she wore the dress, complete with the bullet holes, but minus the blood!

Maud illustrated her talk with lots of slides showing the work she had done building hospitals, homes and schools, which helped to enrich the lives of the people in Congo. What a difference her selfless life has made there!



Monday 2 December 7:00pm

Lights of Love

An evening of traditional carols and readings.
Join us in remembering those babies and loved ones who are no longer with us.

West Church, Bangor
Rathmore Road
BT19 1DF

Contact: Vic Croft on 028 9145 9688
or email: vcroft@westchurchbangor.org

sands.org.uk/lightsoflove



LESSONS FROM OBSCURITY ~ JETHRO

a TIDES PCI Resource, written by Laura McClelland

Tides is a simple resource to help you develop a regular rhythm of bible reading. As part of the vision to resource whole life disciples across our church, the aim of *Tides* is to help God's people discover afresh what regular engagement with God and His word can mean for their lives.

Tides aims to fuel the devotional lives of ordinary disciples through a rhythm of daily devotions that is accessible to all. Each weekday morning, *Tides* provides you with a section of God's word to read, a short reflection sharing what this could mean for your life, and a simple way for you to respond. This is a home-grown resource, created and written by contributors from right across the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and currently being accessed by over 2,500 people.

If you are hungry to read God's Word, reflect on what He is saying and respond in your daily life then join this growing movement of Bible reading by registering at www.presbyterianireland.org/Resources/Prayer/TIDES.aspx

The following article is a *Tides* daily devotion, over the course of one week, written by Laura McClelland.

Lessons from Obscurity - Jethro, Day 1

Read Exodus 18:5-12 *Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, together with Moses' sons and wife, came to him in the wilderness, where he was camped near the mountain of God. Jethro had sent word to him, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons." So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent. Moses told his father-in-law about everything the Lord had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the Lord had saved them. Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel in rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. He said, "Praise be to the Lord, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly." Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other*

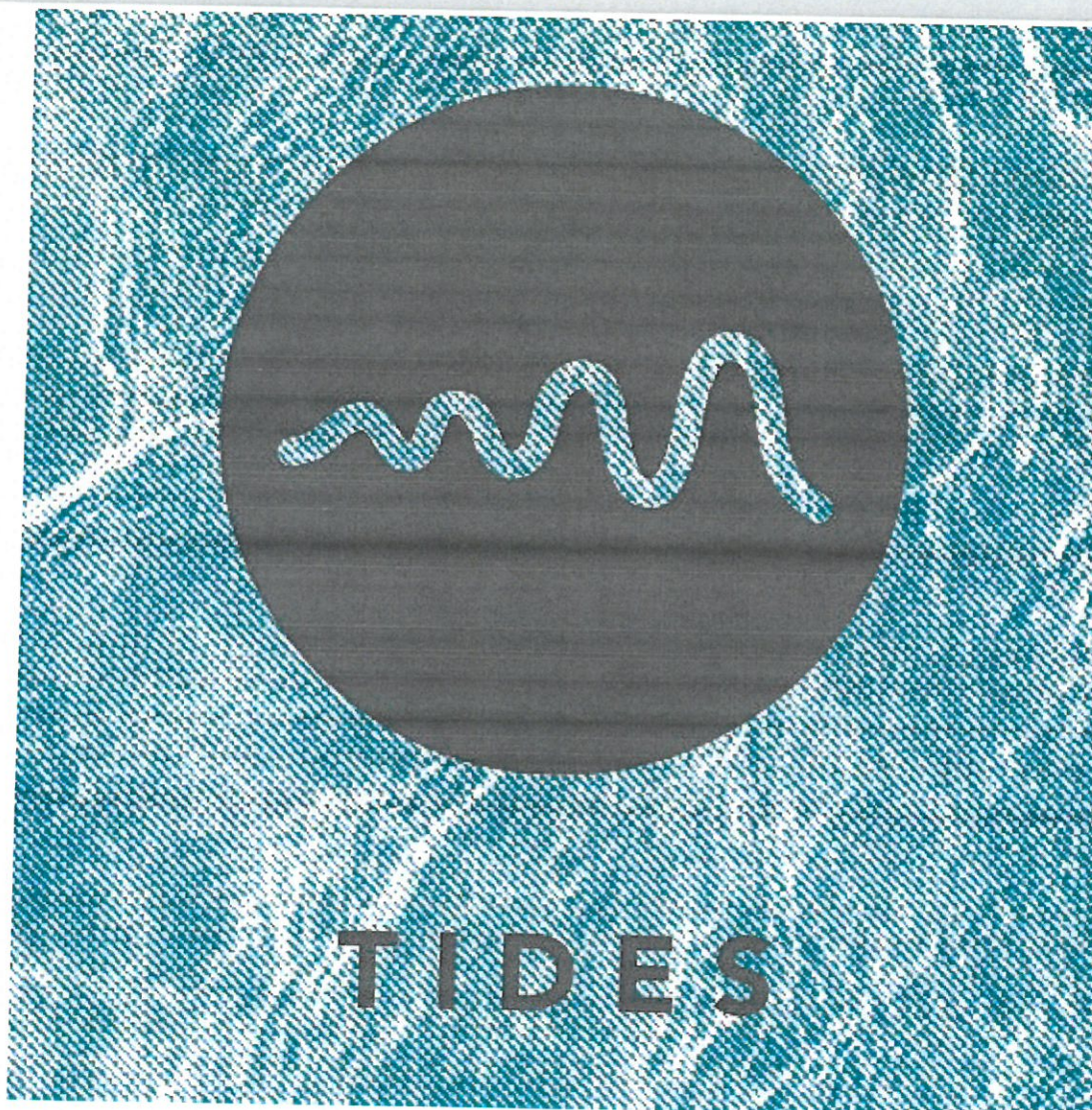
sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

Reflect Jethro first appears in the Bible under the name Reuel in Exodus 2-3. In fact, it was Jethro's sheep that Moses was tending to when he encountered the burning bush. Jethro, a pagan priest by trade, was one who was seeking more, seeking spirituality, seeking God in all the wrong places.

Over the years, he developed a strong, honest and respectful relationship with his son-in-law. Their exchange here shows a deep, loving connection between the two men. This exemplary in-law relationship provides the backdrop for this extraordinary turnaround in Jethro's life - His realization that the God Moses worshipped was the one, true, all-powerful God.

Jethro's coming to faith as a result of Moses' testimony is a powerful reminder that those outside of our faith are watching. We should take every opportunity to share the wonderful things God has done. You never know how God will use your openness about your faith to transform the lives of others.

Respond Sometimes it feels



harder to share Jesus with relatives or those very close to us. Moses' example was simply to be honest about what God had been doing in his life. What is God doing in your life? Who could you share that with? Pray for that specific person and take opportunities to share God's work in your life with them.

What is God doing in your life?

Who could you share that with?

Lessons from Obscurity - Jethro, Day 2

Read Exodus 18:13-18 *The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide be-*

the parties and inform them of God's decrees and instructions." Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.

God is powerful and God provides

Reflect God is powerful and God provides, but often not in the ways we expect. Here we see Jethro beginning to give Moses leadership advice. New to following God and from a pagan background, should Moses ignore this 'secular' wisdom? No. The wisdom Jethro would offer was not of a spiritual nature, but administrative. It didn't contradict anything God had specified but was for the good of the people and of Moses.

Sometimes God provides just what we need in a miraculous, sudden, mind-blowing way. Sometimes He provides in the faithful friend, the small kindness, the doctor's treatment plan, the everyday. Never close your eyes to the quiet ways God is at work. Never limit Him to the dramatic and miss all He does in the stillness. Never close your ears to His whisper. Don't miss God's work, simply because it hasn't arrived in the package you expected.

Respond If we look for Him, we will see Him. We can drown out all of life's noise and only praise the one who is worthy of our praise (also refer to 1 Kings 19:11-13)

Lessons from Obscurity - Jethro, Day 3

Read Exodus 18:17-19a *Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you".*

Reflect I don't know how you feel when someone tells you the job you are doing is a bad one. I know I'm not a fan! Here we have a beautiful example of both giving and receiving less than favourable feedback. Jethro begins with brutal honesty. It must have been hard for Moses to hear. However, notice Jethro's motive-love. He was looking out for the best interests of the people and of Moses himself. His motive was helpful, kind and focused on the greater good. His practical advice would ensure smoother running and would prevent burnout for Moses.

Moses listens with humility. We will go on to discover that he takes Jethro's advice and discovers a new freedom is his leadership. Instead of confrontation, defensiveness and wounding each other, perhaps this can be an opportunity for growth, for positive change, for building up.

Respond It is important to THINK before we speak. Is it...

- True?
- Helpful?
- Inspiring?
- Necessary?
- Kind?

Examine your motives when confronting a difficulty. Seek to build up, not tear down. And when confronted, listen with humility, perhaps there is a lesson to learn from the wisdom of others.

THINK
before we speak

Lessons from Obscurity - Jethro, Day 4

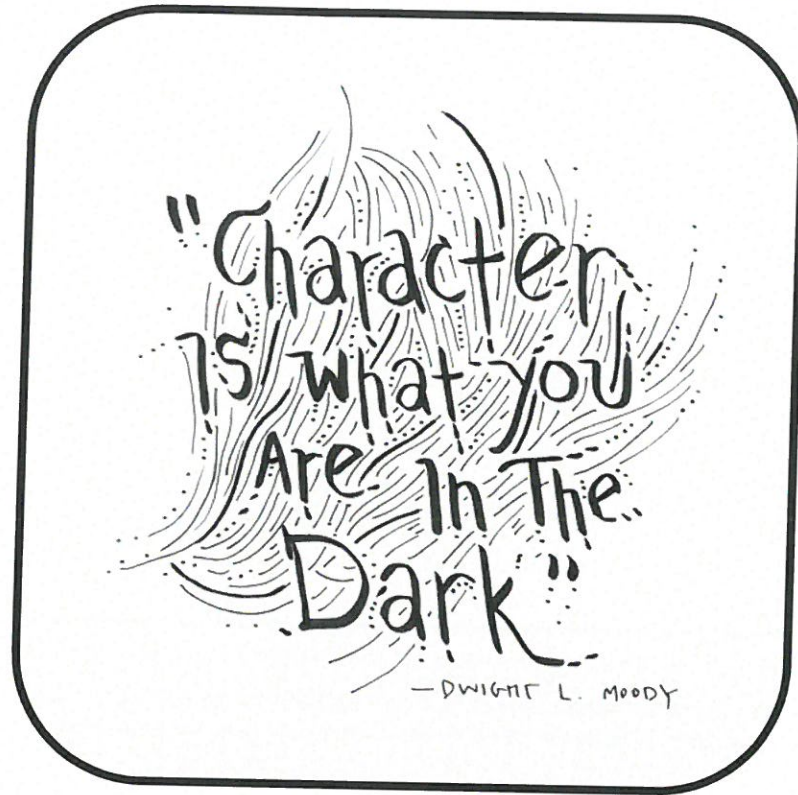
Read Exodus 18:19-23 "Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to love and how they are to behave, But select capable men from all the people - men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain - and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load light, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."

Reflect Jethro's advice is life changing for Moses. The Egyptian style of leadership was dictatorial. Jethro recommends empowering people, delegating. This frees up Moses to focus on teaching and not to be bogged down in administration.

Jethro is specific about who should be appointed as leaders - men who fear God, are trustworthy and are capable. The character of these new leaders was paramount. Each was to be appointed over 10s, 50s, 100s, 1000s. Recognising leadership capacity and the skill set of each appointed man was vital. Would they thrive in closer relationships and therefore oversee 10? Or were they a visionary who would be able to mobilise a system that would oversee 1000 people.

Each role required a different kind of leader, but each role was important. Character came first, before charisma, talent or popularity. When appointing leaders in any role, we must consider character above all else.

Respond "Character is what you are in the dark." D.L. Moody
Pray: "Lord, help me to love with integrity, to be who I am in you in public and in private. Help me grow



in character as I walk with you. And help me to place greater value on character than popularity, charisma or talent. I want to know You more and know more of You in me. Help me, God. Amen."

Lessons from Obscurity - Jethro, Day 5

Read Exodus 18:23-27 "If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied." Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves. Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and Jethro returned to his own country.

Reflect Leadership is a tough job. For its many joys and honours, it also involves hard graft, relational investment, sacrifice, criticism, disappointments and unrealistic expectations. Moses has

a champion in Jethro. Someone who can see how hard he is working and can see a better way of utilising Moses's gifts. Jethro speaks not to criticise or have things done his own way, but to empower and release Moses into his God-given role over the people.

I urge you to champion your leaders. Empower them in their role. Resource them in their weaknesses. Support them through their tough-spots. Remember their humanity, their families, their sacrifice. Lift them up in your prayers, build them up in your words. Confront with love as your motive. Be gracious in your expectations. Encourage, inspire and love.

Respond Think of a leader in your church. (Bonus points if it is someone you have difficulty with!) Do something practical and kind for them to build them up. It may be a note of encouragement, a meal for their family, an offer of help, praying with them.

Tweet about your experience using #lovemyleader so we can share in the joy of encouragement. Consider making it a regular thing to build up those who lead the people of God.

ENCOURAGE : INSPIRE : LOVE

Changes in Districts : New address

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 101 Margaret Webb | 604 Suzanne Bole & family |
| 104 Phyllis Bolton | 604 Stanley & Sharon Dornan & family |
| 304 Claire Byrne & family | 604 Karen McDonnell & Will |
| 401 Geoffrey & Hilary Henderson | 999 Pat McLeer |
| 501 Joanne Stevenson | 999 Margaret Stevenson |
| 504 Paul & Lynne Carson & family | |

WELCOME to the following new members: District

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 102 Margaret Yeates | 904 Donna Migan, James, Charlies & Daniel |
| 602 Luke & Lyndsey Neal & Rylie | 1002 Ian James |
| 604 Anne Coulter | |

Weddings at West

23/08/19 Lyndsay Cameron & Colin Todd

REMOVE the following who have transferred congregations: District

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 504 Paul & Barbara Wallace | 1002 Cathy Courtney |
| 1301 Chris & Beth Sung | |

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

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 05/08/19 Lilian Marshall | 31/10/19 John Palmer |
| 15/08/19 Freda McDaid | 09/11/19 Betty McCrea |
| 07/09/19 Ellen Dines | 11/11/19 Peggy Russell |
| 21/10/19 Maurice Stevenson | |

Please remember to contact the Church Office if you:

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



Contact the office on 028 9145 9688 or email: office@westchurchbangor.org

BUEN CAMINO! (HAPPY CAMINO!)

by Andy Heron

The Camino de Santiago, known in English as the Way of Saint James, is a network of pilgrims' ways leading to the shrine of the apostle Saint James the Great in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia in northwestern Spain, where tradition has it that the remains of the saint are buried. (WIKIPEDIA)

When a friend of mine, Paul, asked me in November 2018 if I'd be interested in 'doing the Camino,' I gave it some thought, but didn't decide to go until a few months later. By the time I made up my mind, Paul had mentioned it to a few other guys, and eventually the number grew to 7... So, on the morning of 21st September 2019, seven middle-aged men with varying degrees of middle-aged spread, most of whom were not inveterate walkers, set off on their big adventure.

Several people from West Church had already walked the same stretch of the route that we were going to do, on what is known as the French Way (or Camino Frances).

Of that French Way, we would do around 100km (it was actually around 120 km!), which is the minimum allowed to qualify as an 'official' pilgrim. Their advice was very helpful, particularly the encouragement to do the stretch in 6 rather than 5 days. Our feet were mighty glad we took on board their recommendations!

A few weeks before leaving, I felt it would be good to do something useful with the walk. So, the idea came that I would ask for people to sponsor me and that any monies collected would go to our United Appeal Fund. I had in mind a target of around 50 sponsors at 10p per km, aiming for a total of £500. Little was I to imagine how many sponsors would respond inside and outside West Church, and how immensely encouraging it was to end up with a total of around £4,000 (including extra money coming as a result of Gift Aid)! Thank you to all those Westies and others who responded so generously!

People 'do the Camino' for various reasons. Many are Roman Catholics who go on a religious pilgrimage. Indeed, we saw many

co-walkers from all over the world who were clearly heading for Santiago da Compostela as pilgrims. There was even a Mexican group who'd brought along their own priest and had an open-air mass along the path. Others go because they want to 'shower their heads,' as we say in Ulster - so they seek the opportunity for solitude and reflection which the ordinary run of life does not allow. Others again enjoy the physical challenge, and for them it is more of a fitness exercise than anything else.

I wasn't sure before going exactly what reason motivated each of the 7 men in our group. Personally speaking I had no clear objective in mind, but thought it would be a challenge and had heard from others how much they'd enjoyed the experience. The many practice walks I did along the coastal path between Holywood and Groomsport provided me with wonderful times of quiet prayer & meditation, which in itself was one great reason to prepare for the Camino trek.

The route we took was very busy, and I would say it would be difficult enough to find the space necessary on that stretch if you really wanted to be completely alone and looking for meditative isolation. One couple I chatted with urged me to do the walk in France because it was a much more authentic experience (the fact that they were French, of course, had nothing to do with it, n'est-ce pas?)

Mid-week the 7 of us in our group decided to split up and make the next day one for walking each man on his own. I found that to be the most difficult day, because walking along chatting with the other guys made the time and distance fly in. For me, the main benefit actually was the company of a super bunch of guys, most of whom were complete strangers at the outset, and who became great mates by the end. It makes me think, though, that if we spent more time alone with God ('walking with the Lord,' as the Old Testament puts it), we would learn to appreciate His company and fellowship much more.

I can't end without making some confessions! The food was so cheap and copious that several of us put on weight in spite of walking so many kilometres (ah, the pilgrim's life!) Also, at several places where we spent the night, a single room was available (the other nights we were two, three or four to a room). Let me give you a little tip if you're doing a group exercise like we did and you want to get a single room as often as possible - pretend you are an awful snorer and that you'd keep any room-mates awake if they shared with you! That trick worked for me, and I had a single room twice out of the seven nights!!! Shush! Don't let the other six guys know my secret!



7 weary pilgrims (Andy pictured 3rd from right) at Santiago Cathedral



Andy, pictured far right with his fellow 'pilgrims'



A Camino de Santiago signpost

THE ONLY HOPE IS JESUS

by Anna McDowell

My name is Anna McDowell and I am in my second year of studying Law at the University of York.

Life at West Church played an important role in my school life; I started coming to Young West when I was in year 9. I have also been involved with J Club, YoungLife and Wyldlife. This September, I had the amazing opportunity to travel to Lebanon with a team from Open Doors, which I heard about through a family member. This team was made up of people from seven different churches across the UK. Enjoy some of my life changing experiences in the following article.

In September of this year, I had the incredible opportunity to travel to Lebanon with a team from Open Doors. Here, I was helping to run a children's Bible camp for Lebanese and Syrian refugee children.

Visiting the refugee camp was a very eye opening experience. The whole team came to terms with the fact that the only hope that these people have is Jesus. I was surprised to find out that they all just want to go back to Syria, despite it being a war zone and all their land has been confiscated by the government. When asking what they wanted prayer for, the families I visited replied that the desires of their hearts was peace for Syria so that they can return.

The church is doing amazing work in this camps to support the refugees physically, emotionally and spiritually. There are several women who have come to faith, but

PHOTOGRAPHS HAVE BEEN REMOVED AT THE REQUEST OF OPEN DOORS BUT ARE AVAILABLE IN THE HARD COPY OF THE MAGAZINE FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

were also able to play, make crafts and have two meals. There were several children that we know of who accepted Jesus into their lives at the camp. Some of the children however were scared to talk about Jesus due to their Muslim upbringing. There was one child who would constantly ask Allah for forgiveness throughout the camp as she felt she was sinning. Some of the older girls would also try and make their friends sit down during the worship. However, the team are all praying that their hearts would be softened to the truth. Overall, everything went smoothly; logistically, we had enough food/ crafts for everyone and the children were mostly well behaved and responsive. We are extremely thankful for the opportunity to serve Lebanese and Syrian children.

We also had the opportunity to visit a nursing home. The staff's enthusiasm was very admirable and it was lovely to have the opportunity to sing hymns with the residents and spend time with them.

I am very thankful for the amazing people out there. Recently in the news, we have seen the difficulties Lebanon are currently experiencing with underlying political and economic issues and how this is leading to unrest. Despite this, I was able to see how much potential this country has and how much love the people have to give. Please pray for them that they will be safe, and that they will soon find peace. Pray for hope for these families and that they will learn to love Jesus and can be safe to show it.

Pictured left, Anna with some of the refugees and above, some of the children from camp showing off their crafts and above right, helping out at a refugee camp

can't tell their husbands as it is too dangerous for them. The crime rates are also very high in these camps. The team from the church in Lebanon have so much enthusiasm to serve and it is so inspiring to see their passion to share Jesus with the Syrian refugees. These camps go on throughout the year where other teams from Open Doors and similar organisations go to Lebanon. Pray that they will endure and that they have enough resources to do the life changing work that they are doing.

The children's camps we ran were great. The kids were so enthusiastic when doing the songs and were very responsive to the stories. In the small group time we had with them, they were asking lots of questions and remembering the stories perfectly. At the camp, we



Open Doors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide



younglife

CAPERNAUM

Young Life in Northern Ireland has been up and running for 9 years. We have seen God bless this ministry with many kids meeting Christ and growing in their faith; equipping young people as they start out in junior leadership roles; student staff and full time staff taking the lead in key areas of ministry, innovation and growth in contacting un-reached kids; and new YL ministries starting in Belfast. Over the past few months we have been drawn to the teaching of Ezekiel 36:23 where God says, 'HE will make his name holy, THROUGH us, BEFORE the eyes of the watching world.' It is ultimately God's responsibility to make his name holy and our responsibility to be obedient. That is our heart for ministry amongst all teenagers across Ireland.

YL is committed to reaching ALL kids with the gospel and has a ministry specifically for teenagers with additional needs. The Bible tells of four men eager for their friend with a disability to meet Jesus. They carried him to a home in a town called Capernaum where Jesus was teaching. Desperate to assist their friend, they cut a hole in the roof to lower him before Jesus. Moved by their bold faith, Jesus restored the man to wholeness and health. The lives of all five men were never the same. We call our ministry to teenagers with additional needs "Capernaum," because like these friends in the Bible, our lives are never the same after we spend time together with Jesus. Like the friends in the story, we move through barriers that can accompany having disabilities, inviting people of all abilities to experience Young Life and be transformed by God's love.

Young Life Capernaum, started in America in 1986. Since then it has grown with over 300 Capernaum ministries in America and around the world. However, there are currently no Capernaum ministries in the UK, and so we are passionate to start YL Capernaum ministry in NI and provide a space for those aged 11-19 years to have fun together and hear and see the love of Jesus in action. We believe that teenagers of all abilities want a place where they're accepted, where they can have meaningful friendships, where they can experience fun and adventure. They also want to discover their purpose in the world. It is our goal to grow a team of Young Life Capernaum leaders who develop relationships with teenagers with additional needs where all are invited, celebrated and needed. YL Capernaum ministries are led by caring adults and equips and supports YL teenagers to come alongside and befriend their friends with special needs. This provides a wonderful opportunity for teenagers to use the gifts God has given them to love and serve others.

Given that West Church has additional needs ministries for children (Special Friends and Little Acorns) and for adults (Sycamore Club) we are excited to pilot 3 events specifically for teenagers with additional needs- a Christmas Club in Dec, one in Feb over half-term holiday and one over the Easter holidays. After the three pilot clubs, we will determine if there is a desire for a weekly or fortnightly club, and if so, where and when this could be held in the wider Bangor area.

Young Life is for every teenager — regardless of ability, race, religious tradition or culture.

How you can help:

- Please pray for our first YL Capernaum Club in December. Pray for the teenagers who will attend.
- Pray for the development of a regular YL Capernaum ministry in the Bangor area from September 2020.
- Pray for Eden McRoberts, our student staff member, who will be taking a lead in developing this ministry alongside other YL staff and supporters.
- Visit <https://www.younglife.org/ForEveryKid/Capernaum/Pages/default.aspx> for more information about YL Capernaum ministries.

In the meantime, if you would like any further information or to chat about this ministry, please do not hesitate to speak with Sonia Mawhinney or any of the Young Life team.



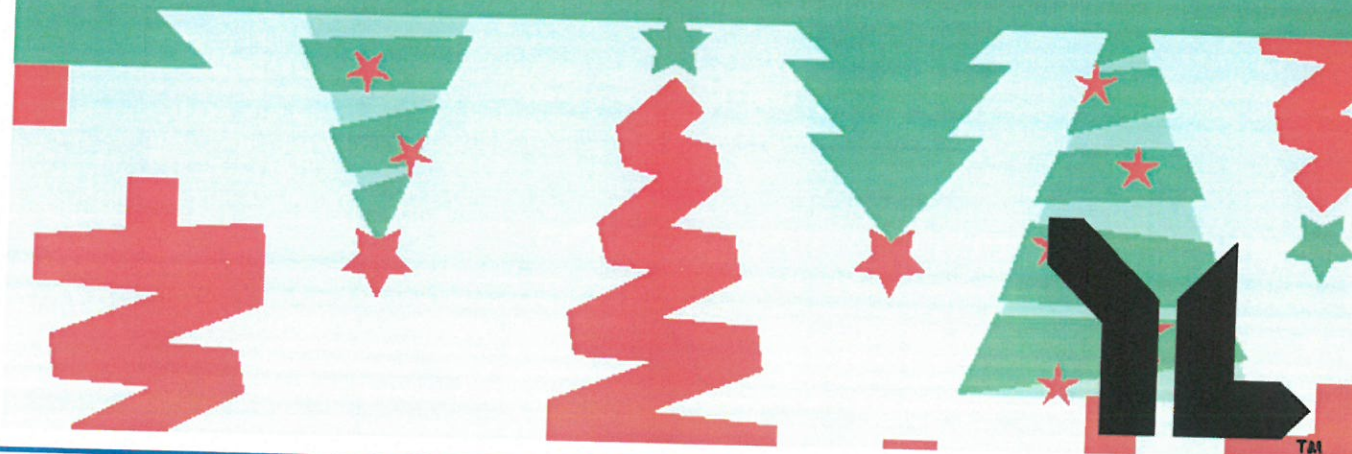
YOU'RE INVITED!

YOUNG LIFE CAPERNAUM

A FUN FILLED CHRISTMAS EVENT FOR
TEENAGERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

MONDAY 9TH DECEMBER
6:30PM - 8:00PM
WEST CHURCH BANGOR

An event specifically tailored for teenagers with Special Educational Needs that will include crafts, games and a Christmas Nativity message!



A PACKED JOY FILLED ADVENTURE

by Andrew McClelland, Youth & Children's Worker

It's been a packed joy filled adventure since September in the youth and children's ministry of West. We have been blown away by what God is doing in the lives of young people and children, and simply put we want more. We want to see God move more, to stir young people and children to follow Jesus not just for a season but for their full lives.

We want to see young people and children develop a deep rooted joy in their lives beyond the circumstances they face, and to see a real revival of the spirit happen in their hearts. It's been a full on season since September, but we are so thankful to our incredible leaders and volunteers, God is on the move and we cannot wait to see what is next.

As well as our usual weekly programmes (Young West, JClub, Coffee Bar, West Tot's, Younglife, Wyldlife, Deeper, Small Groups) I wanted to mention and highlight a few specific events.



Above, the children enjoying JClub songs, and below right, our amazing team, of Young West leaders

Glow party

Halloween is such an interesting time of year. With the shops filled with scary things we wanted to be able to provide an alternative that speaks out against the darkness that is out there. We wanted to teach children that 'perfect love casts out all fear.' We had a lot of fun during the night, songs, crafts, memory verses, food, as well as an animal roadshow. The children got to hold and see lots of different animals from not so scary (lizards, hedgehogs, tortoises, chinchilla etc...) to those that make you shiver – snakes, lots of big snakes. We have some very brave boys and girls in church.



Prayer space

Back in September in conjunction with Bangor Cares week we hosted a Prayer Space for all of Grange Park Primary School. We decorated the meeting room and had every class through our door. It was a brilliant week which allowed children to express what was going on inside their heads and it was a privilege to see children share their joys, hopes, dreams with us. They could share what they were thankful for, as well as feeling safe enough to share the tougher battles they are facing. It was a brilliant week and we are very thankful to the school, parents, and volunteers who helped make the week happen.



Weekend away

It's one of the highlights in our Young West calendar. This year was our biggest to date, 95 young people and 25 leaders heading to Castlewellan Castle at the end of October. For many, a weekend away from home is where they encounter God for the first time through the worship, talks, and small groups and we got to see God move in the lives of our young people. We had a lot of fun through campfires, midnight race around the maze, park run, talent show, slip n' slides, West Olympics and more. It's such a joy to be able to spend the time with, and invest in our young people. We continue to pray for our young people to engage and encounter



If you would like to get more involved and help out with any aspect of our Youth & Children's Ministry, please speak with Andrew, Harry (our Youth Worker) or Vic (our Children's Worker). You will read how our interns are getting on in their year out on the following page.



STEPPING OUT OF OUR COMFORT ZONES

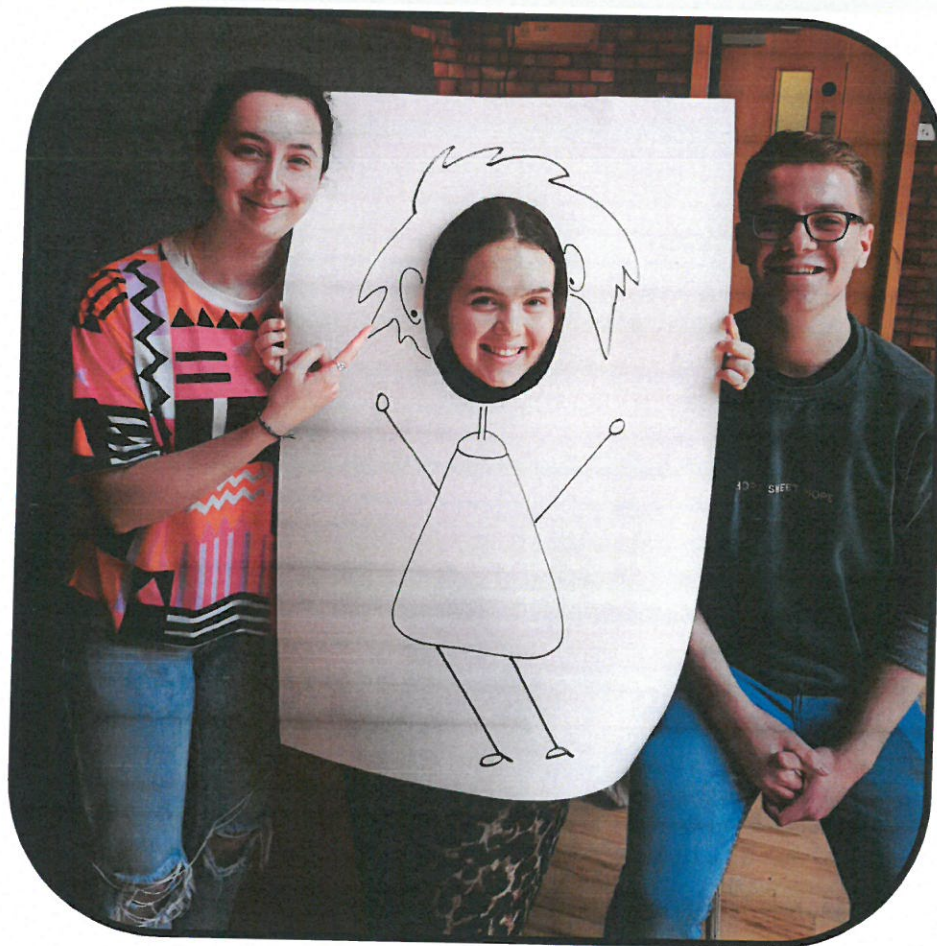
find out how our three interns are enjoying Youth & Children's ministry in West

Hey, I'm Jess and one of the Youth and Children's Interns. I have been a member of West Church since I was around three or four years old. Going through the children's and youth ministry such as Sunday School, Girls' Brigade, Easter Mission and Young West sparked a love for the West community and God. The encouragement and love that I have received over the years from being a member of West was a big reason for me to apply for the Intern position. Throughout the process of completing UCAS forms in my Upper Sixth year there was always something holding me back. I kept asking myself if the courses I was applying for were really what I wanted to do. Was I ready for such a significant change?

During this time God really had it on my heart that there was something else for me, that He had more for me to learn. During my A-levels I felt a real draw and calling to be an intern at West—to give back for the years my leaders and church community gave to me, and to be able to pour into the youth and children through the role of leadership. I wanted to dive into whatever God has planned for me.

Since we started only a few months ago so much has been achieved already. We have taken part in so many activities and events, including Girls' Brigade. From going to GB since a young age, this encouraged me to take the next step to become a Sub-Officer (after completing training), and helping with the P1 age group in the Explorer Section. I love being able to talk about the Bible whilst having fun and making cool craft.

Young West is another aspect of the Youth & Children's ministry in which we are involved. During the



Pictured left—right, Jess, Jordan & Daniel

Halloween half-term weekend, we were at Castlewellan. This was an amazing weekend of learning and development for the young people, following the theme of 'how everything is not what you think'. Being part of the planning process and leadership team makes you realise how much hard work our youth leaders put into such significant weekends. I loved being able to spend time with our teenagers and hear what's going on with their lives.

Alongside the weekend away is our Young West small groups. I have the amazing opportunity to teach and give guidance along with another leader to girls in Year 12. As an intern, assemblies are a significant aspect of teaching children of God's love for us. Since September I have been in Rathmore Primary School leading assemblies ranging from Creation to the Bible being the Word of God. Having the opportunity to minister in this format has been a great experience and allows me to reach out into the community. Recently the Youth and Children's team held an event known as "Glow", in which we tried to bring the light back into Halloween and promote the fact that yes, we were afraid, but God is there to help to overcome it. I continue to be so excited for what God has in store for me and where this internship will lead.

Hi, I'm Daniel and I am one of the Youth and Children's interns this year at West Church. I started going to West when I was in P1 and have been here ever since. After being here for 14 years and growing up through the Youth and Children's programme it made me want to give back to the place which I have called home for so long and to get more involved through leadership in Young West and up until mid-way through A2 exams that's all I thought I would do. Then after getting offers for Interactive Design courses I realised that Design was not a career that I wanted to pursue and that I wanted to work with Children and Young People. This led me to apply for the internship and God has really taken control in showing me what he has in store for my future.

In these first 3 months of being an intern I have been involved in many different activities and events. I have been into Primary schools to do Assemblies where we tell the children different Bible stories, such as Daniel in the lion's den and about how amazing God's love is for each of them. Two young people and I lead P7 JClub every other month and this has given me a change in perspective as to how much work goes into preparing and planning each week and it has been great getting to know the P7s as they mature through Sunday school and then come to Young West. In Young West I help with the Year 8s and 9s and having been their JClub leader before it is always fun to see them mature in both faith and maturity (allegedly!). In Young West I also have learnt to step out of my comfort zone and to help lead worship by playing guitar. This was such a big thing for me to overcome as I previously had refused. I was always too nervous to play in front of people but with the encouragement and prayer from the team God has really put this on my heart and even though I still get nervous God has been present and now I really enjoy doing it!

Hi I'm Jordan and this year I am interning with the Youth and Children team in West. When I completed my final year of school, I was stuck wondering how to spend the coming year as I knew I was not yet ready for university. After many prayers I truly felt God calling me to West Church to serve and do for our current young people what many leaders had done for me and that is guide, encourage and love.

At the beginning of the year alongside Bangor Cares Week we, as a Youth and Children's team, transformed an empty room in church to a 'Prayer Space' which we opened to a local primary school, Grange Park. This room was filled with many interactive, visual and fun activities which encouraged children from P1-P7 to talk about and understand how they're feeling and how to deal with tough emotions and thoughts. This week brought about many big moments for these children and God was so evidently working amongst them all. As you can imagine, this was an amazing way to start our year as interns! Also, we have had the chance to help with both planning and taking part in assemblies throughout various schools where we share a story from the Bible and an important message for the kids to hear whilst also keeping it big, loud and fun. I myself have done quite a few assemblies in Grange Park Primary which has always provided such a fun atmosphere from teachers and students as well as a great response to the biblical teachings we have shared.

Throughout the week, we help out every Tuesday morning with West Tots which is an incredible outreach for new or not so new parents to come along with their kids and have the chance to play, chat and eat with other families. I have to say, personally West Tots is genuinely one of the highlights of my week not only because of the parents or the kids, not even the buns, but because of the amazing team who work to make this outreach as wonderful as it is. I am genuinely so thankful for every laugh and prayer we have shared each week and so blessed to work alongside such brilliant women.

Within West, I help out at Wyldlife which is a youth club held every Saturday night. This will be my second year leading at this club and it has been such a great opportunity to reach out to secondary school kids, from encouraging, strong relationships and of course share so many amazing truths about Jesus and the Bible. I myself came to church through Younglife which eventually led me to Young West so for me it is such a privilege to be on the other side of that scenario and hopefully introduce God into the lives of these kids. This year so far as an intern has also encouraged me to grow and develop my leadership skills with regards to worship which has been an opportunity I am extremely grateful for as worship has always been such a huge part of my faith. I feel that God is well and truly moving in Young West and this has been so evident through the young people's response to worship so far this year; there has been such an apparent sense of freedom to openly praise God regardless of who is around them which has been so refreshing and encouraging to see. My prayer for the rest of this year is that God will continue to revive and renew Young West as we grow together and become such a strong and uplifting family.

GIRLS' BRIGADE NEWS

by Cheryl Miller

Our 2019/20 session got off to a really encouraging start at the beginning of September with a fantastic membership of 184 girls and leaders. We have 7 Brigaders currently in training for Sub Officer leadership and 2 helpers currently completing Officer training.

For anyone who happens to be about West on a Wednesday evening you will know space is of a premium given our numbers and the range of activities the leadership team put in place for the girls.

This year our Juniors & Seniors have been learning First Aid skills and all our Company section girls (P5 through to year 14) have completed EpiPen & Anaphylaxis Awareness training. Our Brigaders have taken part in a Futsal competition, Seniors have taken part in Unihoc and our P4 girls took part in a Choir competition.

Our Annual Enrolment service took place on Sunday 24th November when our Youth Worker, Harry McBride was our speaker. We enjoyed refreshments in the Welcome Area after this special service and our thanks as always are extended to the Catering Team. At this service 7 girls were presented with the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's certificates and 5 girls were presented with their Silver certificates and we are currently making plans for a Gold Expedition to the Lake District next summer.

Thank you to everyone for your continued prayers for all the girls in our care and the leadership team and for your support throughout the year.

Cheryl



Pictured above, some of our Senior & Brigader girls who enjoyed a day trip to Tayto Park as part of our 40th Anniversary celebrations and below, (l-r) Sophie, Leah, Ruth, Emma & Anna with Paralympic Gold Medalist, Kelly Gallagher at the official launch of Scamwise NI which took place in Stormont Buildings



Pictured above, (l-r) Alice, Grace, Connie, Leah, Josh & Michael on Bronze DofE Expedition during the summer



Pictured above, some of our P4 girls who took part in the Ards District Explorer Choir competition in Shore Street Presbyterian, Donaghadee



Pictured left (back to front) Ruth, Emma, Lauren, Rebecca & Sophie on Silver DofE Expedition during the summer and pictured above, Audrey with her 2 daughters, Kellie & Erika who took part in GB NI's 125th Anniversary Colour 5km run at Victoria Park at the beginning of October.

MAKING NEW FRIENDS : EXPLORING A NEW 'WORLD'

Miss Alison & Miss Wendy writes

Starting pre-school is a 'big' step into a broader social world. At Bangor West Nursery Playgroup this is something we have long been aware of because, even at the age of 3 or 4, it's possible for our staff to see how children begin to learn about themselves and how they relate to others. There's a great deal adults take for granted about children's development but in September, at the beginning of Term 1, our children's interactions often involve imitation and observing their peers. For children, this important process of imitation involves not only seeing, but also beginning to understand other children's perspectives. Over the course of the pre-school year therefore, particularly as children's language skills develop, their attentiveness to other children expands into exploring and interacting directly with peers. It's worth thinking about what an incredibly significant development this is for 3 and 4 year olds!



The class of 2019/20

Creating predictable routine(s) allows the children to move through this transition (from home to pre-school) with the support of caring staff, but it also helps them develop future life 'skills', including resilience, negotiation and compassion. Experience has shown us that this happens very quickly. It is heart-warming to see that, in just a few weeks, this year's twenty-six children have made the transition from home to pre-school so rapidly. They have begun to build positive relationships, make new friends and become part of the 'very special pre-school family' that is Bangor West Nursery Playgroup.

Our Open Day for 2020/2021 prospective pre-school children and their parents to view our pre-school is **Monday, 6th January 2020, 10.30 – 11.30am.**

Learning how to make and 'keep' friends is also one of the primary developmental tasks of childhood. Developing and maintaining friendships, as we all know, is a fluid process and it can be challenging for young children as they develop skills to communicate, regulate their emotions and learn techniques for co-operation. Changes that arise within friendship groups are not always inherently negative, however. These situations create opportunities for our experienced staff to guide and model behaviour and for our children to learn and practice important social skills.

There may be occasions at the beginning of the first term when children feel anxious or hesitant about coming to pre-school but this is part of normal development. Creating

Bangor West Nursery Playgroup

OPEN DAY

Monday 6th January 2020
10.30 am - 11.30 pm

Interested parents and their children are welcome to view our purpose built facilities and meet staff.

If you require any further information please contact Alison or Wendy on 028 9147 0664
playgroup@westchurchbangor.org
We look forward to meeting you

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