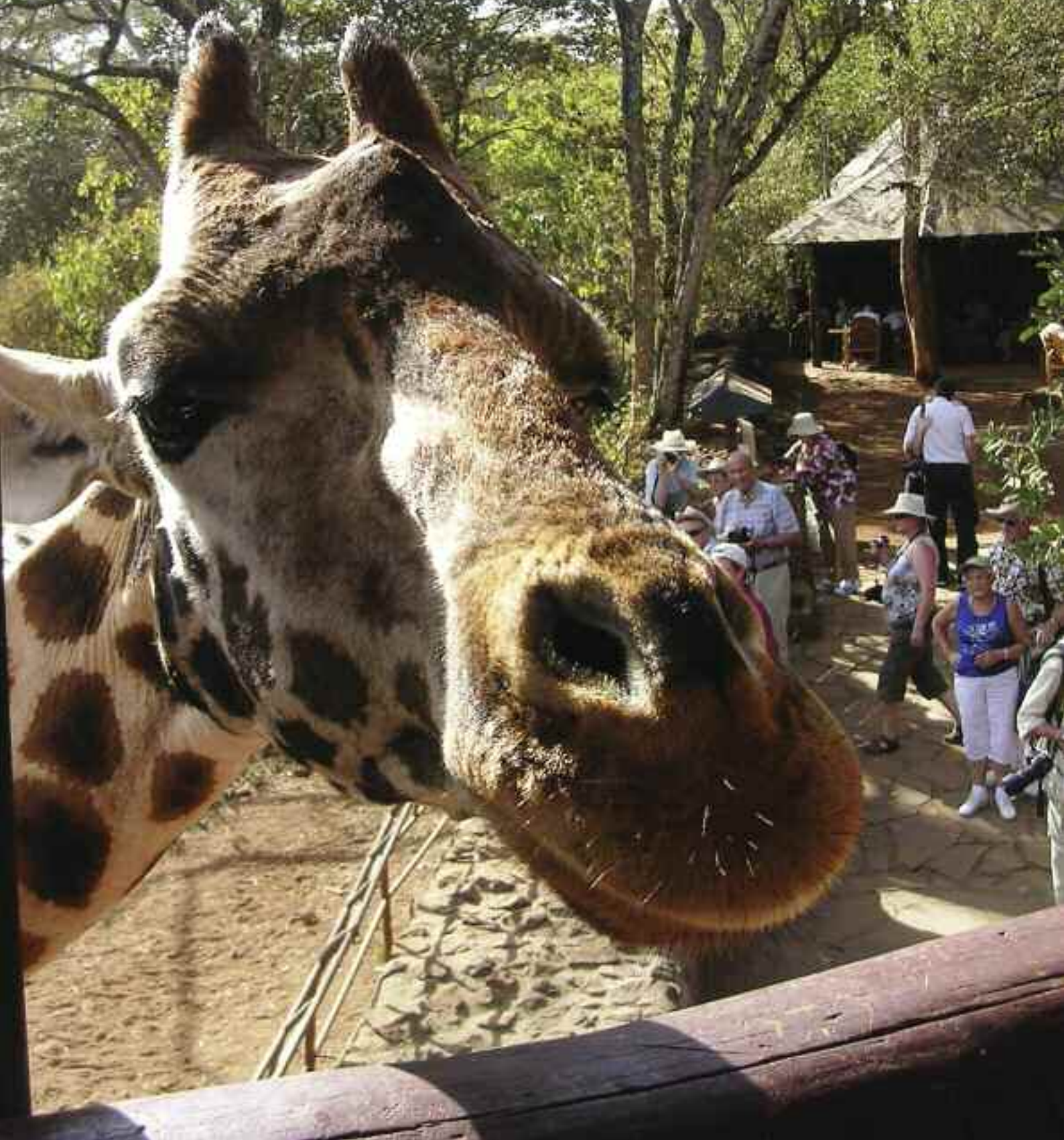


CONNOR

OCTOBER 2009

The Magazine of the Diocese of Connor

connections





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Bring Christ to all in word and action

This edition of Connor Connections has a particular focus on the worldwide church and I am delighted to affirm and encourage this.

From my experience in parish life, one of the lessons I learnt was the value of a link with the worldwide church. It helped the parish look beyond the parochial boundaries and learn lessons from other places.

In the context of a link with the Anglican Church in Kenya there was a greater awareness of the critical importance of the incarnation. In practical terms this meant the need for the local church to find connections with the local community in which the parish was called to serve.

In the busyness of parish life and indeed in the focus of survival we can sometimes lose the focus on what we are called to do. We are called to serve the local community and incarnate the presence of Christ in that community. We are called to



Bishop Alan presents Bishop Jeremiah Taama of Kajiado Diocese with a Connor shield during his recent visit to Kenya.

mission and not maintenance. Our mission is to bring Christ to all in word and action.

I trust you find some accounts in this edition inspiring and challenging. Please pray that we will be more aware as parishes of how we are called to connect with and serve the needs of our local communities and so fulfil our calling to be salt and light in Christ's name.

+ *Alan Connor*

New parish grouping

A new parish grouping came into existence in Connor on October 1.

Following the retirement from full time ministry of the Rev Clifford Skillen, who had been rector of St Polycarp's, Finaghy, for 13 years, the parishes of Finaghy and Upper Malone (the Church of the Epiphany) in South Belfast have come together in a new grouping.

The rector of the grouping is the Rev Garth Bunting, who has been rector of Upper Malone since 2006. He has been joined by the Rev Louise Stewart as a non-stipendiary priest in the ministry team. Formerly, Louise served in that capacity in St John's, Malone.

Mr Skillen said he was 'greatly blessed and privileged' to have served in St Polycarp's and wished Garth and Louise every blessing as they and the parishes enter a new chapter in their work and witness. Mr Skillen will remain assistant editor of The Church of Ireland Gazette.

MU walk success

The 15 members of Connor Mothers' Union who took part in the Belfast Marathon Walk on the May Day Bank Holiday raised more than £3,000 for the MU Relief Fund.

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: A TEAM FROM ST PAUL'S, LISBURN, WAS IN KAJIADO DIOCESE, KENYA, OVER THE SUMMER. MEMBERS ALSO VISITED THE GIRAFFE CENTRE, NAIROBI. PHOTO BY LISA CARSON. FULL STORY ON PAGES 12&13

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	CONNOR CONNECTIONS	
		FEATURE



Mr Neill Wilson, secretary to the dioceses of Connor and Down and Dromore, at his desk in Church of Ireland House. Mr Wilson will retire in December after 35 years in the post.

35 years as secretary

He has attended 70 Diocesan Synods and served 10 Bishops but after 35 years as Secretary to both Connor and Down and Dromore dioceses, Neill Wilson is stepping down.

Retirement will be a major change for a man who admits that after all this time, he still loves his work!

Mr Wilson has always worshipped in Lambeg Parish Church where he is honorary treasurer and a Diocesan Lay Reader. His professional career began in the Provincial Bank of Ireland where he worked for three years before switching to local government and later Coca Cola Bottlers Ltd. In 1974 he was appointed Diocesan Secretary to Connor and Down and Dromore and the rest, as they say, is history!

Mr Wilson this year celebrates 40 years of marriage to Joycelyne. Their daughter Jennifer, 32, is married with two children. Son Simon has a learning disability and lives at home. Simon was born with a chromosome abnormality so rare that at the time there were only five or six known cases of the condition. His parents were told his life expectancy would be 12. "He is now 30. We have been caring for him for many years and I am very proud of him," said Mr Wilson.


His son's disability has led to Mr Wilson's long-term involvement with the learning disability charity Mencap. Until recently he was the chairperson of the Northern Ireland Committee, a post he held for 12 years.

When first appointed Diocesan Secretary both Down and Dromore and Connor diocesan administration was based in what was the CIYMS building in May Street. But work was already underway on offices behind St Anne's Cathedral, and the dioceses moved there in March 1975.

The building housed the Church Mission Society Ireland, the Stewardship Department, Social and Family Welfare Association and the Church of Ireland Press Office. The departments grew and in 1996 Mr Wilson and his colleagues moved into the current Church of Ireland House premises.

Over the years in Connor he has served Bishops Butler, McCappin, Poyntz, Moore, Harper and currently Bishop Alan Abernethy, while in Down and Dromore he has served Bishops Quinn, Eames, McMullan and the present bishop the Rt Rev Harold Millar.

"I have managed to work with them all with their own little quirks," he said. "Our role is really to keep administration

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	FEATURE	

stable. Bishops come and bishops go but the central work has to continue.”

In the course of his work, Mr Wilson and his team of 10 full and part time staff organise synods, carry out the day to day business of Diocesan Council, administer finances, Easter Vestries, legal issues, registry, clergy appointments, manage the building and communicate large volumes of correspondence to parishes, all in duplicate as the team works for the two dioceses.

The office also looks after the affairs of the Church of Ireland Orphans and Childrens’ Society and helps the Down and Connor and Dromore Diocesan Board of Education, the Church of Ireland Trustees and other small trusts and charities.

“We have to remember that are dealing with two completely separate dioceses with their own ideas,” he said. “While you can help one with your experience of the other you have to be careful not to tell one what to do because that is how the other diocese dealt with the subject. They have to make up their own minds and you have to realise that you are carrying out their wishes, not doing what you want to do.”



Mr Wilson with diocesan administration staff, from left, Alma Atkins, Audra Irvine, Tracey Taggart and Elaine Wright.

Christmas’ campaign. They had stickers which were being distributed from the Presbyterian Assembly building. We had to circulate these to all our parishes. It was a big inter-church initiative for peace, but it took a while for it to work,” he added wryly.

There have been huge technical advances over the years too. “I remember when I started here the high tech equipment was an electric typewriter and the most amazing photocopier. It was like a tin box with a bulb in it. You used sensitised paper and put the document in and it may or may not have come out,” Mr Wilson recalled.

Picking highlights from the past 35 years was not easy but initiatives launched by both Connor and Down and Dromore do stand out.

“I helped to organise Connor’s launch of Building for Generations on the train to Coleraine in 2000,” he said. “It was a big occasion, we were witnessing the diocese moving as one as the train travelled from Whitehead to Belfast, then wound its way through the diocese finishing in Coleraine. It was a great way for Connor Diocese to launch a new image, and set a strategy for ministry and mission.”

Down and Dromore’s ‘Think Again’ launch at Belfast’s Waterfront Hall in 1999 was another highlight, when the Diocese endeavoured to bring 2,000 people together for an evening of worship and music on the eve of the millennium.

Retirement is something that is not going to come naturally to Mr Wilson. “I will miss the work and the routine of the work. I have to say I have always had a very happy relationship with the staff. It is a pleasant place to come to work,” he said.

Mr Wilson was diagnosed with MS in 1996. “I have been fortunate that it has progressed very slowly and I have been able to keep up my work,” he said. “So far it is just my mobility that is affected. I can’t just run round to the shops and do a quick message, I have to be very organised now to get there, but I am very thankful for what I do have.”

Mr Wilson will remain in post in a part time capacity working alongside his successor June Butler until December 2009.

Bishops come and bishops go but the central work has to continue.

Things have of course changed in the last 35 years. Not just the bishops or faces in the office, but the face of Belfast itself. Being based in the city centre at the height of the Troubles had its own problems.

“When we were in the office behind the Cathedral a bomb went off in a warehouse just across the street. We were having our morning tea break when we heard the bang. The soldiers had gone in before the bomb went off. I had to help an injured soldier out of the building, but thankfully no-one was killed,” Mr Wilson recalled.

“There were regular bombs in May Street. We were there in 1974 and all the churches had started up a big ‘Peace by



Sharing a smile with Bishop Alan at the 2009 Connor Diocesan Synod.



Clergy widows from across Connor Diocese came together at St Peter's Church, Belfast, on June 10 for the second annual widows' tea. This was hosted by the Rev Canon Kathleen Brown, Chaplain to clergy widows, and the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, along with a band of helpers. The ladies, pictured with the Bishop and helpers, enjoyed a sumptuous afternoon tea, served in a real silver pot by Margaret McBeth and friends from St Peter's. Following the tea Bishop Alan conducted a service of Holy Communion in the side chapel of St Peter's, and the lesson was read by the Rev William Taggart.

Honour for BB captain

The Captain of eighth Carrickfergus Boys' Brigade Company based at Holy Trinity Parish Church, Woodburn, was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Drew Buchanan has been captain of eighth Carrickfergus Company for the last 17 years and has more than 40 years BB experience. He became President of the East Antrim Battalion of the Boys' Brigade in September.

Drew said: "It is a great honour to be awarded the MBE. I would thank my wife Karen for all her support over the years and all the officers and the 125 boys of my company. This is recognition for them and shows that the BB is as relevant today in bringing the gospel message to boys as it was 125 years ago when it was founded."

He added: "It's good that voluntary youth work has been acknowledged by this award because there are many men and women who give up their time each week

as officers and leaders in BBs throughout the Carrickfergus area."

Happy 100th birthday



Miss Elizabeth Adams, pictured above, a member of Portglenone Parish Church, celebrated her 100th birthday this year.

To mark the occasion, the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, accompanied by the Rev Mark Loney, rector of Portglenone and Ahoghill, paid a visit to Elizabeth at her home in Gortgole Fold, where they chatted to her about her working life as a care home manager in England for 23 years.

Glencairn Prayer Walk

Members of the parish of St Andrew, Glencairn, went on

a Prayer Walk up and down Forthriver Road on June 28.

Parishioners were accompanied by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy and his wife Liz. They walked up the hill to the junction with Forthriver Park where they held an act of worship including a song, a reading and prayers. The infirm travelled by vehicle.

Worship continued when the group moved down the hill again to the junction with Forthriver Drive where Bishop Alan gave a short address on the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13). This involved all present joining in vigorous actions to illustrate the story.

The group returned to the church building where prizes were distributed to the members of the Sunday School. Bishop Alan sang the Blessing.

New role for QUB Chaplain

The Rev Patrick McGlinchey, Church of Ireland Chaplain at Queen's University, Diocese of Connor, has been appointed a part-time Lecturer in Missiology at the

Church of Ireland Theological Institute.

His appointment was announced by the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of Ireland and the Director of the Theological Institute.


Mr McGlinchey took up his new role in September. As well as his university chaplaincy role, Mr McGlinchey is working on a doctoral thesis that will make a comparative assessment of evangelical theology and the thinking of Joseph Ratzinger.

A year in Argentina

Megan Johnston from Lisburn Cathedral, spent a gap year with the South American Mission Society (SAMS).

Megan was based in Salta, Argentina, where she was a volunteer with SAMS' Red Box Project. She was based in a local church where she was a leader of the children's Bible study club, Pastor's secretary, and a participant in the weekly youth group.

"I taught in private and public schools helping as a language assistant, which you can imagine really opened up my eyes to the extremes in society," Megan said. "My time in Salta was significant as I learnt many things such as relying wholeheartedly on God. It was also character building and an opportunity to learn things about myself."

	CONNOR CONNECTIONS	
		ORDINATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

New faces in parishes

There have been five institutions in the diocese in recent months. The Rev Adrian Dorrian, 27, was instituted rector of St Peter and St James, Belfast, at a service in St Peter's on June 22.

A native of Groomsport, Co Down, Mr Dorrian graduated from Queen's University, Belfast, with a degree in Theology and Drama, and was employed as a youth drama worker with the Christian outreach Youth Initiative project in Poleglass for a year before studying at Theological College in Dublin. He was ordained a deacon in June 2006 and served as curate assistant in the Parish of Newtownards.

The Institution of the Rev George Davison took place in St Nicholas Parish Church, Carrickfergus, on June 29.

A native of south Belfast, Mr Davison, 44, has a BD from St Andrew's University, Scotland. He also studied at Oakhill Church of England College, London and at the Church of Ireland Theological College, Dublin.

He was ordained a Deacon in June 1992 and served his curacy in St Mark's Parish, Portadown. In October 1995 Mr Davison was appointed rector of the Parish of Kinawley and Holy Trinity, Derrylin, Co Fermanagh, where he remained until his appointment to Carrickfergus.

The Rev Amanda Adams was instituted rector of the parishes of Ballyrashane and Kildollagh on July 2.

Miss Adams, originally from Lisburn, is an economics graduate from Queen's University, and worked for the Inland Revenue all over Northern Ireland. She was ordained a deacon in June 2006. Since then she has been curate assistant in St Patrick's, Ballymena.

Former Bishop's Curate, the Rev Edith Quirey, was instituted rector in St Stephen and St Luke's on July 6. Mrs Quirey was priest-in-charge of St Stephen and St Luke for three years and during this time St Luke's Church closed for worship and united with St Stephen's. A year ago she was appointed Bishop's Curate of the parishes.

The Rev Roger Cooke, former incumbent of Musselburgh Parish, Edinburgh, was instituted rector of St Patrick's Parish, Coleraine, on September 25.

The father-of-three was born in Ballymoney and spent his early years in Portstewart, later moving to Bangor, Co Down. A qualified architect, Mr Cooke was ordained in 1999 and was appointed curate at St Peter's, Musselburgh and St Andrew's, Prestonpans, becoming rector in 2002. He is married to Sarah.



Pictured at the Ordination of Priests in St Thomas's Parish Church, Belfast, on June 11, are, from left: The Rev William Taggart, Registrar; The Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Archdeacon of Connor; The Ven Barry Dodds, Archdeacon of Belfast; the Rev Martin Hilliard; the Ven Stephen Forde, Archdeacon of Dalriada; the Rev Mark Niblock; the Rev John Farr; the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor; the Rev Clifford Skillen, Bishop's Chaplain; Preacher the Rt Rev Trevor Williams, Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe; the Rev Helen MacArthur and the Rev Canon Walter Lewis, Rector of St Thomas.

Deacons and priests

Deacons who were ordained in the Diocese of Connor at a service in St Patrick's, Ballymena, on June 24, pictured with other clergy. From left: Graham Nevin, Archdeacon Stephen McBride, Tracey MacRoberts, Rev Peter McDowell, Alan Irwin, Archdeacon Stephen Forde, Archdeacon Barry Dodds, The Bishop of Connor, Rev Clifford Skillen (Bishop's Chaplain), Canon Ronnie Nesbitt (preacher), Dean John Bond, Simon Genoe, Rev William Taggart (Registrar), Colin Welsh, Darren Millar (Dean's Verger) and Canon Stuart Lloyd (Rector, St Patrick's, Ballymena).



Charity provides vital services for older folk

Connor Age-Ability Committee recently hosted a visit from a representative of Age Concern and Help the Aged. Last April, the two charities joined to create a new, independent charity for older people in Northern Ireland.

Until a new brand is in place in next year, the charity will be known as Age Concern Help the Aged NI.

In a statement, the charity said: "Older people continue to be under-represented in society and to experience neglect, live in poverty and be discriminated against. Age Concern Help the Aged NI is determined to fight to redress these issues to create a world where older people flourish.

"Our commitment continues to lobby government, provide valuable services and to campaign to improve the lives of older people now and in the future. "

The charity provides a range of vital services for older people across Northern Ireland. Many of these are available in the geographical area covered by Connor Diocese.

They include an Advice & Advocacy Service which offers free advice, advocacy and information for older people on welfare benefits, housing, community care, elder abuse, residential and nursing care

Another service, First Connect, supports older people to access services and live independently in their own home. Age Concern Help the Aged NI's HandyVan is out and about improving home safety and security through fitting security products and undertaking minor repairs

To find out more about the Age Concern Help the Aged



An Age Concern Help the Aged NI HandyVan fitter at work. NI services available in your area, contact the charity's free-phone on 0808 808 7575.

Connor Age-Ability Committee was set up under the diocese's Building for Generations' initiative. Its aim is to identify some of the circumstances, problems and opportunities common in older age and bring these to the attention of the leadership in each parish. The committee is chaired by the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Archdeacon of Connor.

MU parenting course welcomed by schools

Connor Diocese MU Parenting Programme has made exciting inroads into the Extended Schools Programme. This is a government sponsored initiative aimed at supporting families beyond the school curriculum. A local school invited MU members to run a Parenting Course as part of their

outreach to parents and a facilitator attended a 'Pampering Morning' organised by the school coordinator. Here, she got the chance to present the idea of a parenting course and almost all the parents attending signed up for a six week course.

The enthusiasm of the parents

led to the course being extended and a further course being booked for later this year. Since that the MU has marketed its Parenting Programme to all schools involved in the Extended Schools Programme within the diocese and has generated good interest with more courses booked in advance



A group of lads from Greenisland parish with youth worker Paul Browne.



Young ladies from Coleraine set to have fun in the atmospheric dance hall.

Raving about God

The words of a current hit song 'It's gonna be a good night...' said it all as hundreds of young people danced the night away (or at least part of it) in the cathedral hall in Lisburn.

They had come from all parts of the diocese to spend an evening with Fusion, the hugely successful youth outreach project based at the cathedral in Lisburn city centre.

The evening, hosted by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, was aimed at encouraging young people, youth leaders and clergy to explore youth work 'outside the box.'

Fusion has more than 2,000 members registered with the project, and up to 300 young people attend its nightclub style activities every week.

The evening with Fusion on Sunday September 27 was a follow up to the successful Energize evening of youth worship which took place in St Brigid's, Mallusk, in September last year. Both events were organised by the Energize committee.

Every week Fusion is open for dance music, video

games and pool and offers chill out space, pampering space and prayer space. On September 27 there was also worship through dance.

While young people had a rave in the hall, clergy and youth leaders retired to the relative peace of the café. Bishop Alan with the help of youth workers Keith Neill (Lisburn Cathedral); Alan (Arf) Wright from Greenisland and Stuart Moles talked about their experiences of youth work, and the challenges they face.




Time to express thoughts in different ways in the prayer room at Fusion.



Youth leaders take the opportunity to chat at the Fusion event.



Fusion workers Martin Welsh, Mark Snowden and Graeme Clarke.

	CONNOR CONNECTIONS	
		ORGAN SCHOLARSHIP BOARD

No church service would be complete, no hymn so tuneful, without the wonderful background of organ music. For years the Down & Dromore and Connor Organ Scholarship Scheme has been ensuring there are organists to play in our churches.

The scholarship scheme was conceived in 1990 and launched in 1991 after an anonymous benefactor provided an endowment to train organists in the two dioceses. The Down & Dromore and Connor Organ Scholarship Management Board was established to administer six scholarships a year tenable for three years.

Originally the scholars were to be taught by the organists of St Anne's and Down cathedrals. More recently that panel has been extended and the current tutors are Philip Stopford (St Anne's), Michael McCracken (Down), Dr Donald Davison (St John's, Malone) and Reggie Patterson (Coleraine).

Scholarships provide free organ tuition and training in the leadership of a choir for three years. The basic entry requirement is keyboard skills of approximately Grade Five Piano or equivalent.

Chairman of the Board, the Rev Canon Gregory Dunstan, rector of St Matthew's, Belfast, said the Organ Scholarship Scheme is devoted to resourcing parishes for worship in the Anglican tradition, in which music plays a vital role.

"The scheme is aimed at providing organists and choirmasters for the parishes to raise the standard of music and worship in our churches," Canon Dunstan said. "It is not aimed at recitalists. To date it has provided many organists across both dioceses. Some of our former scholars are giving very good service in the parishes."

“A lot of people are under a misconception that the organ is just like playing a piano but I realised after the first lesson that there is a lot more to it.”
Simon Neill

In recent years more candidates have come forward from Down & Dromore than from Connor. Of the six new students welcomed to the scheme at a special service in St Anne's Cathedral on Sunday September 20, only one was from Connor. At this service those who had completed their three year scholarship were presented with their certificates.

Connor Connections caught up with some present and former organ scholars.

Since February, Simon Neill, 19, has been organist and choirmaster at St Polycarp's Parish, Finaghy, a job that would not have been an option for him had he not been on the Organ Scholarship Scheme.

Simon, who has just started a music degree at Queen's University, has been playing piano since he was six, and was awarded an Education and Library Board scholarship in the flute. He was Musician of the Year on piano at the Portadown Festival for two consecutive years, and hopes to make a career as a classical pianist or lecturer.

Simon is currently in his third year of the organ scholarship. "It is more work than I thought it would be, but very enjoyable," he admitted. "I love to learn and my tutor Donald Davison has taught me all that he absolutely knows. He is very inspiring, supportive and helpful.

"The whole programme is quite demanding, but I would not have been able to apply for the job at St Polycarps had I not been doing the scholarship. I would recommend it to anyone. Donald has taught me so much in such a short time."

Simon said that the piano and organ are two very different instruments. "A lot of people, including myself at first, are under a misconception that the organ is just like playing a piano but I realised after the first lesson that there is a lot more to it," he said.

Anne Tyler, 54, had been playing the organ in Carnlough for years before applying for a scholarship. "Carnlough has a magnificent pipe organ, but no-one has played with their feet since Canon Bannon's wife was the organist. I did not use my feet and I could only experiment with the stops," Anne said.

A former biology teacher, Anne also taught piano and is currently studying for a nursing degree. She still plays the organ at Carnlough when she is available. She said the three year scholarship was rewarding but hard work. "I really loved going to Donald. He was so patient and provided music that really stretched me. I had to go into the church three or four times a week to practice."

She said the organ scholarship was a 'brilliant scheme.' "If I wanted to have organ lessons I'm sure it would have cost a lot of money over the three years. It was fantastic, and I found the choral training aspect really useful. I was given a lot of pieces to try with the choir in church."





Nurturing our organ tradition



Organ scholar Catherine Olver playing in St Bartholomew's, Stranmillis.

Fourteen-year-old Catherine Olver only started to learn the piano three years ago, but a year into her organ scholarship she is already playing the organ to full congregations in her home parish of St Bartholomew's, Stranmillis.

"The organ is such a big instrument, I really wanted to learn to play it," she said. "When I first started it was quite hard getting used to the pedals, but it got easier."

Catherine travels to St John's, Malone, every fortnight, where she is tutored by Dr Davison. She practices regularly on the organ in St Bartholomew's. "I get a lot of

work and I don't want to get behind, so I practice a lot," she said.

Catherine's aim is to become an organist. She is certainly getting plenty of experience, having played in St Bartholomew's twice during Holy Week, and at other services since then. And she is taking it all in her stride. "It wasn't too bad, although it was quite scary at the start. When you make a mistake it is quite loud!" she said.

For further information on the organ scholarship scheme please contact Canon Gregory Dunstan on 028 9071 4325.

Youth work audit

The Bishop of Connor, President of the Church of Ireland Youth Department (CIYD), launched the first ever all-Ireland audit of Youth Work in the denomination in June.

The findings of the survey, commissioned by CIYD, were unveiled at Stormont at a launch attended by youth workers from a number of dioceses. The publication, An Audit Report of Youth Work in the Church of Ireland, reveals that each week some 26,000 young people aged 11 to 25 are active in the Church of Ireland's youth work,

supported by more than 3,000 adult volunteers.

The Bishop, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, said 26,000 was 'a staggering statistic.' But he added that the church could not be complacent. "This work needs to remain focused on the needs of young people and their well being through strategic partnerships, through a deepening of accountability measures, and especially through the ongoing development of adult youth work volunteers and professionals alike," the Bishop said.



Bishop Alan is joined at Stormont by youth workers for the launch of the first ever all Ireland audit of youth work in the Church of Ireland.

Mary is 100 years young!

Congratulations to Mrs Mary McCleary, a parishioner at Skerry, Rathcavan and Newtowncrommelin, who recently celebrated her 100th birthday.

Although Mrs McCleary was in hospital on the day of her birthday, she was heartened by warm wishes from Her Majesty the

Queen, Irish President Mary McAleese, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor, and the Dean of Connor, her rector the Very Rev John Bond.

Dean Bond brought his greetings and those of the parish to Mrs McCleary in person when he called to visit her in hospital on her birthday, August 12.



The dedication of the bikes at Kajiado by Bishop Jeremiah Taama.

Extracts from team web blogs

The entire team went for a walk in Kajiado, we were all struck with the poverty, this was a humbling experience for us all. *Stephen McWhirter August 23*

The worksite team ... has been really brilliant in moving dirt in wheelbarrows, shovelling sand, removal of nails from wood ... and making cement. Tom (foreman) informed me that our team has moved the project on several weeks simply by helping to do tasks which otherwise the paid workers would have to do. *Mark Jamison August 28*

Had my first spill off the bike (twice) - the terrain was very rough, but thankfully not too many cuts and bruises. I was given a beautiful traditional Maasai necklace by a Maasai tribeswoman, so that made up for my spill. It was an emotional day, but a beautifully spiritual day. *Ann Whan August 30*


It has been an absolutely phenomenal leap of faith. The weather has been great and the people of Kenya are so kind. *Chris and Rosemary Orr September 1*

This trip has been an emotional rollercoaster for both of us. We have met some wonderful people. Words cannot explain how bad things are here or the extreme joy the people have in the Lord even in extreme hardship. *David and Janet Hunter September 11*

The trip was a success in all departments and now we can look forward to developing the partnership as we go forward. *Ronnie Briggs, CMSI, September 25*



Forty one children are baptised in a trough normally used for watering livestock.

CONNOR CONNECTIONS		
	MISSION	

It was an ambitious project. To take 25 people from their home comforts in Lisburn to labour in a drought ridden part of Kenya for three weeks.

Yet this is what the parish of St Paul did this summer in partnership with CMS Ireland. The team travelled out in two groups to deliver six motorbikes they had bought to clergy in Kajiado diocese, to help in the construction of a school for Maasai girls, and to build relationships.

Over the three weeks they also whitewashed a church, preached at and led eight services, participated in youth and MU programmes, and supported Kajiado Clinic.

As well as the bike experts the team also had some capable mechanics who turned their hands to fixing old bikes, tractors and even Land cruisers.

And Jim took part in the baptism of 41 local children who were fully immersed in a cattle trough which just a little while earlier had been surrounded by thirsty livestock.

For the third consecutive year Kajiado is in the grip of a drought. The impact on the community and its animals is shocking. Jim and Stephen said the

Bikes for Kenya

number of dying animals was heart-rending.

But according to the rector of St Paul's, the Rev Jim Carson, relationships were a key factor. "The most important thing is that new and good relationships have been developed between St Paul's and Kajiado Diocese and also on a spiritual basis between the various members of the group who travelled," he said.

Jim organised the trip along with his pastoral assistant Stephen McWhirter. In Kajiado, Stephen was part of the team of experienced bikers who undertook to train six clergy to ride in order to pass their local driving test.

Success of the project is already evident. One motorbike was sent to the Rev Naftaly Lemooke in Oltiasika last November. This has led to the establishment of four new congregations and plans for a conservation project in the area and the establishment of an Adult Training Centre.

Stephen explained: "These clergy cover huge rural parishes. Until now they had to travel around on foot or use public transport." One of the clergy to benefit from the bikes is Rev Moses, whose parish includes 11 churches in a 70 km strip. "He had never been on a bike in his life so we had to train him from scratch," said Stephen.


"In Africa you can see the devastation of global warming. The snowline at the top of Kilimanjaro which feeds Amboseli Lake has receded and the people fear that in 10 years the snow, and their water source, will be gone," said Stephen.



With their livestock dying, the people watch their livelihoods die too. On their last day in Oltiasika the group spent the equivalent of £600 sterling on crafts, jewellery and other typically Kenyan gifts in the market. "Rather than giving money directly to individuals we were able to go to

a local market arranged specially for us, buy goods, and put money directly into the pockets of local people for food, school fees, etc," said Jim.

Stephen said the project was a huge success. "It was much more than we could have expected. It was very moving to experience Christians in an entirely different culture and realise that underneath everything we are all the same." He went on: "On a personal level I realised that while the country is very poor and folk have very little, we are much more dependent than they are. They source everything, their food, water, animals. We are dependent on big corporations."

	CONNOR CONNECTIONS	
		MISSION

Burundian people 'beautiful'

Four parishioners from the Church of the Epiphany, Upper Malone, travelled to Burundi as part of a 12-strong CMSI Mission Experience Team Abroad team (META).

Victor Stephens, Emma Borthwick, Sylvia Kennedy and Ann Stockman were in a team led by the Rev Bobbie Moore.

Reporting on the trip Victor wrote: "We expected to do quite a lot of work while out there, but the attitude that we found was one of 'you have sacrificed quite enough to come here, you have left your homes and families and raised money and travelled all this way to share your Love of the Lord. And your presence here means so much to us'.

"To be honest we were treated fantastically by everyone and were quite humbled by the whole experience."

Victor said the country and the people were beautiful. "The Burundian Christians do not have very much, sometimes not even enough food to eat, yet they love God and Jesus so very much with all their hearts," he said.

The group met diocesan councils and staff, visited sites of Church plantings, shared testimonies, and at one church plant helped make bricks from clay to build a house.

The group started off in the capital Bujumbura before travelling up to Matana diocese, via the Great Lake



Many parts, one body. A member of the Burundi team meets local people for a sharing of testimonies.

Tanganyika. At Matana Cathedral they witnessed 20 people being installed as canons in a four and a half hour service.

They later moved to the other partnership diocese of Gitega. Victor wrote: "The difference between the two dioceses was a bit of a shock, in terms of poverty. It seemed to us that Gitega was much poorer, though it was pointed out to us that there were still a number of 'displaced' people still living there from the war. Again their love of the Lord was overwhelming." Victor said the META had been 'an excellent success.'

Experience not to be missed

Kajiado and the people of Kenya made a big impact on the members of an 18-strong youth team which travelled to the Diocese with CMSI in July.

Simon Purdue and Daniel McConnell from Ballyclare Parish were among several from Connor Diocese who spent three weeks in Africa.

For both Simon, 16, and Daniel, 17, it was their first trip to Africa. While there they helped renovate classrooms in different schools, taught lessons including RE, and developed friendships with local people young and old.

"Everything about Kenya was different, the food was different although I enjoyed it, and there was the whole cultural thing. There were different handshakes which took a while to get to grips with!" said Simon.

He is now thinking of mission on a long term basis. "It was the best experience

of my life. I would recommend it to anyone. It was an experience not to be missed," he said.


Daniel described the trip as an eye-opening experience. "I enjoyed it but at the same time I did question a lot of what I saw and it made me think," he said, adding that Kenyans were very people centred. "They are more about people than work which is hard to get used to. If they asked and you said 'I'm fine,' they would say 'You are not fine. Sit down and talk to me.' Here we don't tell people how we really feel."

He went on: "About half way through the trip we realised the work would get done anyway, our visit was more about building relationships."

The Kenya youth META team worked alongside the youth team at Kajiado Cathedral, helping with repairs to primary schools, schools work and church services.



Daniel McConnell with some of the children in Kajiado.

CONNOR CONNECTIONS		
	MISSION	

The Bishop of Connor has described an invitation to speak at the Kenyan Diocese of Kajiado clergy conference as ‘an amazing honour.’

Bishop Alan Abernethy led a small team to Kenya for the conference, spending a week in Kajiado before moving to the conference centre in Mombasa.

Bishop Jeremiah Taama of Kajiado is a close personal friend of Bishop Alan. This was his diocese’s first clergy conference in the 13 years he has been Bishop.

Bishop Alan was joined by his wife Liz, a doctor; Desney Cromey of Connor’s Pastoral Support for Clergy team, and her husband Roger, a GP, and the Ven Barry Dodds, Archdeacon of Belfast.



CMSI partner Ronnie Briggs, second from left, with Desney Cromey, Archdeacon Barry Dodds, Bishop Alan, and workers on a farm in Isinya, Kenya, where they are trying to improve local agriculture with more efficient use of the limited water supply.

A land ‘spiritually overflowing’

“In Kajiado we met the diocesan committee and got a clear idea of what they wanted from us at the conference,” said Bishop Alan. “We also preached in the cathedral and in Isinya. It was very important for the team members to get a sense of the diocese and the clergy. This is a diocese where because of the drought people are actually going to die. How do you speak into that and help people?”

Bishop Jeremiah had opted to hold the conference in Mombasa as a way of ministering to his clergy and their spouses. “Even though the conference was very busy the husbands and wives had some free time. That was part of Bishop Jeremiah’s way of helping them,” said Bishop Alan.

At the conference Bishop Alan spoke on the theme ‘Arise and eat for the journey is too great’ (1Kings). “Ministry is a very difficult place. I talked about how to deal with that for the same applies here,” he said. He and Archdeacon Dodds also led Bible studies, Liz and Roger spoke about dealing with stress, and Desney dealt with the issue of retirement. There were also open sessions with Bishop Alan, and worship and communion.

Bishop Alan said that by going as a team, they were a model to Kenyans of team ministry. “We all benefited from it and were enriched by being part of a team. It was good fun and hard work. And we have all come back changed by it. You cannot help but be changed by Africa. Every time I go it disturbs as well as excites, and challenges as well as inspires.”

This was Desney’s first trip to Africa. She was impressed

with the farming project run by CMS mission partners Ronnie and Maggie Briggs, which is helping people secure a living in the face of an horrific drought. Even the zebra, normally very resilient, are dying.

But Desney said they had received a wonderful welcome. “They gave us all they had,” she said.

Even the language barrier was easily overcome. “Everything was translated by the clergy themselves, but they got really into it and were very animated. They even added their own wee bits!” Desney said. She described being in Kenya as ‘a gift.’ “The bottom line for me was that for a diocese which has so little in material terms they were so rich in faith,” she said.

Reflecting on his trip, Archdeacon Dodds, said: “I found Kajiado to be a physically dry and thirsty land but spiritually a land overflowing with blessing if the clergy and their spouses were anything to go by. The intensity of their singing and dancing was amazing.”

Archdeacon Dodds said the impact of the drought was devastating. “The people are losing their present livelihoods and future investment through the death of their livestock.”

But he said the physical conditions the people were living in added to the intensity of their prayer life. “At prayer time they all start praying out loud at the same time, really wanting the Lord to bless them and meet their need. I have never experienced anything like that before,” Archdeacon Dodds said. “This intensity is probably born out of the hardship in their lives.”



Coffee morning organisers Nicola Carson and Loraine Brown.

Staff cuppa for charity!

Staff at Church of Ireland House in Belfast took part in the world's biggest coffee morning on September 25, in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support.

The event was organised by diocesan accounts staff Nicola Carson and Loraine Brown, who provided the refreshments and handmade gift bags. They and their colleagues also used their extensive artistic talents to host a sale of handmade cards, jewellery and other items, again in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. The coffee morning raised £320.

Lay Readers' centenary



By Canon George Irwin, Warden of Readers, Diocese of Connor

This is a special year for Lay Readers in the Church of Ireland as we celebrate the centenary of the restoration of this ancient Office.

In looking back we can derive encouragement and inspiration from the vibrancy and idealism of the Church in the first decade of the twentieth century. At the 1909 General Synod when the Office of Reader was restored and defined, a whole scheme of lay ministry was approved by the Synod.

Central to this scheme was a proposal that in each parish the rector was to hold monthly a short devotional meeting of all those in the parish who were actively involved in the work of the Church - Select Vestry members, Choir, Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, lay visitors etc. This meeting was meant to be a fellowship of vocation. As such it would have been both an encouragement to Church workers and a well-spring of vocations to ordination and other forms of ministry.

Vocation, in Christian terms, is well described in a prayer composed by Dr Eric Abbott: "Lord, you have prepared a place for my soul, prepare my soul for that place." That prayer is, of course, prompted by the question where and how are our God-given talents to be used most effectively to the glory of God?

It may take years for the question to be fully answered. For vocation is a process and it evolves and is facilitated by mentors, good pastoral care and prayer. Many of the Reader candidates who come for interview mention how they had been thinking about ministry through the Office of Reader for several years, but did not feel moved to do anything about it until the rector or some other senior person in the parish delivered a word of encouragement and expressed confidence in them. Such is the importance of affirmation for the development of vocation.

Readers are authorised to play a significant role in ministry, not least in the conduct of worship and preaching, and for those duties which they share with the Clergy they are given a thorough training.

But we misunderstand the nature of their Office if we see the training and commissioning of Readers as some kind of pragmatic strategy to make up for a shortage of Clergy. The Reader is a representative person. He/she is a representative of the laity and perhaps much closer to the thinking and feelings of the laity than the Clergy, but also a person authorised to carry out a significant role as a worship leader.

As lay persons employed in a great variety of occupations, Readers have valuable skills, insights and understandings not normally shared by the Clergy. They have a calling not only to speak to the world, but to interpret the tensions and concerns of the world to the Church. And by making their experiences and insights available to the Church they can assist the Church to minister effectively to contemporary society. The role of the Reader is complementary to that of the Clergy but it is a distinctive ministry and should not be seen as a substitute or an attempt at improvisation.

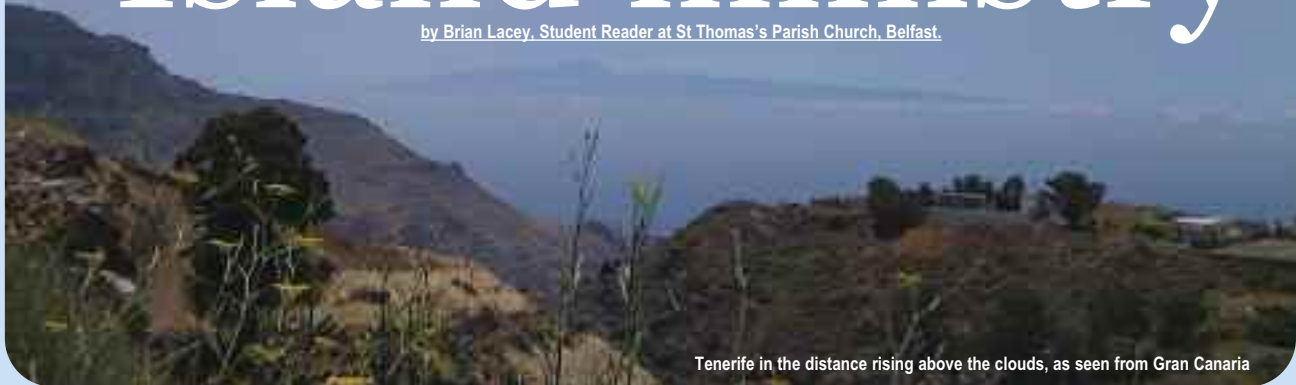
In the Diocese of Connor we have 50 Diocesan Readers and 18 candidates in training. There are 30 Parish Readers and five candidates in training. The number coming forward for training has grown steadily over the past decade, so also has the volume of work undertaken by the Readers. But increased pressure of service has not diminished the quality of the contribution they make to worship and witness. Our diocese has a band of Readers whose commitment to God and His Church is evidenced by helpfulness, dedication, sacrifice of personal time, prayerfulness and careful preparation. We thank God for all He enables them to do.

On November 28 the centenary will be marked by a special service in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, followed by lunch. The centenary is an opportunity for the Church to show its appreciation of the ministry of every Reader and to recall with gratitude the contribution made in past generations.



Island ministry

by Brian Lacey, Student Reader at St Thomas's Parish Church, Belfast.



Tenerife in the distance rising above the clouds, as seen from Gran Canaria

This summer I spent 55 days in Gran Canaria on a summer placement marking the start of my third year of training at the Theological Institute, Dublin.

The placement continued my introduction to the broad spectrum of ministerial activities as an assessed part of training for ordination. Officially my duties consisted of preaching, leading worship, leading Bible study and pastoral visits. Unofficially I experienced a taste of what it means to be and do 'church' in an environment far removed from our own.

Although there is an Anglican Chaplaincy in the north of the island I chose to do my placement with the Independent Evangelical Church based in two tourist towns in the south of the island, led by Pastor Donald Davies.

This church worships in a non-liturgical style, much more free-form, extemporaneous, and Spirit-led than that which is practiced in mainstream Church of Ireland parishes. However, Donald's own background as a Reader in the Church of England meant that he fully understood – albeit sometimes disagreed with – where I was coming from in terms of liturgy and doctrine.

Whilst I thoroughly enjoyed their services of worship, I did ensure that I attended weekly Anglican Eucharist in order to strike a healthy balance of both styles and build relationships with members of both congregations.

Of course church is much more than a couple of hours each Sunday, and I greatly appreciated the friendship and fellowship of church members; their hospitality and generosity affirmed the understanding of church as one big family.

But although things tend to look brighter in the sunshine, beneath the surface you will find all the problems that exist in Ireland, ranging from internal church disputes to social and economic deprivation.

The latter was much in evidence amongst the pub and

club reps – generally British men in their late teens and early twenties who had come to the island seeking fun in the sun, but had instead found themselves underpaid, malnourished, and linguistically and culturally isolated. It is for such as these that the church needs to have a deep pastoral concern, and I was pleased to see both the Anglicans and the Evangelical Church seeking to engage with them through friendship evangelism and practical support.

Owing to the number of tourists attending services, the Evangelical Church has a certain transient and multi-denominational feel to it, and I hope that my short stay brought a degree of Anglicanism into the mix. I am certain that the experience of the small but faithful and motivated Evangelical Church will leave a permanent mark on my own journey of faith. I am greatly indebted to Pastor Donald and his wife Val, and the other members of our Christian family there, for a challenging, insightful and enjoyable placement.



Brian Lacey out and about in Gran Canaria.

Growth, unity, service

For its Synod 2009 Connor Diocese returned to St Brigid's Parish Church, Mallusk. Synod took place on June 17 and was attended by around 300 clergy and lay members from parishes across the diocese.

In his Presidential address, the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, referred to the frenetic activity of life, the current economic instability, and the need for Christian traditions to pray together. He remembered the murders at Massarene Barracks and paid tribute to Bishop Noel Treanor, the new Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor.

The Bishop also condemned the attacks on Romanian families living in south Belfast, urging people to 'reject such activity and thinking.'

Bishop Alan referred to the Mission Statement of the Church of Ireland Bishops which the Diocese of Connor is seeking to implement, under the three words, growth, unity and service.

The concept of growth, he said, is often taken to simply mean more people joining parishes. "However I also believe that a critical part of our life together is about learning more of what it is to be quiet and still to enable us to discern God's presence in the confusion of our society. We need to be communities of faith that aren't so busy doing things that we have no quality of life for others as they come into our community," he said.

Bishop Alan went on: "We must ensure that one of the priorities in parish life is to make disciples and to nurture faith and an enriching spirituality."

Referring to unity, he said: "I believe it is critical we find ways of praying together, that we can share with each other the riches of our own heritage in Christ.



Dining together at Synod are, from left: George Harris, David Houston, John Brownlees, the Rev Martin Milliard, and Archdeacon Stephen Forde, all from Larne, and Andrew Stewart, Muckamore, Killead and Gartree.

"It is often as we pray together, as we are still together that we can find new insights into our own journey of faith from other fellow travellers. This unity of spirit is so much more important than a false structural unity."

In relation to service, the Bishop said: "In the being and listening we might be better able to find ways of re-connecting with the many communities we appear disconnected from."

The Bishop also spoke of the Diocese's research into children's ministry. "I am more than ever convinced at the critical importance of our ministry not to but with children as they are such a gift to us as God's people," he said.



Sheena Herron, the Rev Denise Acheson, St Colman's, Dunmurry, and the Rev Donna Quigley, Derryvolgie, enjoy a chat with Mildred Diven from St Brigid's who helped with the wonderful catering.

He said of Connor's link with Yei, Southern Sudan: "The partnership with the diocese of Yei has produced a genuine care and love for the needs of the people there."

Reports of Diocesan Council and various boards and committees were all accepted and two Notices of Motion were passed unanimously. The first proposed that the Commissioned Lay Ministry Scheme, which has now ended as a pilot project, should be

reviewed by Diocesan Council and brought to Synod 2010 with a proposal for continuation or otherwise of the ministry. The second motion proposed changes to Connor Council for Mission to ensure that, in the words of proposer Archdeacon Stephen Forde, "mission is part of the overall life and witness of this diocese."

On conclusion of the business of Synod, the Very Rev John Bond, Dean of Connor, thanked Bishop Alan, saying: "This diocese values your ministry, friendship, sincerity and leadership."



The Bishop of Connor delivers his presidential address. Behind him are the Archdeacon of Belfast, the Ven Barry Dodds, the Dean of Connor, the Very Rev John Bond, and Honorary Lay Secretary Robert Kay.



Gathering at St Anne's in Belfast at the start of their sponsored walk to Lisburn, are, from left: Canon Ernest Harris, Canon William Bell, Chancellor Stuart Lloyd, Archdeacon Stephen McBride, Canon George Graham, Canon George Irwin, Canon Percy Walker, Archdeacon Stephen Forde, Dean John Bond, and Dean Bond's dog Ben.

Celebrating 400 years

Nine members of the Chapter of St Saviour, Connor, along with Ben the Bassett Hound, stepped out to walk from Belfast Cathedral to Lisburn Cathedral on June 6 as part of the celebrations marking the Chapter's 400th anniversary.

The Dean of Connor, the Very Rev John Bond, was joined on the 12.5 mile walk by the Archdeacon of Connor, the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, vicar of Antrim; the Archdeacon of Dalriada, the Ven Stephen Forde, rector of Larne; Canon Stuart Lloyd, rector of St Patrick's, Ballymena; Canon Percy Walker, rector of St Mary's with Holy Redeemer, Belfast; Canon George Irwin, rector of Ballymacash; Canon William Bell rector of Eglantine; Canon George Graham, rector of Dunluce; Canon Earnest Harris, rector of Ballinderry; and Canon Sam Wright, rector of Lisburn Cathedral (who joined the walk part way through).

They left St Anne's Cathedral at 1pm and followed the Lagan towpath from the Waterfront to Lisburn, finishing at the Cathedral of Christ Church, Lisburn. Dean Bond thanked his fellow members of the Chapter for their efforts which raised more than £8,200 for the new school in Mongo in Connor's link diocese of

Yei, southern Sudan. "It was very worthwhile and while we may not have been totally favoured by the elements the liquid sunshine was just a slight inconvenience compared with where this money is going to to benefit the young people in the school in Mongo," said Dean Bond.

"The weather helped us get things in perspective. Compared with our brothers and sisters in that part of the world we are all millionaires."

The 400th anniversary celebrations continued with service of Holy Communion in Lisburn Cathedral on Tuesday June 9, followed by a celebration Chapter dinner in Malone Golf Club. Former Chapter members were among the many guests at the service.



Chapter members at the service of Holy Communion to mark the 400th anniversary.

Preacher was the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy. He said: "It is amazing to realise that Christian witness and worship have been going on in this place for so long and so many have served here, and that this witness and ministry still go on each and every generation.

"In celebrating the past we give hope for the future."

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