

YOUR SPRING EDITION OF

# WEST LIFE

ISSUE No.17, MARCH 2019

WEST CHURCH, BANGOR PUBLICATION

ONLY INSIDE YOUR WEST LIFE / HOLY WEEK & EASTER / WORLDWIDE MISSION / UNITED APPEAL / YOUTH & CHILDREN / WEST UPDATES



*'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations'*  
*Matthew 28:19*

# West Church Our Core Values

**W**orship—we worship God in Spirit and Truth  
**E**quip—we grow deeper together in Christ  
**S**erve—we welcome and care for everyone together  
**T**ell—we reach out in love and service

West Church, Bangor — Welcome, directory and contents

## WELCOME TO YOUR SPRING WEST LIFE

**A**pparently the 1st March marks the beginning of meteorological spring. Maybe as you open this magazine you have already responded to the changing season by doing a little bit of spring cleaning around your home? In the midst of all those chores I hope you can carve out some time to dig into this spring edition of West Life and be inspired by what you find.

In this edition you will read about the special service held in West on 10th February to celebrate the 90th birthday of our founding minister, Rev. David Bailie. You will also discover the exciting plans taking shape for a group of our young people as they prepare to travel to Uganda on a mission trip with Abaana. You will learn about other African



adventures in an article by Lydia McMullen, who travelled to Malawi recently as part of her midwifery training and Liz Clayton as she travelled to Ghana.

For many years Pastor Hendrik Hoere has been a regular visitor to West, and this edition brings us an update on the situation in Cali, Colombia where he serves as missionary and church planter.

And finally, closer to home, you will read about a dramatic change of career for one of our members, as Keith Morrison shares his story of what God has been doing in his life.

So put the duster down, step away from that Hoover, and may you be blessed by these and many more articles in this edition.

Andy

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**Associate Minister:**  
Rev Andy Galbraith

**Moderator's Assistant:**  
Rev Andrew Gill

**Minister Emeritus:**  
Rev David Bailie

**Pastoral Associate:**  
Andy Heron

**Pastoral Associate:**  
Very Rev Dr Roy Patton

**Pastoral Assistant:**  
Rev Jim Hagan

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

**Youth Worker (temp):**  
Harry McBride

**Children's Worker:**  
Victoria Croft

**Director of Worship:**  
Gillian Caughey

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**Church Secretaries:**  
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**Clerk of Session:**  
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07801 429306

**Deputy Clerk of Session:**  
Maureen Bennett  
07808 169 302

**Church Officers:**  
Ken Macartney  
Martin Yardley  
Lin Montgomery

#### Sunday Service Times:

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

Pastoral Mobile: 07543 198391

# JESUS IS ALIVE!

by Rev. Andy Galbraith

**I**wonder if you would consider yourself to be an optimist or a pessimist? Be honest with me now! When you look at a certain situation, do you naturally find yourself focussing on the positive possibilities that might transpire, or is your mind caught in the gravitational pull of all the negative impacts that might well evolve?

I have somebody in my family who is relentlessly positive in their outlook. Give them a complex situation, and they have the gift to see through all of the potentially negative aspects and pick out the things that are positive and highlight them with a sunny enthusiasm. Every year on the 21st of December we are always reminded by this positive soul that the worst of the winter is behind us. From now on every day will get gradually brighter. And of course it is true. Winter solstice is a scientific reality.

I have to admit, it's great to have this reminder every year in the heart of winter. It's great to be reminded when the nights are long and dark and the temperatures are frosty and cold that the turning point has past! Winter is on the wane!

Let's face it, some years it feels like winter is never going to end! By the time we get into February we are yearning for a change in the climate. But not so this year. I write this in the week when we have seen the warmest February days on record. The sun has been shining, the skies have been clear. Yesterday saw temperatures in the UK top those of Barcelona! I was so inspired by the dramatic change in the weather that I got my old bicycle out of the shed and cycled down to church for our weekly team meeting!

There is an unmistakable sense this week that spring is on the way, the winter is almost past. The daffodils are out, and even cherry trees have been in bloom! Sure there might be a rogue frost here and there. There's bound to be the odd storm and many a shower, but I don't imagine we're going to need to



The season has changed, the bondage of your barren winter has ended, and the season of hiding is over and gone. The rains have soaked the earth. *Song of Songs 2:11 (The Passion)*

invest in snow shovels between now and Easter.

I know I'm not the only one who delights in the evidence of the turning of the seasons. This inspired Solomon in his song writing:

**The season has changed, the bondage of your barren winter has ended, and the season of hiding is over and gone. The rains have soaked the earth.**

*Song of Songs 2 : 11 (The Passion translation)*

Now we can all begin to look forward towards longer nights and warmer temperatures. Maybe your mind has already begun to think about plans for the summer, with trips and holidays you might want to take. It's great to be in the position that we can look forward to the summer knowing that the worst of the winter is behind us!

And spiritually speaking, we are called to be a forward looking people who have been '**called out of the darkness into his wonderful light**'. When we put our trust in Jesus our worst days are behind us, and we are on a journey of faith into the amazing future God has in store for us. There is a reason to be hopeful this spring. The Spiritual winter is over, no matter what

happened in our past, no matter however complex or difficult our current situation may be, our best days are yet to come!

Easter reminds us of the extraordinary extent of God's love for us. **Jesus is alive!** He has defeated death and darkness and has risen to the right hand of his father. Now we can experience the power of his presence in the midst of our situations.

So as the reasons to be hopeful for the weather begin to manifest outside of our windows, let's remind ourselves of the incredible reasons to be hopeful in our faith. I love how J.B. Phillips translates that great forward looking verse in Philippians 3 :13

**I leave the past behind and with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead I go straight for the goal—my rewards the honour of being called by God in Christ.**

May your Easter be blessed.

Walk in the light!

Andy

# LIFE-CHANGING MOMENTS

by Rev. Andy Galbraith

**E**very three years it falls to West to choose the guest speaker for our joint Holy Week services that happen in partnership with our neighbours in St. Galls, and Carnalea Methodist Church. As it turned out, 2019 is one of those years, so it is with a real sense of excitement and anticipation that I announce the guest speaker for our Holy Week services this year. We will be welcoming (drumroll please...) Rev. David McIlwrath to inspire us from God's word during this special week of services.

You will find a short bio from David below along with a schedule of the services. Can I encourage you to make a special effort to engage with our Holy Week services this year, you will be blessed!



David is no stranger to Bangor. He lived here after his retirement and was a

member of Trinity Presbyterian Church where he worked as a part-time Associate Minister.

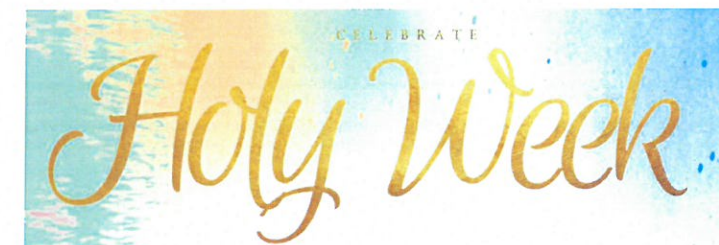
Since his ordination in Carnmoney Church in 1975, David has served congregations in Newry, Coleraine and Killyleagh. He is married to Doris and they have four children and five grandchildren. He enjoys walking, reading and watching sports.

David has chosen as his theme for our Holy Week Services "Life-Changing Moments—in the lives of Christ followers then and now."

## Holy Week 2019 "Life-Changing Moments"

Services begin at 7.30 pm with prayer from 7.00 pm

- Monday:** St. Galls C of I led by Rev. Michael Parker
- Tuesday:** St. Galls C of I led by Rev. Michael Parker
- Wednesday:** Carnalea Methodist led by Rev. Fiona McCrea
- Thursday:** Carnalea Methodist led by Rev. Fiona McCrea
- Friday:** West Presbyterian led by Rev. Andy Galbraith



# KEEPING OUR FOCUS ON CHRIST

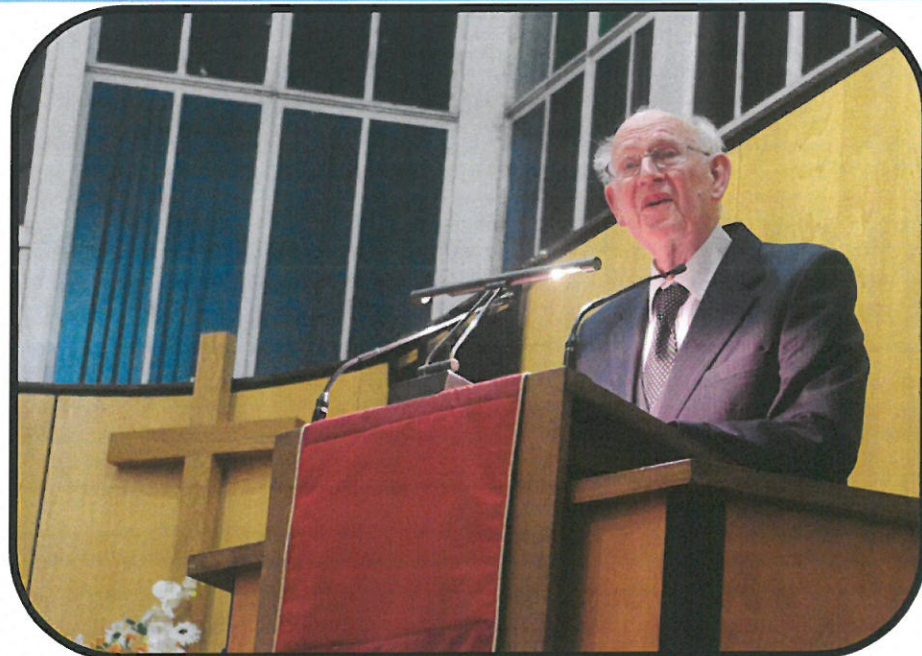
a transcript of Rev. David Bailie's West Church recollections at his 90th birthday Praise Service

**S**unday evening, 10th February, saw West Church overflowing to celebrate the 90th birthday of our Minister Emeritus, Rev. David Bailie. David was joined by his wife Rhoda, son Andrew, daughter's Elizabeth and Mary along with one of his granddaughter's, Catherine. Some of David's Assistant Ministers and colleagues, members of the congregation past and present and also members from Ballygilbert Presbyterian joined together to celebrate the legacy of David's ministry here in West.

Rev. Andy Galbraith welcomed everyone to the service and the Rt. Rev. Dr. Charles McMullen paid tribute to David's ministry and how he built up the church from Carnalea House across the road into a thriving congregation. The Very Rev. Dr. Roy Patton led the celebratory prayers and Lindsay Conway, Clerk of Session, along with Victor Stephens our Treasurer and Lyla Graham, one of David's founding elders, made a special presentation to David & Rhoda.

A beautiful celebratory supper was prepared by our Catering Team and enjoyed by all in the Rathmore Hall with a special 90th birthday cake. Enjoy the following transcript of David's memories of his life and journey with West.

Exactly 90 years ago on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1929 I was born the fourth child in a family of 6 children. My father was a hard-working and progressive farmer and we imbibed the values of industry and rectitude sustained in the context of a County Antrim Presbyterian Church at Duneel. My first minister was the Rev. R.C. Elliott, a warm hearted man, in no way narrow or sectarian who dared to be innovative who had sown in me perhaps seeds that had



reached through to Christian ministry. A person who also influenced me was a man called George Pearson, a humble man of great spiritual warmth who lived in the spirit and brought the very presence of God with him. A shortcut way of introduction to say that in due course I did become a student for the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. In respect of that I studied Philosophy at Queen's University in Belfast and Theology at New College, Edinburgh and Union College in Belfast as well as the Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey.

While completing my final theological year at Princeton, I wrote back to Church House stating that studies being completed, I was available for work and would be happy to serve either at home or abroad, wherever the need seemed the greater. By return of post I was told that I should serve in Gujarat, India. I returned from Princeton in August 1954, met up with Rhoda and we were engaged by Halloween. Why I always tell young couples who come to get married, 'make sure you have a good, long

courtship'. And so I was ordained, a missionary to India in 1954. No sooner was I ordained than I set off for India, a 3 week journey in those days, and Rhoda followed me a year later and we got married in Wilson College, Bombay in November 1955.

**So some statistics now: 64 years ordained, 63 years married, 3 children, Elizabeth, born in India and Andrew and Mary born here. Rhoda, on medical grounds, was not able to return to India at that time and I was appointed to Church Extension in Bangor West in 1961 and worked here for 37 years until 1998 and that is nearly 21 years ago. So we work in decades!**

It is thrilling and uplifting to recall the manner in which West Church developed from the first days when we met in the old Carnalea House to become a small, but strong, congregation that moved over the road into this new building. New housing brought many people, young people into our locality whom we welcomed and drew into our congregation. We sought to satisfy the needs and the challenges with many baptisms, a

large and growing Sunday School department and with much endeavour we sought to create a vibrant Christian faith in this place. In our early years we were good at unremitting hard work and outsiders would say that we had achieved a lot of great success yet I felt that we fell short of a New Testament life and a Holy Spirit vitality, and I had a hunger for that. So having heard that the Rev. Tom Smail, a fellow student from New College days, and much respected by me, had entered upon a new fresh experience of the Holy Spirit. It seemed right to invite him to come and visit us and he did. He prayed with me to be filled with the spirit. After a week struggling with unbelief I clearly found the Holy Spirit working in my life in a new way. Not only was I given a new Bible and a new dimension in prayer and praise, a new awareness of the Holy Spirit within but I found that people for whom I prayed likewise received such blessings. Things began to change and people began to change and that is best understood if I give a couple of examples.

**Rhoda then read 2 stories, first of a man called Chris Annette and then of Duncan Reid both of which come from West Church Journey, which is well worth reading as there are many, many other stories of the same kind, of the same thing happening and of the gracious work of God's Holy Spirit.**

When many people were requesting, as they began to do, to be prayed for, we had to say to them, 'come after the evening service' for there was no other time or space for this to happen and many people came to know the reality of God. The Sunday evening meeting, people who wanted prayer for themselves, or for others or for situations that they had a concern for, these could be prayed for and were.

Sometimes we have been asked,

"What about all the Troubles in the Province at the time, all the atrocities and hard things that were happening. Did you have any contribution to that?" And to that I would say, yes, we did. We prayed for people that folk had a concern for, we prayed for situations that were hard and difficult. For example, we prayed for our policemen, because people that they knew who were in the police and they had a concern for them and at the end of a meeting these names would be presented to God and I'll give you a couple of examples of things that happened.

We prayed for their safeguarding and as far as I know, in respect of all the people we prayed for, none came to harm. But I'll give you two examples: the name of a young policeman who was about to go on active duty the next day was mentioned. The next day in Belfast he went on duty with an experienced officer. In Royal Avenue there was an alert that a suspicious object might have been left in one of the adjoining arcades. 'We have to warn the shopkeepers who may not know' said the senior policeman, 'you take the left side and I'll take the right and we'll go down and make sure'. The young policeman

reached a place where there was a bicycle tied to a shop and when he reached that he heard a voice that said to him strongly 'FALL FLAT' and he obediently fell flat. At that moment the bomb went off and he was covered with broken glass and debris but he was unhurt.

Another example, the name of a policeman in Downpatrick was mentioned and one night when he returned home from his work and was making his way from his garage where he parked his car to his front door, he heard a voice that said 'RUN FOR IT' and he ran through the door that was normally locked and at that moment a hail of bullets came right into the room where his daughter was asleep. The gunman had been hiding behind some trees and shrubbery on the opposite side of the road.

Two examples of those that we know that there was an answer to the prayers that were made.

West Church grew in size but not necessarily at the expense of quality. Hugh and Anne Anderson came to us as a newly married couple, eager Christians, seeking to grow and to be fruitful. After three decades, Huge reflects thus.

Cont'd over

## "DAVID

WAS A VERY SKILLED AND UNDERSTATED MENTOR. I LEARNED MUCH MORE FROM HIM THAN HE EVER KNEW. AND MORE THAN I KNEW AT THE TIME. HIS MINISTRY STILL SHAPES MY OWN IN VARIOUS WAYS EVEN THOUGH I ONLY SERVED WITH HIM FOR A FEW YEARS BEFORE HIS RETIREMENT."

Rev. Bobby Liddle,  
Assistant Minister at West  
before being called to  
Legacurry Presbyterian  
Church



**Pictured, back row Rt. Rev. Dr. Charles McMullen & Lindsay Conway front row, Lyla Graham, Rhoda & David Bailie and Victor Stephens**

'West Church gained a reputation for many, many things down through the years that I have known it. Its friendly and informal style, its ability to blend both traditional and modern forms of worship without causing offence to either side, its friendship and cooperation with neighbouring churches, its openness to whatever way the spirit leads and willingness to take risks for Jesus' sake. Perhaps more importantly he said are its Life in the Spirit seminars which have been a life changing experience to so many people. The wonderful thing is that these qualities that attracted us to West Church over 30 years ago are as evident today as they were then.

In West, we are deeply indebted to those who have come to us. People like Tom Swail who came to and spiritually enriched and blessed us. People like Mrs Jean Darnall, American Evangelist who held us spellbound by her stories of God's grace. Read now Ethel Anderson, how she felt impelled to go to one of her meetings on a Sunday afternoon and the impact that that had upon her life. She writes, 'we went to charismatic meetings in West Church and in Belfast and sometimes the Sisters from St. Comgall's joined us. I have memories of Sister Grace playing the guitar. Nuns from St. Comgall's, the Catholic Church on the Brunswick Road, came to Life in the Spirit seminars in West and were later to

conduct these seminars in their own church. Ethel Anderson had an important role in our Sunday Schools, with Renee Robinson she had a department of 90 people, 2 rotas of teachers needing a total of 18 teachers to man it, other departments likewise. She had a way of inviting young women to help and a way also of saying to them 'you might find it helpful to go to a Life in the Spirit seminar'. So we had addition and quality.

Our lives in India and Ireland have been deeply fulfilling. We have enjoyed a key role in gospel ministry. We have been able to share the Good News of Jesus with many people in every age group.



We have seen the church built-up together in fruitfulness in His way. Having lived for 90 years, one can compare life back in those early days and life today. The gap between then and now is vast and growing. A godliness that once characterised life has largely disappeared. Society has become secularised and brutalised. The radio tells us almost daily of sundry atrocities. So many people do not go to church nor worship. Large church buildings, once highly populated and used for vibrant worship, now sparsely attended or even shut down. So many people openly, boldly declare that they do not believe in God and that the Bible is not the Word of God, no different from any other book.

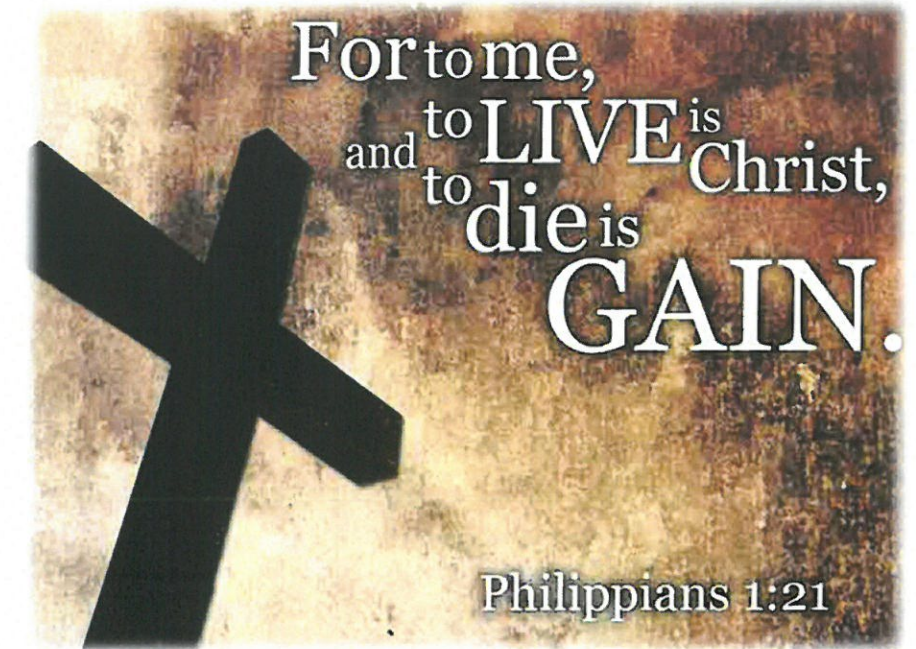
A few weeks ago Rhoda was at a church breakfast for women where a young lady from Sweden was the speaker. A keen Christian herself she declared that the church in Sweden had become so diminished that it now represented only 1% of the population.

I look back upon life as a minister with great satisfaction because I have witnessed so many lives transformed and blessed through faith in Jesus. My conviction is that a minister can still have a key role in the power of the Holy Spirit in facilitating such transformations. For the world denies the existence of God or the claims made in the Bible of Jesus Christ, a godly educated and skilled minister can still open the Gospels and refute such unwarranted

accusations.

Having attained 90 years, I am happy to celebrate them in this place with Rhoda, faithful loving, unselfish and building partner with our children Elizabeth, Andrew and Mary, whose love and devotion we treasure. And to do so in this congregation of West Church where mutually we have experienced so much love in Christ and have laboured hard and long together. We simply say to you 'that we love you and that we have experienced so much of your love and support for us. Our focus must remain on Christ. And we rejoice that under our successor, Charles McMullen, Moderator of the General Assembly, our congregation flourishes and our whole denomination receives vision and leadership.

We are well aware that our remaining lifetime here is limited. It is a tiny fraction of that whole glorious life that lies ahead and beyond. For Christ there is for all of us a destiny that is glorious. We may well ponder Paul's words to the Philippians, 'For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain' and then he adds, 'I desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.' We rejoice at the prospect for the perishable is clothed with the imperishable and death is swallowed up in victory and I know that in all our hearts we say Amen.



## JOURNEY WITH JESUS *by Rev. Andy Galbraith*

If you've been with us on Sunday mornings since the start of the new year, you'll be aware of a sermon series through the book of Psalms which we've called '**Awake my Soul**'.

We've been investigating how our prayer lives can be shaped by the beautiful language we find in the Book of Psalms:

- Repentance (the turnaround)
- Lament (finding God in the Dark)
- Petition (the big ask)
- Adoration (awestruck)
- Meditation (stop, look & listen)

Our Awake my Soul series has now come to an end and we are launching into a new series that will take us towards Easter. Maybe Easter still feels like a long way away to you, but we are going to posture ourselves as a congregation

for the coming of Easter. We are going to do that by following in Jesus' footsteps as he journeys towards Jerusalem. So the title of our new series is simply **Journey with Jesus**.

In the New Testament there is a key verse that serves a launch pad for this series. It is found in Luke 9:51, and it marks the turning point in the gospel. After this verse, everything that follows is building up towards Jesus' destiny on Calvary hill that first Easter. Here's how it reads in the Voice Translation:

**The time approached for Him to be taken back up to the Father; so strong with resolve, Jesus made Jerusalem His destination.**

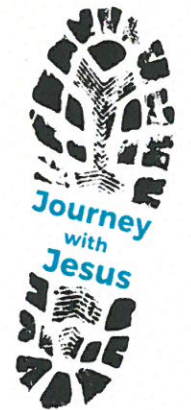
Jesus is heading towards the cross, knowing full well what is on the road ahead. But fuelled by His love for us and determined to obey His Father's plans, He doesn't hesitate to turn His face towards

Jerusalem!

As we follow Jesus on His journey we will be exploring some episodes that happen as He journeys to the cross. Each week we are going to explore a different spiritual discipline that can help us in our own personal walk of faith. I

hope you will journey with us as we set our destination for Easter 2019. I hope you'll be open to develop new spiritual disciplines as we journey together; disciplines that will help us grow deeper with God and live faithfully for Him in our everyday lives.

On Palm Sunday, 14th April, we will be focusing on the discipline of hospitality and hearing what Jesus has to say about that. Rev. John Braithwaite will be preaching at our morning services and we will hear from members of West who serve at the International Meeting Point in Belfast. This service will serve as the launch of our United Appeal for Mission, which we hope the congregation will wholeheartedly support once again.



# MODERATORIAL MUSINGS

by Rt. Rev. Dr. Charles McMullen

I am writing at the beginning of March, as I set out on the final quarter of my Moderatorial year. My successor, Rev William Henry who is minister of the Maze near Lisburn, was appointed at the February meeting of our Presbyteries and preparations are already under way for this year's General Assembly when I will hand over officially to him on Monday 3 June.

Yesterday I broke my mileage record as I managed 280 miles altogether. I left Bangor for an Irish Inter-Church Committee meeting in Dundalk before then stopping off in Omagh to meet Barbara who had travelled from Belfast by bus. The two of us enjoyed a brief walk through the town centre and coffee before heading to the Silver Tassie Hotel, Letterkenny, where there was an opportunity to meet and hopefully encourage those involved in education. We were well entertained by the choir of the Royal School of Raphoe. It was after midnight by the time we returned to Bangor.

Not every day is as hectic as that, but there is an amazing variety of activity and interaction with all kinds of people. On Sunday, we begin eight days in the Monaghan Presbytery, my fourth and final visit to a local area which involves visiting congregations and coming alongside manse families, to hear something of their journey and to pray with them. We invariably receive far more than anything we give!

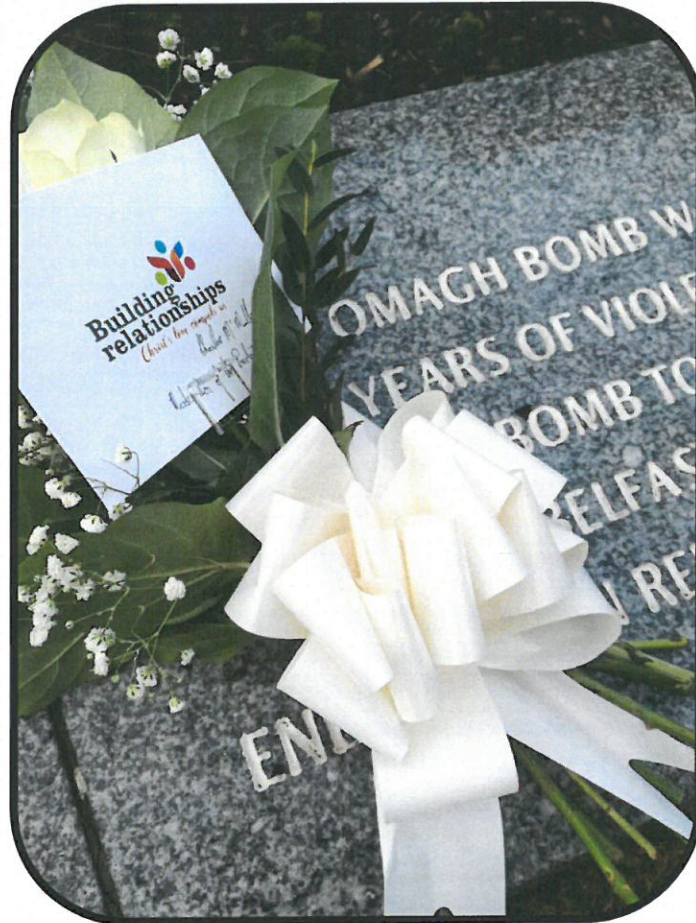
While taking in more than just County Monaghan itself, the Presbytery stretches from the Wild Atlantic Way across country to the shores of the Irish Sea. Made up of 34 congregations consisting of approximately 1,000 families, it extends to Dundalk in Co Louth in the east, to Ballina in Co Mayo to the west and from Sligo City in the northern part of the Presbytery to Kells in Co Meath in the south, where I will be speaking to a

mainly Romanian congregation. Most of the churches, however, are situated in counties Monaghan and Cavan.

My agenda will encompass time with people of all ages from nursing homes, to work places, to schools. Many within the region are dependent on the rural agricultural economy and local engineering and entrepreneurial enterprises. We will visit local employers, including Combilift in Monaghan, Lakeland dairies in Bailieborough and Carleton Cakes in Cootehill. I will also visit St Mary's Hospital Castleblayney and a number of schools under the patronage of the Presbytery of Monaghan, Castleblayney Central, Ballybay Central, Drumcorrin School and Dun Dealgan National School.

I will take part in two significant celebrations, the first being the 300th anniversary of First Castleblayney Presbyterian Church, where Rev Colin Anderson is the minister and who worshipped in West for a couple of years, becoming involved in Younglife alongside his wife Debra. Monaghan County Council will also host a civic reception for us and we will also attend a performance of 'The Importance of Being Ernest' at Castleblayney Drama Festival.

Throughout the week there will be



Laying a wreath at the Omagh bomb memorial

opportunities to offer pastoral support for ministers and elders at the Annual Elders' fellowship dinner that will be held in Cootehill Presbyterian Church Hall, Co Cavan and a breakfast for ministers, which is also in Cootehill. A Presbytery rally, which is a time of worship and teaching that is open to everyone from all over the region, will be held in Bradox Presbyterian Church. I will also spend time with senior members from congregations in the border area around Clones, where Rev Jim Hagan is currently taking services.

On a personal note, my father-in-law hails from Co Monaghan and there has been a family joke that all roads somehow lead back to Ballybay! Barbara and I have been amazed over the years by the

number of people we have met who have roots in the area, and know that we ourselves will be blessed as we discover something of the wider region's innate beauty and charm.

While mentioning family, it was a particular privilege to tour the Omagh area during the first week of February. Let me take you through Friday 8 February, a typical day during the week.

It all began at the site of the Omagh bomb memorial at 8.30am where I had the opportunity to lay a wreath of flowers and pose for photos for the local newspaper. It was a very poignant moment indeed! From there, Barbara and I were taken to Omagh County Primary School, where I spoke at assembly. That's the school I attended and the principal very kindly gave me a tour of the classrooms afterwards. It hasn't actually changed that much and I recognised many of the classrooms!

Rev Robert Herron is the minister of my home congregation of Trinity, Omagh, and from the school he took us back to his house where there was an opportunity over coffee and scones to talk to the local Sinn Fein MP Orfhlaith Begley and Declan McAleer MLA. Discussions were amicable, but also wide-ranging and frank. Wherever I have gone this year, I have seen it as important to link with local political representatives in the hope of encouraging them to try and break our current political impasse.

We were now running late for our next appointment which was a tour of the very impressive, state of the art Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex, which would be a very good excuse to relocate to the area. We were accompanied by a local GP, Dr Nigel Pollock and the Minister of First Omagh, Rev Jane Nelson. I enjoyed stopping off to speak to some of the patients and was very moved by the dedication in particular of palliative care staff.

And then we were given a reception by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council. The Chairman Howard Thornton welcomed us and it became clear that he had done his homework. He told my life story and mentioned one of my favourite quotes which has to do with the shortest but longest journey in the world – the eighteen inch journey between the head and the heart! I was delighted that different political parties were represented.

We were then driven to the Harold McCauley Nursing Home, which is run by PCI's Council for Social Witness. It is an outstanding facility on the banks of The Camowen, one of Omagh's three rivers, and there is such a pervasive atmosphere of care and compassion. I had the pleasure of conducting worship for the residents.

Our final engagement that afternoon was a visit to the Prayer Room of first Omagh, which had been set up in response to my call to prayer throughout the denomination. I have received so many encouraging responses to this week of special events and there would appear to be a desire to develop such initiatives. Only prayer can change the spiritual atmosphere of our families, our congregations and our land at this time.

Moving ahead to Sunday morning, we were in Second Castlelderg and Urney for what was a special service. Earlier in the week, I had found it particularly harrowing to be alongside families of the victims from the area. Thirty members of the security forces were murdered during The Troubles and we

heard each of their stories. There were many anguished cries from their relatives who felt they had quite simply been left behind and were without justice. Although I felt I had nothing to say, I prayed with them and laid on hands.

After morning service in Castlelderg, we returned to West for Rev David Bailie's ninetieth celebrations. What a special evening! The love of the congregation was palpable and I tried to take a mental photograph of David in the pulpit, as spiritually alive and refreshing as ever. He radiated the love, joy, peace and contentment of his Lord! All of this was perfectly matched as well, of course, by his wife Rhoda.

Whenever I have been back to West, it has been a bit like being refuelled to continue on the adventure of this year. Already things are beginning to come into my diary for life beyond General Assembly in June. I am looking forward, after a long summer break, to being back in West around mid-August. In the meantime, I am thrilled that the place is in good hands and moving forward in so many different ways. May the Lord continue to bless you all!



Meeting up with Colin & Debra Anderson in First Castleblayney Presbyterian Church

# WHAT IS KIRK SESSION?

by Maureen Bennett, Deputy Clerk of Session

The Kirk Session of West Church comprises thirty-one ruling elders, four ministers or teaching elders, and our youth and pastoral associates who deliberate with us. Over the course of the year, we have said goodbye to David Baillie who after more than fifty years in West, has gone to live nearer his daughter and joined Edengrove Presbyterian Church. Jay Russell has graduated to elder emeritus status and Claire Richards (nee Whyte) has resigned after three years' temporary leave of absence during which she lived in Canada, got married and then came back to Northern Ireland to new beginnings. We wish all three God's blessing in their new positions and are thankful for their contribution to the life and witness of West.

Each Kirk Session meeting begins with a devotional time and also includes time for prayer either as a whole session or in small groups. At the beginning of September, for example, Andy Galbraith led Session in a study of Jethro's advice to Moses in Exodus 18, after which the elders spent some time discussing what that advice and such a model of distributed leadership might mean for us in West.

The Kirk Session has five sub-groups, namely 'Discipleship', 'Mission and Outreach', 'Pastoral Care', 'Youth and Children's' and 'Worship and Prayer'. Each is co-convened by a member of Staff and an elder and is made up of both elders and other members of the congregation. Each sub-group reports regularly to Session and each has reported elsewhere in this edition of Westlife. At each Session meeting there is also an item entitled 'Membership Matters' when the names of new communicant members are registered as appropriate and when Kirk Session also endorses as appropriate, new youth and

## The Code

The Code of the Presbyterian Church In Ireland - a weighty tome that explains the governance, structures and rules of the church - sets out the role of the elders as follows

(1) The duty of ruling elders as members of Kirk Session is to work together with the minister in the oversight and government of the congregation, for the up building of God's people in spiritual fruitfulness and holy concord, and for the extension of Christ's kingdom among all people. In exercising this leadership the Kirk Session shall oversee and work along with other members who have leadership roles in the congregation.

(2) Ruling elders, by their calling, share equally with ministers in responsibility for practical witness both within the congregation and in the wider world.

(3) In the discharge of their duties each elder should be assigned by the Kirk Session pastoral responsibilities and/or other leadership roles in the congregation.

(4) The Kirk Session, along with the Minister, should seek to ensure that all elders are equipped to fulfil their duties.

children's leaders whose names need to be submitted for clearance under the Safeguarding Requirements of both Church and State. Session also receives regular financial reports.

Since September there have been several other key matters which Session has considered and agreed some action:

### 1) Youth and Children's Staff

After Sonia Mawhinney resigned her position as Youth and Children's Associate, there was significant thought given to how we might build on the considerable legacy left by Sonia, and to the recurring issue of how to effect a smooth and healthy transition for those graduating from Young West. The changed and developing format of the evening service has been one outcome. It has taken the best part of the year to arrive at a way forward on the staffing issue that will meet our needs and also satisfy the requirements of PCI; in retrospect, we can say that that time has been

invaluable in helping us to discern God's plan and in scoping our priorities. We are delighted at the way Andrew McClelland has taken on additional responsibilities, shown Godly leadership and managed the team. Session has agreed that he should continue to lead the team, oversee and develop all of the work including that for post-18 year-olds, and that we should advertise for an additional youth worker.

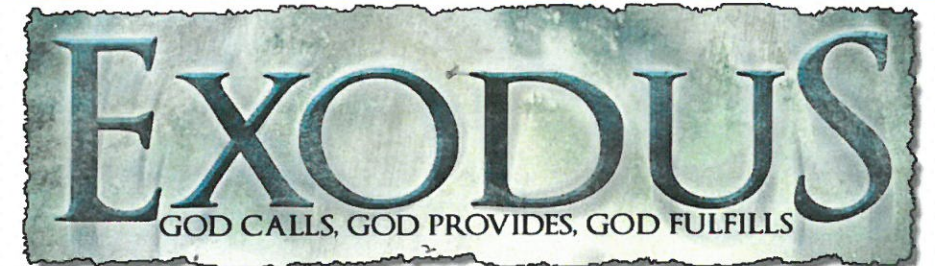
### 2) Female Pastoral Staff Member

Over the last couple of years, we have become very aware of the need to have a female member of staff, to contribute to the pastoral ministry of the church, to deal with some gender specific matters as they arise, and to bring a better balance to the Pastoral Team. When we were invited by Union College to provide a placement for a final year deaconess student, we pursued the opportunity and are delighted to announce that Mrs Louise Davidson will be joining us at the beginning of June for a period of twelve months.

She will work under the guidance of Andy Heron and be with us three days each week and also on Sundays.

### 3) After Schools' Club

A third key item to which Session has given some thought has been the provision of an After Schools' Club. A major part of our ministry is to reach out to our local community and while we will not be in the driving seat of this activity - it is an arrangement between the YMCA and Rathmore Primary School - it will, nevertheless bring on to our premises a range of children and their parents, who might not otherwise be there. The purpose of the venture is to provide after school care at a reasonable cost to parents and while West will benefit from some rental charges, we also hope that it will provide an opportunity for us to get to know the children and parents of the neighbourhood, to reach out with the love of God and to encourage them to participate in some of our other activities.



### 4) Finance

Session has ultimate responsibility for how the finances of church are used and while the detailed management of this is delegated to the Congregational Committee, Session is anxious to reflect on the giving of the congregation and to ensure the good stewardship of that giving in our ministry goals, in the provision of adequate staff, and in the maintenance of our buildings and property. We remain grateful to God for all that is donated, although we are continually exercised by the fact that it is a small number of our members who provide the lion's share of the church's income - indeed the number of regular donors is decreasing as the congregation ages, but that number is not being replaced by similar numbers of new and younger donors.

Before reading this article, you may have thought that the role of the elders is to take over the platform on Communion Sunday and to assist with the distribution of the bread and the wine - and more recently to help lead the prayers of intercession on Sunday mornings! But there is more! Kirk Session meets on the second Monday of each month and the action teams as frequently as necessary. Please continue to pray for Session members that in the words of Jethro to Moses (Exodus 18), *we will be men and women who fear God, are people of integrity and who are incorruptible.*

If you have a family member unwell or in hospital, please do not hesitate to contact Rev Andy Galbraith or the Church Office (028 9145 9688). Although there is a good chaplaincy service in all the major hospitals in Belfast, there are many gaps in the system. Nowadays there is such a quick turnover of 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 the church mobile, 07543 198391 and a member of the Pastoral Team will be available to help.

*The Pastoral Team*



# KIRK SESSION ACTION TEAM UPDATES

**O**ur five Action Teams, within Kirk Session, continue to meet every other month and provide you with the following updates:

## Youth & Children's

**Jayne Fulton writes:** Last Christmas seems a long way away now but many of us remember thinking 'I wonder how many will turn up?' Yes, when you do something for the first time it's always a little nerve wracking. But we need not have worried – lots of people turned up and by the buzz in all areas everyone really enjoyed the first **CHRISTMASFEST**. This was an event that sought to bring the whole church family together – whatever your age – and to welcome our friends and neighbours to join us for fun, food and carol singing around the Christmas tree outside. A photo booth, drumming workshop, crafts, games and of course food were enjoyed by all. Many congratulations to the organising team, Andrew McClelland, Vic, Stephen & Cheryl, who did a tremendous job. Yes it was our first – but definitely not our last **CHRISTMASFEST**!



**MOONLIGHT MISSION:** our young people's semi-formal that raises money for Young West's Summer mission, was as ever a popular night while the Christmas Eve Communion service drew many of our young people to celebrate together the birth of our Saviour.

But we are now looking forward to our other great Christian celebration - Easter. In West this is synonymous with our **EASTER MISSION**, that runs this year from 15 to 19<sup>th</sup> April. It is such a wonderful opportunity for the whole of our church



family to participate in sharing the good news of Jesus. Of course our 100+ teenagers (who stay over in the halls during the week) play a central role in interacting and sharing with the 250 children who attend each morning. However they could not do it without our dedicated Young West leaders, adult helpers who serve in a variety of ways and the prayer support of many in the congregation. Please remember to pray especially for Andrew McClelland in his first year as leader, for our teenagers to grow in their understanding, love and appreciation of God and for the parents of children and teenagers to be impacted by this week also.

Andrew McClelland has been doing an excellent job since Sonia's departure and will continue in his current role as Youth and Children's Worker, fired with enthusiasm and zeal to see God's Kingdom advanced among our young people. He continues to be assisted by Harry, Vic, Heidi and a dedicated team of volunteers. We will be advertising soon for a new Youth Worker and interns to support all the commitments that this team endeavours to fulfil.

Members of Kirk Session were delighted to welcome Harry McBride who shared his experiences of an Abaana trip that he had been on a few years ago. This was a life changing trip for him, widening his

vision of God, of the world and challenging him to play his part in bringing about change wherever needed. Motivated by this, Harry is organising a team from Young West to go to Uganda to support the work of Abaana this summer. Harry has provided more information on this mission trip later in the magazine. Please support them with your prayers, encouragement and if possible, financially. And finally, as display time approaches, as a Kirk Session we want to express our thanks to the leaders in our uniformed organisations. They serve faithfully week by week and make a huge impact upon the lives of young people throughout our church and community. Blessings upon you!

## Pastoral Care

**Andy Heron writes:** It has been great to see potential links developing with Oakmont Lodge Care Home, within walking distance of West Church. Andy Heron advertised in church for people who would be interested in participating in a Sunday morning service once a month in the home. The response was most encouraging. Several West members live there, and they, like a number of other residents, miss being able to attend Sunday services they enjoyed so much when they were able to go. The home's

activities director has been very helpful in making this project possible. The service will last no more than half an hour and include hymns, a short message and possibly a testimony. By the time you read this, the services will hopefully have already commenced. Thanks to all who have volunteered so enthusiastically.

One of our pastoral care action team sub-groups is called Pulse. Led by Mary Braithwaite, it looks at health issues, and has a special concern to help our church become more inclusive for those with disability. The group has spent many hours working on a disability policy for West Church, which will be accompanied by a disability access review document to enable us to assess every few years how well we are doing.

The Pulse group has organised a number of mental health seminars in the past. Last October we held one on the topic of pornography addiction, which led us to the conclusion we need to help teenagers and parents become more aware of this danger and how to avoid it. After attending a lunch-time presentation at Bangor Elim Church on the subject by a Christian charity called 'The Naked Truth Project', we hope to be better informed about how to bring relevant awareness training to our young people and their families.

Our action team is delighted to incorporate the UCB (United Christian Broadcasters) prayer team, capably led by Dorothy Campbell. Team members make themselves available every Tuesday evening (and some on Monday evenings) for people from all over the UK to phone in with prayer requests. This is done in the quiet sanctuary of the ministers' room. It is a wonderfully blessed work, but as you can imagine, the 'pray-ers' hear many people who are carrying heavy burdens. The team exercises a precious pastoral, but also evangelistic, ministry to many. So please remember them regularly in your prayers! You can find out more

about UCB and find some great resources on their website: <https://www.ucb.co.uk>

## Worship

**Andy Galbraith writes:** The Worship Action Team has been implementing a number of different projects in the opening months of 2019. We began the year with a special evening of prayer on Sunday 6th January. It was encouraging to see a good turnout from the congregation for this important event. The evening started with worship and then we had a time of corporate prayer together in the Conference Room. After this we broke into groups and moved around the church premises on a prayer walk. It was great to take the opportunity to soak the church building in prayer at the outset of another year of congregational life.

The Action Team began planning an evening of praise and worship for the whole congregation to enjoy during February that would become the special service of celebration marking David Bailie's 90th birthday. This service took place on Sunday 10th February and it was to be a significant milestone on our congregational journey. (See article on page 58-59).

Looking ahead to the spring we held a healing service on 10th March at 6.30 pm in the Sanctuary. We were excited to welcome a couple of distinguished speakers to this service with Dr. Jerry Root, Professor of Evangelism at Wheaton College, Illinois, bringing us the Word of God and Pastor Hendrik Hoere, missionary and church planter from Cali, Colombia, who led us in a time of healing.

A special prayer event will be held on Sunday 7th April at 6.30 pm to pray over everything that will go on over Easter Mission. We would really value your support at this vital service.

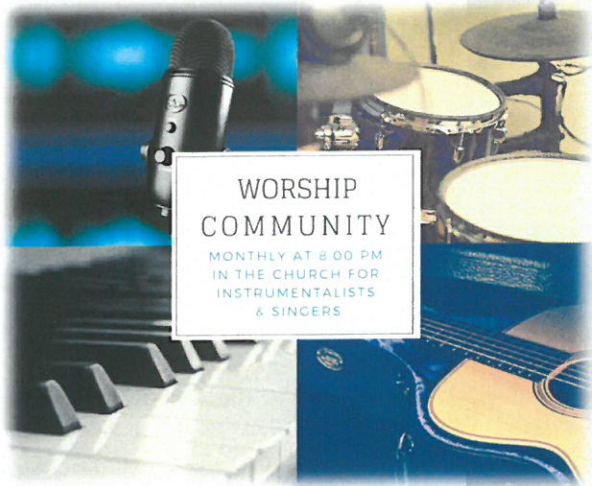
The following week a special service will be held on Sunday 14th April, again at 6.30 pm when we will

*cont'd*



Pictured below and above right, craft activities at ChristmasFest





WORSHIP COMMUNITY  
MONTHLY AT 8:00 PM  
IN THE CHURCH FOR  
INSTRUMENTALISTS  
& SINGERS

new groups have been birthed since Christmas - they are comprised largely of 20-40 year olds the age group we were targeting, include a number of Alpha graduates and are both led by Rev. Andrew Gill. Both groups are also studying the Book of Acts - it is an amazing story of how the early church grew rapidly, spread out from Jerusalem, empowered by the Holy Spirit's

Commission our Easter Mission team.

The Action Team has also implemented a 'worship community' initiative that welcomes members of the congregation who play an instrument or sing, but are not currently serving in any of our worship teams or choir. Anyone who falls into this category is invited to come along to a fun, informal jamming session and explore where their musical gifting could be put to use within the congregation. The 'Worship Community' will meet once a month in the church sanctuary and you can contact Gillian Caughey, our Director of Worship or Paul Shields for further information. (The church office can let you know the dates.)

Finally, on Easter Sunday we will be holding an evening praise service at 6.30 pm to bring our Easter celebrations to a close.

I hope to see you all there!

## Discipleship

*We need...to clean our windows, so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity.*

J.R.R. Tolkien

**Maureen Bennett writes:** The Discipleship Action Team is a bit like an underground stream, helping to nourish and irrigate the spiritual soil of West Church.

Our **Home Groups** continue to meet and this year most of them have chosen from a selection of resources which was drawn up to meet the needs expressed by the leaders. We are pleased that two

coming at Pentecost, and how it faced persecution and sometimes internal tensions.

The other resources from which groups were encouraged to choose are listed below.

- Cover by Cover Series on Revelation
- Blackham : Book by Book study guide on Revelation
- Good Book Guide, Revelation 2-3, Ed Lamb & Chester, Good Book Company
- Passionate Life Bible Study Series on Acts by Simmons
- Payne T. - Bold I Approach
- Pete Greig - Prayer-course.org
- Liz Babbs - Transformed by the Holy Spirit
- Sheets D Intercessory prayer
- DA Carson—Praying with Paul

**The Triads and Quads** have also continued; most meet fortnightly and are studying, 'Discipleship Essentials' by Greg Ogden. The most valuable part for the participants is the opportunity to share together their spiritual journey, to learn from one another and pray for one another. It is our hope that many of the current participants will facilitate another group of 3 or 4 and work with the same resource or the PCI 'Proximity' series.

The **Faith in Focus seminars**, the first of which has just taken place at the time of writing, have been organised in response to

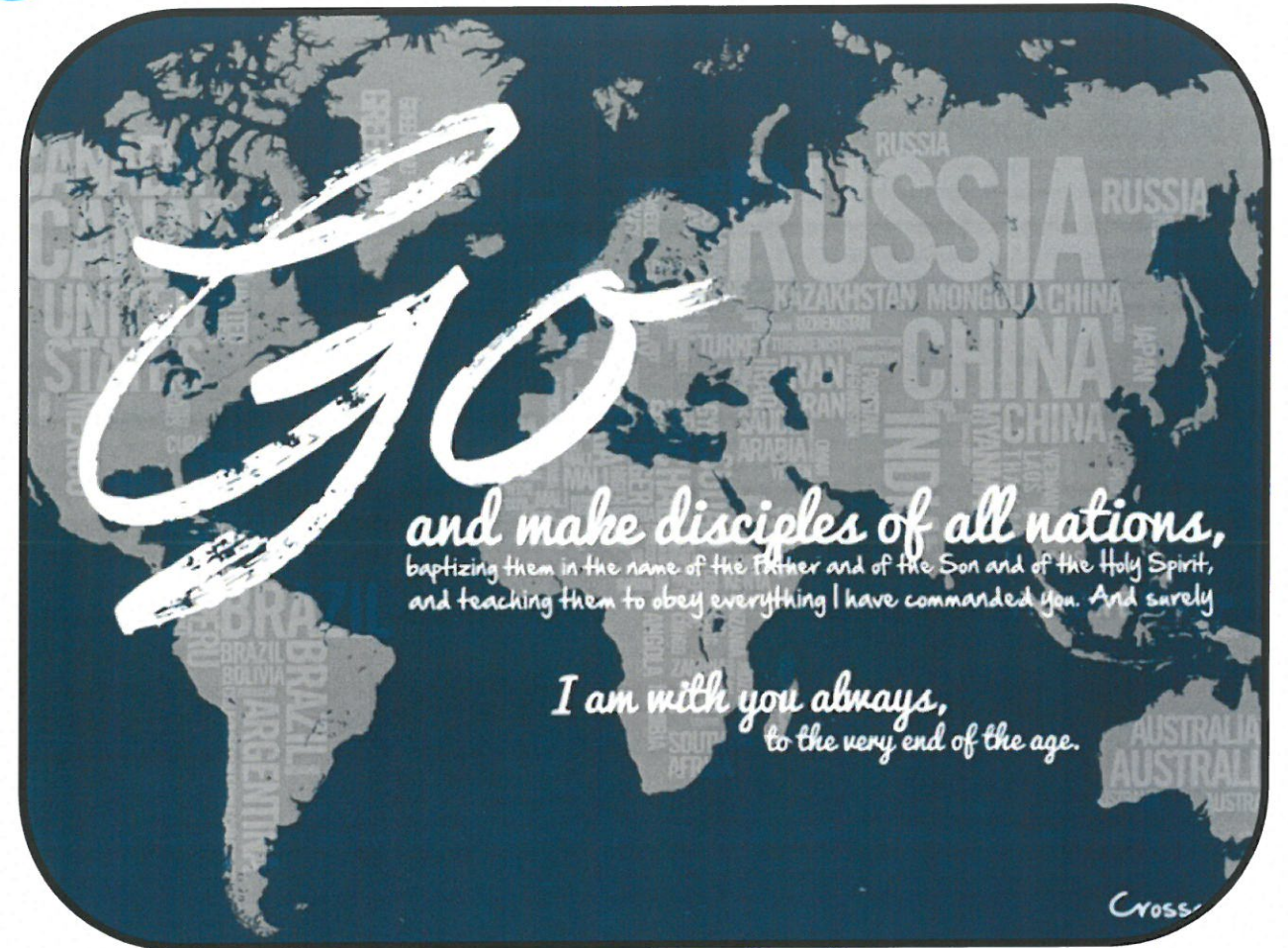
home group leaders in particular, asking for some teaching on current key ethical issues. Dr. Paul Coulter began his series by looking at the Sanctity of Life and the Biblical response to abortion. He posed the question, "How do people decide what is good?" and outlined how, in our post-modern age, too many people challenge the existence of absolute values and instead argue their own right to choose, and to behave as they wish, providing it does not harm others. Such an acceptance of relative moral standards inevitably leads to moral chaos and rejects the absolute standards set by God. As Christians it is His love for us that motivates our obedience, and it is our relationship with Him that helps us to know and follow His will even when the situation is difficult. Paul Coulter went on to set out the basic principles of the Gospel framework - human life is sacred; we are divine image bearers albeit marred by sin; individuals are each known and loved by God; God involves us with Him in the process of procreation, therefore we have choices to make.

He underlined the fact that immediately a child is conceived, a new, individual and unique life comes into existence and therefore, anything that is done to terminate that life is against God's law. He spoke compassionately as he dealt with the 'hard cases' of life-limiting conditions and children conceived out of rape, arguing for more support for mothers and encouraging adoption; he recognised the protection that is given in Northern Ireland to mothers whose life is at risk but questioned the implications for society of any law that allowed for the termination of life in any other situation. The next in the series is on 19<sup>th</sup> March and then on 9<sup>th</sup> April and 7<sup>th</sup> May.

For further information, please contact Maureen Bennett.

## Faith in Focus

Christian Thinking in the Modern World



## Mission & Outreach

**Rev. Andrew Gill writes:** At the heart of the Mission & Outreach Action team is the work of the Missionary Committee. After Jesus was raised to life he commanded his disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the the age." (Matthew 28:19-20) To promote and uphold these words of Jesus the Missionary Committee has the following three aims; to *Envision*, to *Equip*, and to *Engage*.

We seek in *Envision* by teaching believers in West Church to understand God's global plan for mission. We try to *Equip* through motivating them to a loving response to God's word and to *Engage* by providing opportunities for them to use their gifts, abilities and resources individually and corporately to help accomplish God's mission for the word.

One of the ways that the committee works towards these goals is through the prayerful and financial support of our Missionary Partners and our designated priority organisations. Long Term Missionary Partners are individuals who are involved in mission work for longer than two years and usually with an open-ended commitment. They include; Mike and Lorraine Cahoon in Canada; Ben & Jen Carswell working with Tertiary Students Christian Fellowship (TSCF) in New Zealand; Andy Shields, Craig and Sonia Mawhinney, and Keith Morrison all working with Young Life; and Grenville & George Hopkinson working with World Vision.

The seven organisations that we currently support are; PCI's United Appeal, Tear Fund, Release International (which supports the Persecuted Church), the work of Pastor Hendrik in Colombia, Kindfund, Casa Hogar and the Help Them to Smile Project in Peru, and Abaana.

There are so many people who have a heart for overseas mission in West and we have been excited and encouraged by Liz Clayton's and Lydia McMullen's recent trips to Ghana and Malawi respectively. We continue to remember Micheal and Christine Stenning learning Spanish and exploring their call in Peru, as well as Katie and Francis Namate as they head up ShineHisLight in Kenya. We are also looking forward to July when a team from Young West will be going to Uganda to work with Abaana for two weeks.

We are very thankful to all those who generously contribute to the No.7 Account so that we have the funds to be able to support the great work that our partners are doing all over the world. If you would like to know more about how to make a donation to this account and how to support our missionaries and organisations please get in touch through the office. We would also love to welcome you to the Missionary Interest Prayer Meeting that takes place on the first Sunday of every month at 11:15am in the Committee Room.

# HOW BLESSED WE ARE AS A CHURCH

*written on behalf of the Finance Committee*

As we complete the annual accounts it is always good to reflect on how blessed we are as a church through the generosity of our members. As a large church we have many expenses but God always provides for our needs, and we should be truly thankful!

The Office receives many questions during the year as to how the Free Will Offering (FWO) we receive is spent so we hope this article will give a high level view of how this money is distributed during the year.



## Income

In West we have many different bank accounts used for many purposes such as Youth and Children's, Building work, Playgroup and Missionary work, however the running costs of the church are processed in 3 main accounts.

**No 1 Account** – This is the main account in the church and most of our costs in the church are covered from income to this account including items such as staff costs (including Ministers), rates, heat, light and catering. Contributions are made to this account via your FWO envelopes, standing orders or loose donations in the Sunday offering plates.

**No 5 Account** – This account is used to fund the costs of our pastoral staff, excluding ministers. It receives donations via FWO envelopes and standing orders.

**United Appeal of PCI** – This is the account we use to pay our share of the Mission costs of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI). Our congregation has been very generous so that last year we received over £33,000 towards our £35,000 share. The difference is made up with funds from the No 1 account.

## Gift Aid

The government will donate 25p for every £1 donated to the church if the donor is registered for Gift Aid. To be eligible you will need to pay more tax than would be reclaimed. For example if you donate £1000 we can reclaim an extra £250 so you would have needed to pay £250 in tax to be eligible for the scheme.

Gift Aid is a vital source of income to us and we reclaimed over £75,000 last year which covered many of our costs. We still have the potential to improve this as last year we received almost £35,000 in loose collections. If we had been able to identify these donors and they had been registered for Gift Aid we could have reclaimed almost £9,000 to further God's work. Instead we were only able to reclaim a fixed sum of £2000. Only the very few people involved in compiling and submitting claims have any knowledge of who has made donations, because these donations are treated with the utmost confidentiality.

If you would be interested to see how you can help us obtain this extra 'free' money from the government please contact the Office. We can let you have details of how to get FWO Envelopes, set up stand-

we can record your donations and you are a communicant you will also qualify as a full member of the Congregation and be eligible to vote or stand for office.

The following diagram shows the split of the funds coming into West Church, with the main source being the No 1 account envelopes.

We have seen a growth in recent years in the number of standing orders which is more efficient as it reduces the amount of cash that needs to be counted and processed. This is something that the church would like you to consider as a

means of giving your offering.

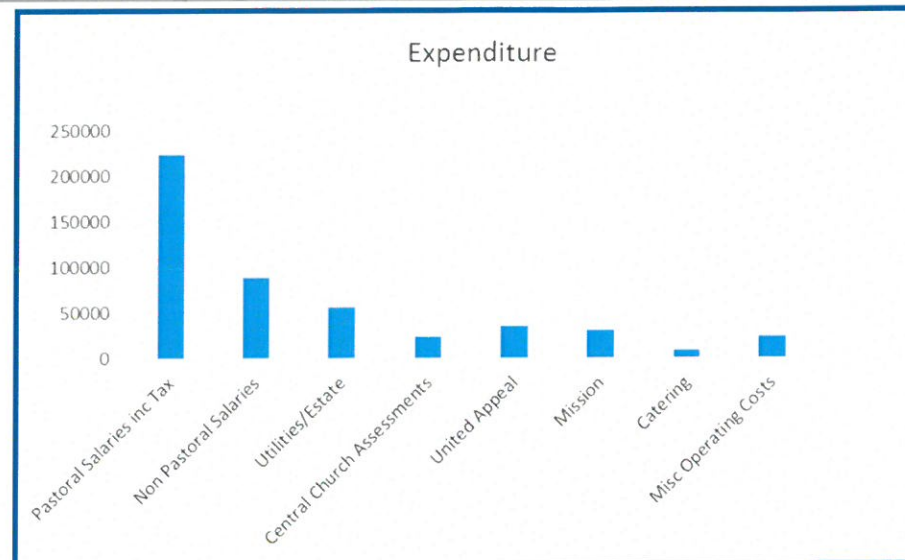
We have been told that some people feel excluded from the act of giving on Sunday if they do not put a donation into the plate so we have made available tokens which can be put into the plate instead showing that you donate via other means and can also join in this act of worship. The tokens are available at the doors on the way into church.

## Expenditure

The majority of the expenditure in West is for staff costs with around 46% of our money being spent on pastoral salaries. This is not surprising given the number of staff needed to support a church with just under 3000 members.

It takes over £55,000 per year to run our premises. We contribute almost £35,000 to the United Appeal of PCI and over £30,000 to our own mission work.

It surprises many people that when the figures are accumulated West Church needs around £10,000 each week to operate before we work on any new initiatives.

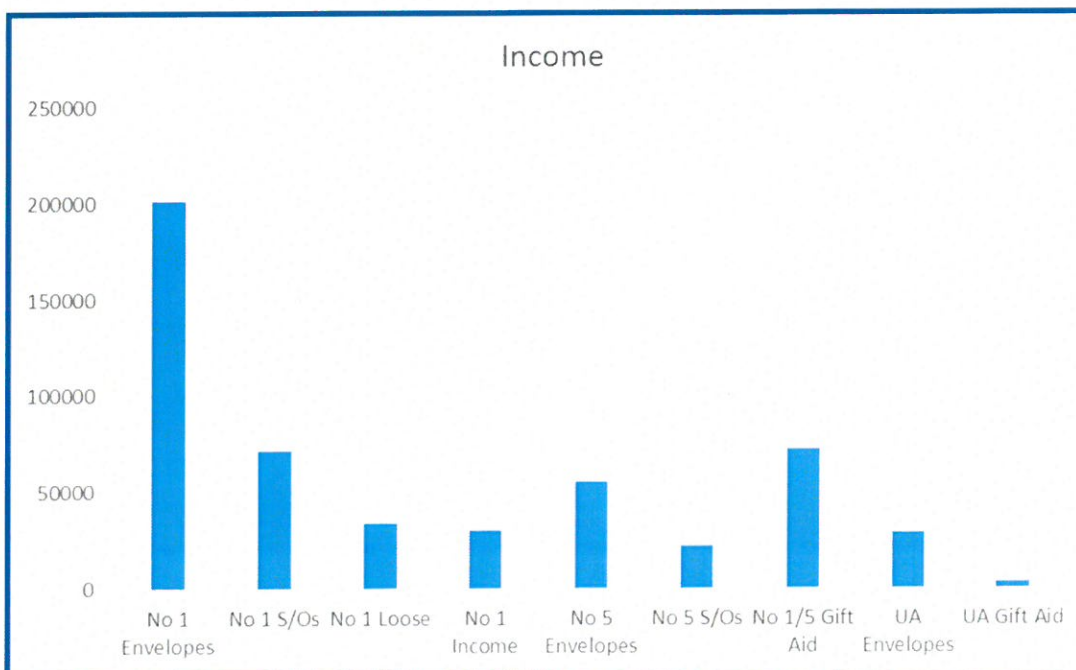


Work for specific mission projects such as TearFund and Peru will come from donations made specifically for the causes and is kept separate. The fact that we manage this each year is something that shows how good our God has been to us.

**This diagram above illustrates how our expenditure is divided.**

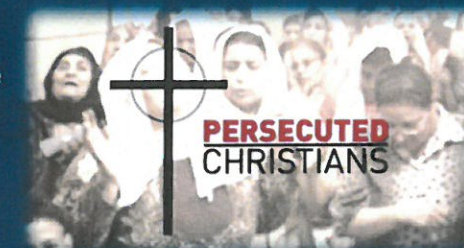
If you have any questions any member of the Finance Group would be happy to help.

The members of the group are, Jeremy Eves (Chair), Victor Stephens (Treasurer), John Poole (Assistant Treasurer), Roisin Scott, Milford Montgomery and Stephen Cully.



## Prayer for Persecuted Christians

Life is incredibly difficult for a great many of our brothers and sisters in Christ across the world. Many have paid a fearful cost for being faithful, as the Lord warned us. We in the western world can learn a lot from their stories and example. We believe God is calling us to stand with our persecuted family in prayer, individually and together, so we are going to begin a monthly gathering for prayer in the Prayer Room on Friday 29th March from 2.00 - 3.00 pm. If you are unable to come at this time but are interested, please speak to me. Also look out for notes in the bulletin which you can use for individual prayer, on the last Sunday of each month.



John Braithwaite

# THE ROLE OF CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE

by Stephen Cully, Church Co-ordinator

**E**very second month, the West Church Congregational Committee meet in the appropriately named Committee Room to discuss the practical issues in the Church.

Some of our newer members may not be familiar with this group so hopefully this article will provide you with some background.

## Who is on the Committee?

The members of the Committee are elected by the Congregation every few years. To be eligible, you need to be a full voting member of the church, which means that you will be a communicant and have contributed to the freewill offering in the last financial year.

The current members of the Committee are: Ethel Anderson, Garth Hall, Alan Logan, Noel Maitland, Hugh McKinty, Brian McVeigh, Milford Montgomery, John Poole, Victor Stephens and Bill Wamsley. In addition all members of Kirk Session are automatically members of Committee and permitted to attend the meetings and vote on issues.

## Sub-Committees

In addition to the main Committee there are 4 sub-committees.

**Finance:** Chaired by Jeremy Eves with members Victor Stephens, John Poole, Milford Montgomery, Roisin Scott, Stephen Cully.

**Catering & Hospitality:** Chaired by Denis Wilson with a large team of helpers.

**Communication:** Chaired by Cheryl Miller with members Garth Hall, Lianne Goldring, Glenn Hall, Megan Johnston.

**Building/Health & Safety:** Chaired by Brian McVeigh with members Ron McAvoy, Bill Wamsley, Ian Robinson, Alan Logan, John Elliott, Noel Maitland, Richard Faulkner, Brian Knox and Ronnie Matthews.

## What is the Congregational Committee?

The Congregational Committee is an official church group under the authority of Kirk Session. It has defined responsibilities which are laid out in 'The Code', which is the 'rulebook' for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Among the defined responsibilities are, managing the graveyard and appointing and dismissing the sexton, both of which do not apply to West Church. It does however cover relevant items such as administering the funds belonging to the congregation and the property.

Over the years these responsibilities have grown as Charity Commission legislation has been introduced to cover items such as Health and Safety, Catering and more recently GDPR. These are all dealt with in a professional manner often with guidance from PCI.

These smaller groups allow members with expertise in relevant areas to assist with Committee issues. Allowing these groups to focus on specific areas also enables better discussions to be held and subsequently better decisions. These groups will report to Committee with any issues or items requiring full Committee approval. The introduction of these sub-groups has been very successful enabling the Committee to focus on the most important issues at their meetings. As Committee meets on alternate months, the sub-committees will try to meet on the other months.

## What has happened this year?

**Finance:** The Finance group has had 2 main challenges this year.

(i) Ensuring that we have sufficient funds to meet the objectives set by Kirk Session and at the same time ensuring that there are adequate funds for our normal operational costs.

(ii) Meeting the challenge of raising the profile and understanding of the United Appeal with the aim of collecting the necessary funds to meet our target.

At the start of each year the group proposes budgets for the different activities and costs within the church and produces a plan which shows how these costs can be met by our expected income. As well as the normal day to day costs such as salaries and the cost of the premises these also include activities such as Mission, supporting Youth and Children's Ministry and other outreach objectives set by session. This budget is then agreed by the Kirk Session in their role as the Church Trustees.

At each meeting the group analyses the year's financial performance against the budgets and if there are any issues a resolution is sought and if this cannot be achieved the matter is escalated to the full Committee for further action. Any requests for funding not in the original budget are brought to the Finance group for authorisation.

Last year West had a target of £34,982 to achieve for our United Appeal contribution. In most years we fail to reach our target and have to subsidise this from our general funds. This has the effect of reducing the available funds for West's own activities such as outreach and mission. This year the group worked with the pastoral team to explain to the congregation the important work that is met by the United Appeal. We had speakers from places like the International Meeting Point and as a result this has now been recognised as more than just a 'tax' from PCI but rather part of the Mission of

the whole Church.

The donations last year were £33,328, our best ever figure, meaning that we only had to use £1,654 from the general funds. We will continue to focus effort in this area of finance.

**Catering & Hospitality:** The team had a busy 2018 while promoting our motto 'Serving Christ, Serving Others.' Our service varied from providing breakfast for ladies from Killinchy to supplying refreshments for the guests of BBC Radio 4 Any Questions.

On the domestic front we were privileged to cater for Charles & Barbara following his election as Moderator, and latterly David Bailie's birthday celebration, all of which catered for between 250 to 350 people. During December we served mince pies and shortbread after Grange Park Primary's Carol Service and, in addition to our own Christmas festivities. Over 800 mince pies and shortbread were baked during the Christmas period.

The lunches for seniors and members living on their own attract around 50 guests when monthly, they enjoy a nutritious lunch with dessert and coffee. On one recent occasion, despite having no gas, we rustled up soup and sandwiches and the entertainment and 'craic' was as good as always.

The considerable amount of work, whether it be for a funeral or concert, is carried out by our dedicated, friendly team of volunteers, who provide delicious meals, economically sourced. Sunday by Sunday the coffee bar is led by our team aided by the congregation with all our activities meeting health & hygiene regulations set out by the local authorities.

**Communications:** The Communications Group has been focusing this year in helping Kirk Session promote the Core Values of the church. After a lot of discussion these have been finalised as:

**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

The group has been introducing these to the Church using a number of different methods: for example, each family received a West Church calendar along with their copy of West Life at Christmas with the values highlighted on each page. You will hopefully also have noticed the pull-up banners which have recently been introduced and can be seen in the Vestibule, Conference Room and the Welcome Area, each displaying one of the values and these will be rotated around each of these areas.

The West Church logo has undergone an upgrade and this is being introduced on all our literature and

**Building/Health & Safety:** This is one of the busiest groups due to the level of maintenance that is needed to manage premises as large and as highly used as West. The group plans an annual maintenance programme covering items from servicing the cookers, cleaning all the carpets in the building to repainting the halls on a phased basis each summer. The group is also responsible for managing requests to use the premises for internal events such as coffee mornings and the rental of our premises to outside groups.

The group is also responsible for ensuring that West is compliant with the Health & Safety regulations set out by the Government and local councils. Going forward, as the building gets older and is used more and more, maintenance will increase and this needs to be managed carefully. The team members are very experienced in this area and bring many skills to the Committee.

If you have an interest in any of these areas and would like to help out, it would be great to hear from you. Contact Stephen Cully or Lindsay Conway, Clerk of Session, on 028 9145 9688 or office@westchurchbangor.org

# SERVING HIM THROUGH YOU

by Louise Davidson

Over the last number of years at West we have had a recurring theme in our discussions at Kirk Session - the urgent need for a female member of staff within the pastoral team. It had come to the point where, in late 2018, the elders agreed to give the Pastoral Care Action Team the freedom to explore how this might be implemented within our congregation.

It was therefore providential when we were contacted in early 2019 by Rev. Dr. David Allen, Dean of Ministerial Studies and Development at Union Theological College. One of David's roles is to find positions for Trainee Deaconesses within congregations for placements as part of their training, and he was giving West Church the opportunity to host a Trainee Deaconess in the final year of her studies, for a thirteen month placement.

Session was swift to agree in principle and in late February after an initial meeting with the Deaconess we agreed that Mrs Louise Davidson should join us the beginning of June. We are very excited to welcome Louise to the Pastoral Care team, where she will work alongside Andy Heron in developing pastoral care within our congregation. Louise comes to us with a rich experience of Women's Ministry and a real heart for serving God in His Church. I know you will all make her feel very welcome in our midst!

Rev. Andy Galbraith



privileged to get this opportunity to serve alongside, Rt. Rev. Dr. Charles McMullen and learn from him and the rest of the team – all the Andys!! I know that they will have lots to teach me and I am willing to learn.

My role as a student deaconess in West will mainly involve ministering pastorally to woman of all ages and stages as well as developing a few different programmes for woman – how we can share life and faith, through discipleship and mentoring. Basically I see it as just walking side by side with one another going deeper in our love for Jesus and others.

I am looking forward to getting to know you all - please do stop me and say hello if I don't get to you first!! I am delighted, humbled, privileged and can hardly believe that God, in his grace and mercy, is using someone like me to fulfil His plans and purposes for His glory and kingdom in and through the work of the diaconate, by bringing me to serve Him and you all in West Church. I am looking forward to what and where God will lead me in this journey and to how I will witness Him at work in new and exciting ways as He promised "Call to me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and hidden things that you have known." (Jeremiah 33:3).

Blessings, Louise xxx

**M**y name is Louise Davidson. I would describe myself as a follower of Jesus, who enjoys life and having fun with my family and friends. I also like a good chat and of course it is always better whilst drinking a good cup of coffee!

I have been married to Barry for 27 years. We have two children Charlie who is 21 and Alice who is 20. We live in the village of Greyabbey, on the Ards peninsula. I grew up in a Christian home in the fishing village of Portavogie knowing about God and that Jesus died on the cross for my sins. However, I did not come to saving faith in Jesus until the age of 27: it was through the challenging words of a work colleague that I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. I have worked most of my life as a nursing auxiliary, in the Ulster Hospital and in the local community.

Eight years ago, I enrolled in a pastoral care course at Belfast Bible College, which then led me to apply to study and complete a B.A. (Hons) in Theology. I have always felt and known that God was calling me into the service of the diaconate.

So, after a period of time I came to

accept and explore this calling which meant I had to be obedient to God, going His way instead of my own and getting myself equipped for the role, waiting on God's timing and not my own.

I commenced Union College in September 2017 and was a full time student for a year studying many different subjects. Between April and September 2018 I had a dual placement shadowing two Deaconesses, Sonya Anderson in Shore Street Donghadee, and Heather McCracken deaconess in the Royal Victoria and City Hospitals. These two placements have been invaluable to my growth and learning. At present I am on placement in Dunmurry Presbyterian Church where I have been assisting the minister leading, teaching and preaching as well as carrying out a lot of pastoral visitation. This has been a great learning curve to me – of how preparation is vitally important and cannot be rushed.

At the beginning of June my placement commences in West Church and when I heard I was coming to serve you here, I was overwhelmed. I am delighted and

# STEPPING OUT OF COMFORT ZONES

by Rev. Andy Galbraith & Grenville Hopkinson

**S**wonder if you have ever challenged yourself to give up something scrummy during lent?

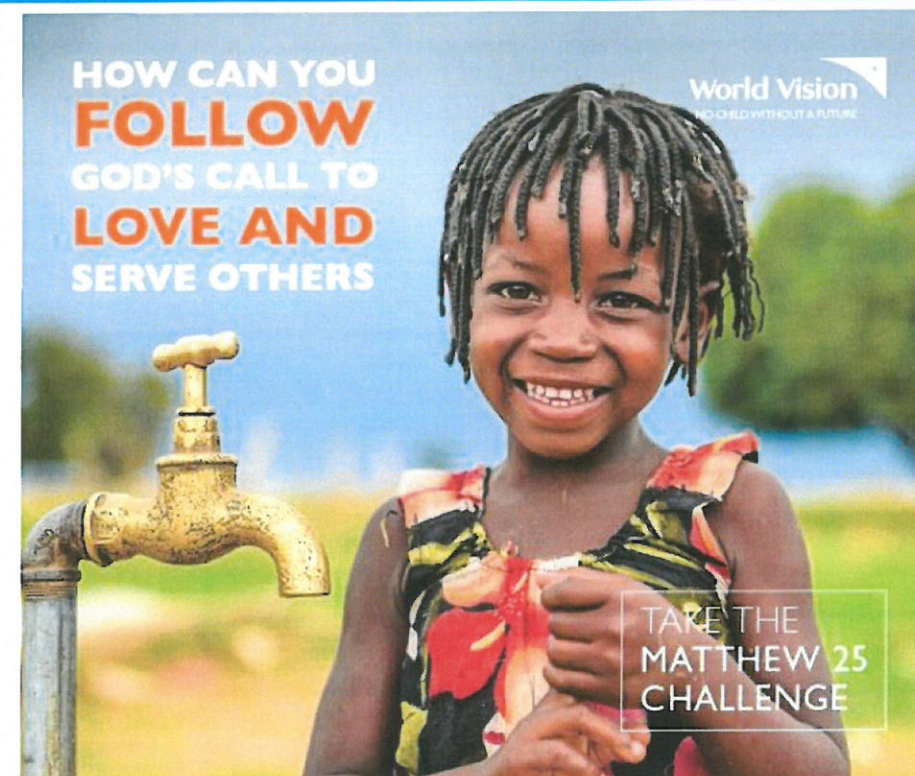
This year at West we were planning to preach to the spiritual discipline of fasting when we were encouraged by one of our members to invite the congregation to participate in a week-long challenge that churches across the UK were getting involved in. On further inspection we discovered this initiative really resonated with the theme of fasting.

'The Matthew 25 Challenge' is run by the Christian charity World Vision and has been designed to help us to step out of our comfort zones and engage in God's love for those around the world living in poverty and crisis. We are blessed to have a member of our congregation, Grenville Hopkinson, working in a leadership role with World Vision.

So with Grenville's encouragement, we invited folks at West to embark on a week of daily challenges that included skipping meals, drinking only water, sleeping on the floor, wearing the same clothes for two days, reaching out to strangers and praying for our neighbourhoods. The staff team at West along with 87 members of our church signed up for this and participated. Personally speaking it was more difficult that I imagined, but it had a powerful impact on those that took part...

Andy Galbraith

If you didn't sign up to the Matthew 25 Challenge at the time, it's still possible to do so—just text **MATTHEW25** to **88080** to sign up and you will receive daily texts to challenge and encourage you with powerful stories of children around the world. Alternatively have a chat with Grenville or Georgie Hopkinson



Doing the challenge as a family was great fun. Each evening as we sat down to dinner, there was a text message, a video and some questions to reflect on. OK, our teenage children were typically non-verbal about their experience during the day but they all did the challenges and 2 out of 3 of them slept on the floor so it wasn't bad! I think they bailed out of wearing the same clothes two days running but I was impressed that they went for the prayer walk on Saturday.

Two things struck George and I, Cheru's story - a little 5 year old girl who carries a kettle 6 km each day to get water was tough. The kettle is tiny, but when it's full it's the heaviest weight she can carry. The water she was drinking was terrible. George and I know what's it like to install a water point and have heard a community's joy when they finally get clean water. It makes a huge difference to children like Cheru, her parents and the whole community. The second was Ali's story and sleeping on the floor. He had to leave his home and is living in a refugee camp in Lebanon. We've been fortunate enough to visit refugee camps and can appreciate the noises, smells and general atmosphere that are Ali's daily experience.

During the challenge we were struck by how safe we are here in Bangor, how far away we are from being homeless, from having to uproot and leave everyone behind, from putting our lives on hold while we get 'processed'. I deal with these issues everyday with my work, however doing the challenge provided a great opportunity to pause and think more deeply about how these challenges impact children around the world. It was difficult, but a temporary discomfort in solidarity with children who have to confront these issues and keep going every day.

Grenville Hopkinson

# SHOWING GOD'S LOVE IN ACTION

Every aspect of our Church's mission depends to some extent on United Appeal. Hundreds of projects and programmes at home and overseas are helping to advance God's kingdom, showing God's love in action to hundreds of thousands of people.

We will have a special offering on Easter Day in support of the work of the United Appeal for Mission. You can contribute to the United Appeal fund at any stage during the year by envelope or Standing Order.

The following story (right) from east London is just one example a few ways of our Church's mission...as we mission together.

## West Church's United Appeal commitment for 2019 to PCI is £35,000

### Partnership for the gospel

"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Phil 1:4-6

From the earliest days of the church, the apostles understood the need for partnership in taking the gospel to the world. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, endured much for his evangelistic mission while also training, encouraging and enabling others in this commissioned word.

The Great Commission remains today and Presbyterians in Ireland are encouraged to partner together for the sake of the gospel. The 'United Appeal for Mission' has endured as an appropriate vehicle to join our resources and coordinate a shared work in Ireland and across the world. Recognising that 'together we can do more', our Presbyterian congregations must be in partnership together and contribute to this Presbyterian fund for mission, enabling the work conducted by our central councils.

Our ability to support mission at home, such as around the Ards Peninsula, is mirrored in our support for the work of mission throughout the world, including the Kabathis in London. Please be assured that the huge amount which is faithfully contributed through United Appeal each year is equally faithfully managed by the hard work of our Financial Secretary and his staff. As convenor of the United Appeal Committee I have had sight of the various budgets from our Councils and know that the committee have and will diligently direct your contribution in the right direction for the sake of the gospel.

Together, we can do more!

Rev. Mark Catney, Convenor,  
United Appeal for Mission Committee



The Presbyterian Church in Ireland oversees the work of 29 global mission workers in 10 countries



- |        |          |
|--------|----------|
| Brazil | Portugal |
| Jordan | Romania  |
| Kenya  | Spain    |
| Malawi | UK       |
| Nepal  | Zambia   |

PCI global mission workers are involved in:

- Church planting
- Community Development
- Medical Mission
- Scripture distribution
- Student ministries
- Theological education

### Kingdom building in London with East Africans

PCI, as a denomination, has been supporting Rev Edwin and Anne Kibathi in their outreach work in east London since 2006.



Known as PCEA UK Outreach, the church exists to provide a soft landing for those arriving from East Africa. At the same time, it serves as a bridge between cultures, journeying towards integration into the wider community.

From humble beginnings, with a congregation of just eight adults and four children, the London church now has over 100 members and their children who meet regularly for worship together. The majority of the members are Kenyan, but there are some from Zambia, Nigeria and the Congo.

Through the United Appeal, PCI has been able to fund Edwin's salary and the rent for their manse. Edwin says, "That funding is very important and we very much appreciate it. I don't have to worry...I am able to concentrate on the tasks at hand."

Anne adds, "receiving funding from PCI gives me a confidence. I do not fear that my children won't have a place to sleep. We don't need to rely solely on this congregation. We feel encouraged by the prayers of PCI and the way your members welcome us".

If you would like to find out more about the PCEA UK Outreach go to its website: [www.pceaukoutreach.org](http://www.pceaukoutreach.org)



#### Together we support

- 79 Home Mission Congregations, 20 North & 59 South
- 11 Community Outreach Workers
- 3 Project Workers
- 15 Deaconesses and 4 in training working in congregations, hospitals

#### We provide support to

- 28 Chaplains in Hospitals, Universities, Prisons & The Forces
- 458 Bed Spaces: Residential, Nursing, Sheltered & Supported Housing and Student Accommodation

#### Together we provide Training & Events

- Taking Care Training Session in 2018
- Over 2970 attended Youth & Children's Event
- Over 1200 took part in training for Ministry, Eldership, Youth & Children's work, Preaching, Discipleship Making and Leadership
- Currently 15 Ministry Students with 31 Assistants
- 782 completed "Handling the Word"
- 174 Accredited Preachers with 43 currently in training

- 18 Auxillary Ministers now trained

"I never cease to give thanks to God for the faithfulness and generosity of PCI congregations to the United Appeal, as it enables the sending out of global mission workers and the provision of grants for a wide range of partner church outreach initiatives.

As I travel overseas on behalf of PCI, I am privileged to see the difference this Appeal is making in the work of the gospel. Even if you are amongst those who rarely journey far from home, your commitment to supporting the United Appeal catapults you to the cutting edge of God's global mission."

Rev. Uel Marrs,  
Secretary, Council for Global

# WEST'S SILENT WITNESSES

Just prior to Christmas a special ceremony was held in Assembly Buildings just prior to Christmas by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. It was to honour the exceptional contributions made by staff and volunteers in congregations, home and support units through its Social Witness Recognition Awards.

PCI members of staff in 16 homes and support units along with volunteers from our 500-plus congregations were asked to nominate individuals, or a team of people, who are making an outstanding contribution in the area of social witness. Across 12 different categories, the Awards included special recognition for volunteering, safeguarding, promoting good practice, leadership and team of the year.

The biennial awards are now in their sixth year and are organised by PCI's Council for Social Witness which has overall management responsibility for our homes and support units. The awards were presented by Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Charles McMullen who praised the silent witness of the Church and the staff and volunteers who received their awards.

Charles said, "As followers of Jesus Christ He asked us to demonstrate the love that He poured out on us by showing that same unconditional love for people. While we can do this in so many ways, at its heart it means the putting of our faith into



caring, which is a powerful social witness of the gospel. Everyone who has been nominated and everyone who has received one of these awards has an incredible servant heart and has made an outstanding contribution to the life of the Church in quiet and unobtrusive ways. The Lord sees all things, so He is very much aware of all they are doing for His sake and the advancement of His Kingdom."

West Church had both individual members and groups recognised. The Unsung Hero (congregation) Award went to Heather & Laura McCreary and their work with our Little Acorns group on a Sunday. The Promoting Good Practice Award went to Derek & Tanya Polley for their work with Sycamore Club, Maureen Blackmore was

awarded a Commendation for Outstanding Contribution to the work of the Church and Brian Smith was recognised as Chair of Sunnyside Residential Home.

Lindsay Conway, Director and Secretary to the Council for Social Witness and our Clerk of Session said, "In a climate of increased hardship, the Churches are having to fill gaps left by the statutory services. Foodbanks for example face increased demands and more pastoral support is being requested as Welfare Reform starts to bite. These awards are a celebration of the caring and compassionate work that is undertaken by so many unsung heroes in our denomination who are responding to society's needs and filling the gap."

He continued, "Social witness is a



Pictured with Rt. Rev. Dr. Charles McMullen with (left) Laura and Heather McCreery, above left with Tanya & Derek Polley and above right Maureen Blackmore

very special kind of witness. As people reach out to others in different hands-on everyday ways, we want to honour the contribution that they make. Every winner and every nominee is changing lives and bringing light in a sometimes dark world."

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# WEST CHURCH—A FAMILY AFFAIR

by Keith Morrison

**I**t is hard to believe, but come this Easter we will have been at West Church for four years. I remember the first service I attended like it was yesterday – the sermon was ‘Breakfast with Jesus’ and Dave Gray was cooking bacon on the stage as part of his children’s talk! The smell wafted around the church making everyone hungry and I thought ‘That’s different, I could get used to this’. I never did get to taste that bacon though – one of the downsides of being just a little old for J-Club.

As is often the case for families, our two girls – Brooke (now 20 and studying nursing in Stirling) and Eva (now 18 and a hairdresser) – were the main reason we moved churches. The girls had been going to Young Life at West on Saturday nights and then naturally wanted to go to Young West on Sunday mornings with their friends. They went from not wanting to go to church at all to jumping out of bed on Sunday mornings and rushing to get over to West. It is hard to put into words just how much of a blessing West has been for our girls and we are deeply indebted to the many leaders in Young Life and Young West who walk alongside them.

Rhonda has really enjoyed coming to West. It has strengthened her faith, and challenged her to use the gifts she has been given, particularly in the areas of prayer ministry, evangelism through Alpha, and hospitality through running a small study group (called the Cappuccino Club – can you guess why!?)

It wasn’t all plain sailing though. As you know, West is a very big church and it can sometimes be difficult to settle in and make friends in a new place. Not that everyone isn’t friendly or welcoming – not at all – it can just feel a little overwhelming if you are new. Thank goodness for the Welcome Corner which gave us a chance to get to know a few

people and to find out about all the things going on in West. As this was an important thing for us settling in, the natural thing was to volunteer to help others by being part of that team. It’s great to welcome and chat to new people and visitors – and we get to wear blue polo shirts.

Home Group was another great thing for us. We joined a new group in September 2015 and it was the best thing we’ve done. There was a group of us, mostly new to West, and friendships formed quickly. We still meet every other Wednesday night and are delighted that new members have joined our group in more recent years. As a group we meet to study God’s word and to pray together. We like to socialise and in the past couple of years we have volunteered as a group to help out at Alpha. I really can’t recommend Home Group highly enough – doing life with people really is what the Christian walk is about.

As for me, it has been quite a journey in my Christian life, particularly over the past 10 years. Underlying everything is a deep sense of thankfulness for what the Lord has done for me.

every Sunday and was confirmed at age 11. I remember going to ‘Good News’ club every week. But, from about age 12 or 13 onwards I drifted away from church completely. I simply had no interest and through my teens, twenties and thirties I would have openly called myself an atheist. Not anti-God as



Keith & Rhonda Morrison

such; I just had too many unanswered questions and no sense that I needed God in my life. I was happy enough.

When I first met Rhonda (that wasn’t yesterday!) I could see she had a faith but she didn’t go to church. We were married in a civil ceremony in Belfast City Hall and within 5 years had the girls. Church still didn’t feature in our lives at all. However, when we returned from Brussels in 2005, Rhonda started taking the kids to our local church in Donaghadee (First Presbyterian). Like a good dad I started going to support the girls at special services – Christmas, Easter, GB enrolment, etc.

For me, attending church every couple of months became once a month, then almost every week, as I became increasingly interested – but still questioning the Christian faith. In January 2010, I agreed to attend a ‘Christianity Explored’ course at Trinity Presbyterian at Greyabbey. I am deeply indebted to the Rev Mark Welsh for spotting God at work in me and inviting me along.

Christianity Explored is a little like

Alpha. It is based on the Gospel of Mark – you read a chapter or two of scripture every week and come and ask your questions in a safe space. Every week I came with my questions, and every week a group of us debated and learned. About 6 weeks in (I still have my workbook) a very simple, but deeply profound, thing happened. I just stopped caring about the answers to my questions. I realised that the Bible had been written by God Himself through men. I had never read anything like it. It read me. It spoke to me. It made me hungry to learn more about Jesus. I gave my life to Jesus that spring and took my first communion in May 2010. I well up every time I tell this story and I have tears running down my cheeks as I type this – such is the power of God’s word and His incredible love for us, even me.

It’s been a wonderful adventure since then. I soon became heavily involved in local church life – serving in leadership, on various committees and as a church treasurer. I helped

run Bible studies, small groups, and prayer courses and helped out with the youth when I could. I was so hungry to know more and more about God.

Since coming to West I went back to college and studied A Level Religious Studies (I still call it RE) and loved it. I took part in the first CS Lewis Fellows programme in 2016 and grew incredibly in my faith and confidence—I can’t recommend the programme highly enough (see article on pages 30-31). I attended PCI’s ‘Handling the Word’ course last year and have been blessed by being given the opportunity to speak in Café Church a few times. I am privileged to get to facilitate two home groups and a small (Triad) discipleship group. The men’s breakfasts and annual weekend at Whitepark Bay have been such a blessing for me.

It’s a strange thing to write this all down. I can see how far God has brought me in such a short space of time. I am truly thankful. And I

know none of this change can be of me.

Perhaps the most dramatic change recently has been in work for Rhonda and me. On Good Friday 2014, we went to buy a garden shed and ended up buying a coffee shop!

This little shop has been such a blessing to us and has shown us what it means to be totally dependent on God. It is His shop, not ours, and we try to steward it as best we can for

the benefit of others. It is the perfect place for Rhonda to use her gifts and do her favourite things – talking, cooking and crafts.

My work in the Health & Safety Executive was about saving lives in high risk industries like farming, construction and manufacturing. It was a fantastic place to work, with a real shared sense of purpose. In my five years there, we started a Christian Union and launched a public prayer initiative around farm safety. It was a blessing to be able to lead an organisation which placed such a high value on human life and relationships and where we could be very open about our faith.

Most recently God has called me out of the civil service (for the record I haven’t retired!) and into full-time youth ministry with Young Life International. Having been involved in supporting Young Life for a few years, and being blessed by what it did for my girls, I had to answer this call. When people describe it as taking a big step, I say I’m just doing what I have been told. Since I started in October 2018 I have been blessed abundantly by the work, the team and the wider Young Life family. My role – the Nehemiah Project – is to help ensure that the structure, strategy and finance are in place to help Young Life Ireland grow sustainably. To do this we are building a community of supportive adults around the ministry to help it flourish. There’s more information on Young Life and The Nehemiah Project on pages 58-59. Please take a minute to read the article and get involved if you can. Please help us reach more kids for Jesus.

West Church has been an absolute blessing for us. The West Church family have encouraged us from day one and encouraged us to use our God given gifts for the benefit of others. We are so grateful to everyone for their love and support.

Thank you.

Bless you all, Keith

Keith & Rhonda’s 2 girls, Brooke & Eva



# EQUIPPING FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

Introduced by Maureen Bennett with comments & tributes from 'Westies'

**W**hen you think of CS Lewis your imagination may well travel to a battered wardrobe, a white witch or the land of Narnia and to people like Mr Tumnus or Reepicheep or Lucy and Edmund. Belfast-born C. S. Lewis was also a Christian apologist and in 1976, the CS Lewis Institute was founded in Washington DC, to equip followers of Jesus to articulate, defend and live their faith in personal and public life. By helping thoughtful Christians to mature in their faith and to impact their sphere of influence for Jesus, the Institute seeks to strengthen and support the mission of the local church. The Institute now operates in eleven different US venues, two in Canada and one in London; In 2016 it expanded to Northern Ireland. Since 2016, around 20 people from West Church have enrolled on the one-year discipleship or Fellows Programme.

The programme is essentially designed for career-aged men and women and is organised around a programme of Bible Study, classic readings, monthly lectures, group discussion, spiritual mentoring. Speakers come from both Northern Ireland and the USA. The programme runs on the academic year from September through to June. Summer readings begin with an orientation meeting in June, and preface a September retreat that formally launches the Programme. More details can be found at

[www.cslewisinstitute.org](http://www.cslewisinstitute.org)

The following comments and tributes are from 'Westies' who have attended the programme, any of whom are willing to chat with potential CS Lewis Fellows.

I was drawn to the CS Lewis course as I wanted to go deeper in my faith. During my reading of the Bible I was always asking 'what does that look like in practice?' CSL gives me the opportunity to explore those questions, alongside the inner conflicts that often accompany the walking out of our faith.

The monthly readings were quite intense but the topics are hugely relevant to our faith and everyday life; completing the response papers each month enabled me to gain wider perspectives, to form my own belief systems and practical ways in which I could live those out.

What I valued most about the course was meeting with my mentor who supported me in my faith journey, challenged my thinking and encouraged my questions. I became more confident in my faith as I became more equipped to face with faith the challenges that meet us all in everyday life and to step out into new areas of service.

I also enjoyed meeting with my quartet - a group of girls my own age - and it was amazing how much of our journey's overlapped and how we were able to support one another. I hadn't had a group of Christian friends my own age before and I grew to appreciate and value each one of them.

Claire Watton

I would say that the C S Lewis course is a great discipleship course. It has increased the depth of knowledge that I have about God and has really made it a living daily relationship with my Father in heaven. Yes it does mean commitment, but the outcomes are so much more. It is fantastic being amongst a group of people who have the same desire and focus - which is to know God more. I would encourage everyone to do it.

Rick Scott



## FELLOWS PROGRAM

Jane is a persuasive champion of the principle that 'readers grow leaders'. So when the CS Lewis Fellows Programme was profiled in West Life back in 2016 she was on it immediately. A disciple equipping and faith building course in the spirit of CS Lewis was too good to miss out on! She went into recruitment overdrive and spread the word to her circle. For the next year I journeyed with her through the books, articles, videos and talks; pillow talk enriched by Lewis, Bonhoeffer, Tozer, Keller, and Stott.

After a year of being a proxy 'fellow', I took the plunge and applied. Wow! The reading is challenging, but manageable, but the other aspects of the programme are most wonderful; being teamed up with other participants, growing friendship and intentionality of deepening faith, being mentored by a mature Christian, being inspired by incredible topic talks and praying for each other. If you want to deepen understanding, love and faith I really encourage you to consider committing the next year to the programme.

Dave Gray

As someone involved heavily in the Fellow's Programme from its very beginning I have seen up close how deeply impactful it has been in the spiritual journey of many people. It has enabled people to grow deeply in their faith, to develop rich new friendships through genuine community and to bring their personal growth back into their church fellowships.

The course has been an enormous source of challenge and growth to me and I am excited to recommend it highly to others. You will not regret taking the step to jump in.

Craig Mawhinney

CS Lewis Fellows is a unique discipleship programme. It's a year of learning from the best local and USA speakers, using a hand-picked library of excellent books and resources, and supported by a spiritual mentor and small group. I can't recommend it highly enough.

Keith Morrison

I would recommend the CS Lewis course to others as it provides a unique opportunity to delve deep into the heart of key discipleship topics through a combination of in-depth biblical teaching, reflection, discussion and prayer.

For me, the focus on one specific topic each month and the combination of methods used to engage and interact with the material (personal reading, big group teaching, small group discussion and mentoring) allowed the teaching to go 'deep' rather than remain at surface level. Participating in the course has been transformational to my understanding of key biblical truths and living these out in my everyday life.

I also loved that a significant amount of the material was presented as podcasts or YouTube videos, so I could listen and walk (or iron!) at the same time!

Being assigned a mentor and getting to meet with her once a month was a real highlight for me. I loved having time to talk through difficult or challenging parts of the reading material. We got to learn and recite our Bible verses together and we prayed together. I am so thankful for the time, wisdom and support my mentor gave me during the year.

Sonia Mawhinney

I've been very impressed with the quality and content included in the fellows programme. Each month we have gone deep into specific aspects of our faith, from grace, conversion, to prayer and obedience. With each topic there is a Bible study and lots of additional multi-media resources that unpack key themes which are then brought together during an on-site lecture on a Saturday morning. There are discussion groups and the opportunity for prayer triplets and mentoring through the course which allow further engagement with the topics. I haven't quite managed to keep up with all the material but nevertheless I have been stretched and challenged as God has been at work in our lives. The course is great and highly recommended.

Grenville Hopkinson

For us as a couple who are seeking to be obedient to God's call on our lives, we found that the course gave us a better understanding of who the Holy Spirit is and how important He is in our daily lives. It was good to be part of a community of people seeking to be disciples and to make disciples. We were drawn by the Holy Spirit to this wonderful course in order to gain wisdom, to be able to share and to love those in our family of believers and more importantly those who have not yet discovered the saving grace of a loving God.

Michael and Christine Stenning

I've learned so much during the CS Lewis course, by reading books I would never normally have picked up, listening to podcasts I didn't know were out there and talking with people whose path I hadn't planned to cross. It's arranged so logically that you move step by step through your relationship with God, examining, pondering and being strengthened in every aspect. It is a big commitment but don't let that put you off. It's been the single most helpful course I've taken since I went to Alpha 17 years ago.

Georgie Hopkinson



# ALPHA—A GENTLE, AMAZING, EASY EXPERIENCE

by Sabrina Harvey

I started the Alpha course to encourage my daughter to come along also. At first I wasn't sure what to expect and wasn't even sure we'd make it through the front door. However I thought I could go and check it out even if it was just for one week! I had no confidence in groups and I wasn't sure what Alpha was all about or what exactly was going to happen.



Pictured above, Sabrina

On the first evening we had some food and fellowship, followed by a short video and then we were sorted into small groups where we spent some time getting to know each other by playing a name game in which we used a positive describing word for ourselves, starting with the first letter of our names. I was not sure this would work but it did and I can still remember them!

Once we had settled, one of our two leaders asked each of us a few gentle questions about the video we had just watched. I had no confidence at all in a group and was under no pressure to answer. I spent time listening to others and was gently encouraged to share. Little did Brian and Karen know that just 12 weeks later they would not be able to keep me quiet!

Week 2 and following, each night started with fellowship, food (and I'm sure everyone will agree the chicken goujons were the best!) and a short video and then group time where we had a chance to share with one another how the week had been for each of us. This way we were getting to know each other and soon our wee group started to feel like a family who really loved each other.

I gained so much confidence to share what I thought and learned and was encouraged by others in my group by their views also. Each of us was able to learn from one another and understand better.

## It's 12 weeks later and the time has literally flown in! Where did the time go?

For me Alpha has been great. The videos helped me to understand things, while the benefit of a small group to share with and learn from just made it. I personally have gained from Alpha a better understanding of Jesus, the meaning and purpose of what life is all about and how it applies to everyday life, while gaining confidence in sharing with the group.

The videos each week give you something to think about, and for me having something to visually look at helped too.

I'm really thankful to each of these people in our group and to the two leaders, Brian and Karen, who week after week gave us much encouragement and prayed for us

and also encouraged us as a group to pray for one another.

Alpha has been a gentle, amazing, easy experience and I'd really encourage anyone to go along to one and explore who Jesus is and what life's all about!

On 29th January Andy Galbraith, Andrew Gill, Lorna McQuitty and George & Norah Dines greeted the guests attending another West Church Alpha. Andy reckoned a morning Alpha would appeal to young mothers, the retired and those working shifts. The course meets in the Prayer Room at 10.00 am and finishes by 12 noon. In true Alpha fashion, the morning 'kicks off' with food followed by a talk then a group discussion. In total 10 people have registered for the 15 talks which are delivered over 11 weeks, including a Saturday, which is devoted to the person of the Holy Spirit.

Alpha is life changing and this course is proving to be no different. Already guests are participating fully, friendships are being formed and questions are being answered. We would value your prayers, for wisdom and discernment for those hosting and for protection for those attending. We believe everyone should have the opportunity to explore life and the Christian faith. To ask questions, and share their point of view in an open, safe and friendly environment.

George Dines



# A BIG THANK YOU

by Jane Richardson, Tearfund Rep for West

In the last 3 years we have been supporting Tearfund's work in India to prevent the trafficking of women and children there. As well as supporting them in prayer we have helped financially and, as a congregation, we have contributed £65,000 to help this work. A big thank you to all who have supported this work so generously.

Just before Christmas we were informed that one of our recently deceased members had left a legacy for the work we were supporting through Tearfund partners in India. That bequest was for £25,000.

This gift brought out total contribution to £90,000 and is the equivalent of 9 years support from West which is amazing. **Prince David (Tearfund's rep in India) sends his thanks for all your support.** I know he values your prayers not only for his work but for him personally. His wife, Anita, passed away just before Christmas. She had been such a support for him and he will miss her very much. Do pray for him as he returns to his work this month.

In my last report I said we would continue to support this project both prayerfully and financially but not in the same formal way through the Connect Church project.

There are many needy areas in which Tearfund is involved so we are going to expand the areas we support and be more reactive to immediate needs which arise throughout the year.

One such area at present is in the Yemen which you have probably seen on TV. The images of the suffering of some children must make you weep. I have provided you with the latest information from Tearfund. Any donations to help Tearfund support these children and their families will be most welcome and can be given through our No. 7 Mission account, marked for Tearfund.



## Fleeing war but fighting to survive in Yemen

Following four years of conflict, the people of Yemen are crying out for help and for peace. More than 14 million people are facing starvation, and an estimated 85,000 children have already died from extreme hunger. **This is the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today, and it must stop!**

Ahmed worked as a farmer to support his children, but then war came to his village. *'The shelling and the airstrikes forced us to flee,'* says Ahmed. *'There were only two choices: either to stay under the battles...or to flee.'* He and his family now live in tents in a graveyard, one of the many makeshift camps for internationally displaced people. Ahmed and his wife are doing all they can to care for their children amid the horror of this war. They risk gunfire to collect firewood and walk two hours for water, but food is scarce.

Sofi is another parent afraid for the life of her children, including tiny Afina\* (not her real name) aged just seven months. Because Sofi didn't get the nutrition she needed when she was pregnant, she couldn't breastfeed Afina when she was born. She and her family are putting all their efforts into paying for baby milk, and have even borrowed money, but Afina remains malnourished.

In the short term, people in Yemen need urgent help to survive. In the long term, they need peace. Please pray for them, for Tearfund's partner staff working to reach those in most need, and for increased action from those in power to see Yemen at peace.

## A prayer for Yemen

**Giver of Life, Who hears the cries from Yemen;  
Of mothers choosing between medicine or food,  
Of parents grieving children lost to starvation,  
Of those who have given up everything in hunger.  
Hear our cries for hope, for change, for peace.**

**In your mercy, break political deadlock,  
Softened hardened hearts, change closed minds, open unhearing ears.  
Let people come before power. Let life be holy again.  
Let Your justice and peace shape the nation of Yemen,  
And the lives of all people. Amen**

# HELP TEARFUND TRANSFORM LIVES AROUND THE WORLD WHERE THE NEED IS GREATEST

In February, Tearfund launched a new Matched Giving Appeal. The UK government will double donations to this appeal until Friday 17th May, up to £2 million.

Donations to this appeal will help Tearfund transform lives around the world where the need is greatest. Match funding from the UK government will be used by Tearfund partners in Pakistan to tackle waste and plastic pollution, provide sustainable livelihoods and improve the living conditions in some of the country's poorest slum communities.

The following are some stories of waste in Pakistan and how match funding will help.

## Tears and heartache—Rubina's\* Story

'I came back from my job one day and he was sitting outside weeping,' says Rubina. She found her son, Tariq, had been badly injured while playing with his friends. 'I took him immediately to the hospital. I can't tell you how much his face was burnt. It took home more than a whole month to recover.'

### Fear for her children

Rubina has a heightened concern for Tariq because of the care that her other son, Javed, needs. 'I used to weep because I already have a disabled child,' says Rubina. 'And was frightened for the second child.' Javed has had fits since he was a baby. 'After having a lot of fits, he became severely ill,' she says, 'He is now disabled and is unable to do anything for himself. He has severe breathing problems. He feels pain because of the smoke and has an allergy to the soil. I take him to the hospital where he has oxygen. Otherwise, I boil water and the steam helps him.'



### A rubbish problem

Rubina lives with her husband and three children in Pakistan - one of the least developed countries in Asia. A third of the population live below the poverty line. One of the biggest challenges is rubbish.

Pakistan produces 20 million tonnes of waste each year (according to the country's Environment Ministry). And about half of it remains uncollected.

### Overwhelmed by waste

'The main problem here is the rubbish,' says Rubina. She works hard - cooking, cleaning and ironing - in three households. But however much she tries, Rubina and her family are stuck in a waste-strewn, unhygienic slum. Rubina does her best to provide a safe, clean home for her children. But she cannot stop the overwhelming rubbish dumped in the slums where they live. She worries about the long-term health of her children and the huge cost of medical bills and transport to hospital is burdensome.

But praise God, the story does not end with Rubina and her children left in the dirt and waste...

### Clearing up the streets

'A lady came and told us about a project to clean the streets to make them rubbish free so that there may be no diseases and problems for children.'

Tearfund partner Pak Mission Society (PMS) started this new initiative in the slums, working with local church and community leaders to encourage communities to reuse plastics and manage waste through recycling hubs.

This creates a clean and healthy environment. It prevents rubbish being burnt and stops plastics ending up in the ocean, as well as providing employment for local people.

### Nationwide recycling

PMS want to help other slum communities in Pakistan establish similar recycling initiatives. The money matched by the UK Government from this appeal will enable them to do so.

Rubina is excited about how the recycling initiative could transform her daily life. 'We hope that it will be better for us and our children - and there will be fewer diseases'

\*name changed for privacy purposes, Rubina, pictured over on page 36

to Islamabad, where they used to work as brickmakers. They were happy to come and live with the children and grandchildren. But they found conditions in the slum to be very poor, with waste dumped and burnt at night. 'When the fire is burning, we fall ill because of the smoke. When it is rotten, it smells. We cannot dispose of all of it—it spreads pollution.'

So when their church held a meeting to introduce a new recycling scheme proposed by Tearfund's partner Pak Mission Society (PMS), Mumtaz and Beenish were keen to get involved.

### Too good to refuse

'They wanted to start a project to clean the community,' says Mumtaz. 'They needed people to collect the rubbish.'

The couple agreed to take on that paid role. This will help them to support themselves and their family. It will also provide better living conditions for the whole community. 'It will help us to be safe from diseases. And it has given us a job too. This place will be clean, and our brothers and sisters will no longer suffer from diseases.'

### Good neighbourhood

One of the things Mumtaz and Beenish love most about the job is that they are with each other all day. 'We work together and come back home together as well,' says Mumtaz. 'It feels good. We get up between 3.30 am and 3.45 am. We wash our hands and faces, pray to God, then go to work. 'After work, we have dinner and enjoy fun times with our grandchildren. Then we rest.' 'I like it,' adds Beenish. 'We used to go very far to work, but this work is in our neighbourhood.'

### Environmentally friendly

'When your environment is clean you feel good,' says Mumtaz. 'PMS has done a great service to our community. And good work is always good. Since we started collecting rubbish there are no piles left in the market.'

With the extra income from their jobs, the couple hope to help with their grandchildren's education. 'We want our grandchildren to have a good education and learn about the teachings of God,' says Mumtaz.

### Bags for lives

One bag at a time, Mumtaz and Beenish are helping to make their family and the community's lives healthier. Mumtaz's dream is to live in a community with '...proper streets, no rubbish and every person feeling good.'

And as they work hard to achieve that vision, the couple are enjoying their new role. 'We are living a good life,' says Mumtaz. 'Our hard work is paying off, and our environment is improving.'

\*names changed for privacy purposes



## A life less ordinary—Mumtaz Beenish's \*Story

Husband and wife, Mumtaz and Beenish - although in their 60s - have no thoughts of retirement. They have started new jobs in their community. They get up at 3.45 am to clear up rubbish from their neighbourhood. 'Every kind of rubbish is here,' says Mumtaz. 'Including broken glass, plastic, metal...sometimes people throw food away.'

### What a waste

Pakistan has never had adequate waste management. The government only collects half of the rubbish generated by people and industry.

Uncollected waste poses a serious public health risk. The slum in Islamabad where Mumtaz and Beenish live is a clear example.

'The rubbish causes many problems like coughs, fever and other diseases,' says Mumtaz. 'Waste is everywhere. We don't like this rubbish. We want our homes to be as clean as possible.'

### Up in smoke

Nine years ago the couple moved

**My beautiful slum palace—Nargis's \* Story**

'My house is good,' says Nargis. 'I worked hard to build it, so it's good. No matter if it is of a very low quality. I have spent my whole life here, so it looks beautiful to me. Even compared to a palace, I like this house more.'

Nargis lives with her family in a home about 20 feet above the river in one of Islamabad's oldest slums. Although proud of her hard work building a home for her sons, daughters and their children, it is not safe.

**Drowning in sleep**

The huge build-up of rubbish—plastic and organic, human and animal waste—causes the river to clog up and rise. Floods are a constant threat.

Nargis lost her husband in a road accident ten years ago. She now lives with her family, because she fears what would happen if her house flooded when she was alone at night.

'The danger of drowning while we sleep is high,' she says. But it's not just the threat of death that troubles Nargis—life in the rubbish is a constant nightmare too.

**Infected waste**

'People come with buckets full of waste and throw them near our animals,' she says. 'I removed the waste myself. People throw plastic shopping bags and the waste comes flowing in.'

The build-up of waste has horrifying consequences. 'Weasels and rats make their homes in the piles of

wood and in our houses. Snakes also enter the houses. Fat snakes come flowing with the water and enter here. When the gutter is blocked, human waste also comes inside the house. Because of that, the mosquitoes cause problems. They bite us. It is good we are heavy because otherwise, the mosquitoes would carry us away with them...'



**Population piling up**

For decades, the population has increased. Without a similar increase in housing, the slums have grown more and more overcrowded.

Having lived in the slum for 30 years, Nargis feels powerless to stop the flow of waste. 'Having rubbish around feels bad, but we have no choice. When this community was established, we had ten houses. With the growing size of the population, how can we ask everyone not to throw rubbish?'

**Water damage**

Nargis and her family are resigned to the fact that the floods will come and waste is left behind. When the waters rise, members of her family stay constantly on watch.

As the flood enters their home, they leave and wait on higher ground for the waters to recede.

'We wait for the water to drain out, then go back to our homes to see the damage. What stuff has washed away and what's left behind.'

**Weary and burdened**

'We pray to God that it does not rain at night,' says Nargis, who is a regular at her local church, 'I pray to God to bless me with a healthy life and not make me dependent on anyone.'

Tearfund's partner Pak Mission Society is determined to help people like Nargis. Working with local church and community leaders, they have established a pilot scheme in Islamabad and want to develop more with the UK government's match funding from this appeal.

These hubs will encourage communities to collect, dispose of or reuse waste materials. It may be the answer to Nargis's prayers.

\*name changed for privacy purposes



**THE BIGGER STORY**

**The Bigger Story -**

Plastic pollution is devastating the health and local environment of countless people in the slum communities of Pakistan, and making living conditions even worse. Due to a desperate lack of waste collection, rubbish builds up on the streets. Children play among it, suffering cuts and burns. People set fire to the rubbish in an effort to clear the streets, but this results in fumes that pollute the air and are harmful to breathe (Rubina's story).

Rubbish blocks up the waterways too, causing homes to flood and creating pools of stagnant water where disease-carrying mosquitoes thrive. People's health suffers, limiting their ability to work which pushes them deeper into poverty.

The recycling centres that will be created with the support of the UK government match funding are called Haryali Hubs. The word 'haryali' means 'green' in the local language.

Located in the cities of Karachi and Hyderabad, each hub will provide up to 2,000 families with the waste collection services they desperately need. As rubbish is collected, less will be set alight, and so each hub will prevent up to 3 tonnes (3,000 kg) of waste per day from being burnt and releasing toxic fumes.

In this way, the Haryali Hubs will help make the air cleaner to breathe and the streets safer in the slum communities of Sindh, where poverty is extreme.

**£42 doubled could provide waste collection for two families, making their local environment cleaner and safer**

**Protecting the oceans**

In Karachi and Hyderabad alone, 6,000 tonnes of waste is dumped in or near watercourses daily, resulting in around 500 tonnes of plastic entering the ocean each day.

The Haryali Hubs will process up to six tonnes of waste a day, per hub. As plastic and other waste is collected, sorted, and then recycled or disposed of sustainably, less will end up in waterways. Each hub will prevent as much as 200 tonnes of plastic from entering the ocean each year.

Once collected, as much of the waste as possible will be recycled into eco-friendly products such as organic compost, which will be sold. This will help the Haryali Hubs to generate income and become able to cover their own running costs.

**£97 doubled could prevent two rubbish trucks' worth of waste from entering the ocean, helping us to better care for God's creation.**

**Providing livelihoods**

It's not easy for people in the slums of Karachi and Hyderabad to make a living. Many have moved from rural areas to the cities in recent years, meaning work is in high demand.

With limited education and skills at their disposal, people such as Rubina do whatever they can to make a living, including cleaning the houses of wealthier families. But this work tends to be short-term and low-paid, and can leave people vulnerable to exploitation.

Each Haryali Hub created will provide around 25 jobs for local community members. Like Mumtaz and Beenish, they will be trained to earn a sustainable and meaningful living by helping collect or process waste. Crucially, vulnerable people such as women and people living with disabilities will be prioritised.

**£45 doubled could train two people to work as waste collected at a Haryali Hub, enable them to lift themselves out of poverty.**

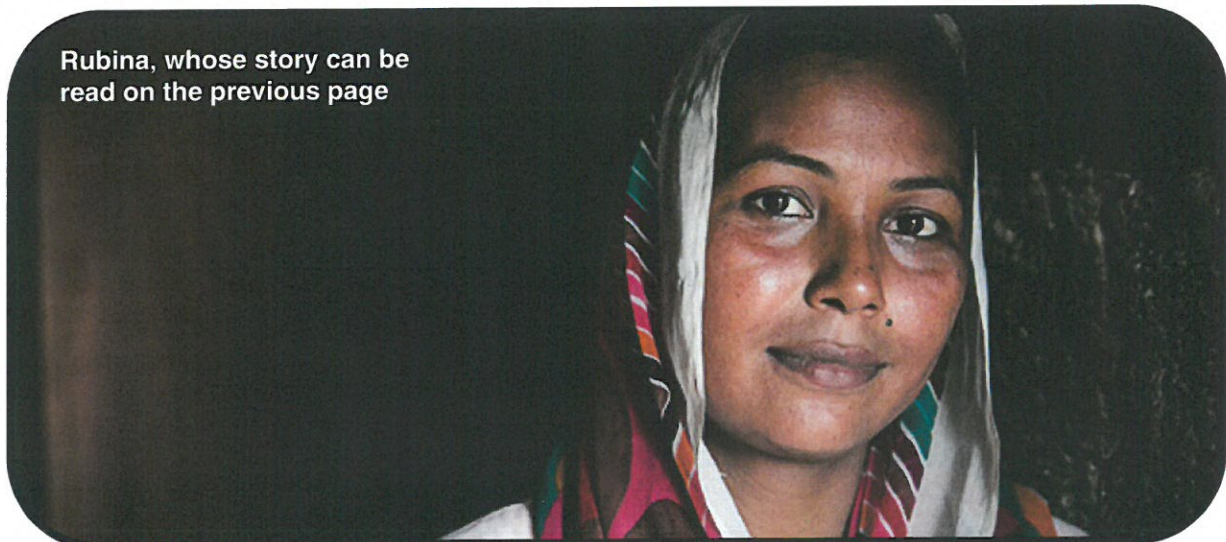
**Creating long-term change**

While this work in Pakistan will quickly begin to make a difference among the communities they serve, we believe the impact will be long-term and widespread.

Waste and plastic pollution is a huge problem across Pakistan and around the world. As the Haryali Hubs are established, our staff, partners and the communities they work with will be promoting greater action to tackle waste. They will also be encouraging more support and investment in initiatives like this from businesses, communities, local authorities and others in positions of power.

As the hubs begin to change lives and improve local environments, we believe they will serve as an example, inspiration and sustainable model for long-term transformation across Pakistan and around the world.

Rubina, whose story can be read on the previous page



Tearfund partner, Pak Mission Society, is setting up recycling hubs in Pakistan.

# HELLO FROM PERU

by Mike & Christine Stenning

**H**ello to our friends in West. At the time of writing we've been here in Peru 6 weeks already. We have so much to be thankful for. We have both been keeping very well, we are enjoying the sunny weather and the culture. There's always something interesting to see every day.

Our Spanish classes are every morning from 8am until 11am. They are definitely challenging, but we are making progress. We also have homework to do in the afternoons. Betty, our teacher, is very gracious and very patient.

We share living accommodation here at the Wycliffe Bible Centre with Tom and Margarita (sister of Miriam from Casa Hogar), also the American missionaries, Dr David Weber and his wife Diana who are currently here until mid March. They have been translating the Bible into various Quechua dialects for over 40 years.

We spent a lovely weekend in Tingo Maria recently, which is in the jungle 3 hours from Huánuco (pictured right). It was amazing to see so much of God's wonderful creation.

We are hoping to visit a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre soon, as well as the prison in Huánuco.

Pictured below is from our trip up the mountains to a church service.



We plan to be here until the start of April and then we will heading north to visit our friends in Tarapoto and the clinic in Moyobamba.

Please continue to pray for safety in travel. Our Peruvian friends face many dangers day and daily. The condition of the roads, the state of the vehicles, the standard of driving, not to mention constant landslides which close the central highway to Lima in the rainy season, all conspire to make travel hazardous (see photo below of a recent landslide).

We look forward to seeing you all again on our return at the start of May.

Michael and Christine



# AMAZING LOVE

by Reg Bates

## In the very beginning

Let me take your mind back to an important occasion in human history. Back, in fact, to the very beginning of everything. In the beginning, God made all things and that included us, human beings whom God considered to be His family:

**So God created human beings, making them to be like Himself. He created them male and female, blessed them and said: Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control**

Genesis 1 : 17-28

Everything was intended to be perfect, and everything was at first! Unfortunately, things were not to remain like that.

God's Arch Enemy, Satan, had other plans to take control of all God had created. Satan did attempt to take control of human-kind and he continuously tempts us to disobey God and do things our way. Something had to be done, and something WAS done!

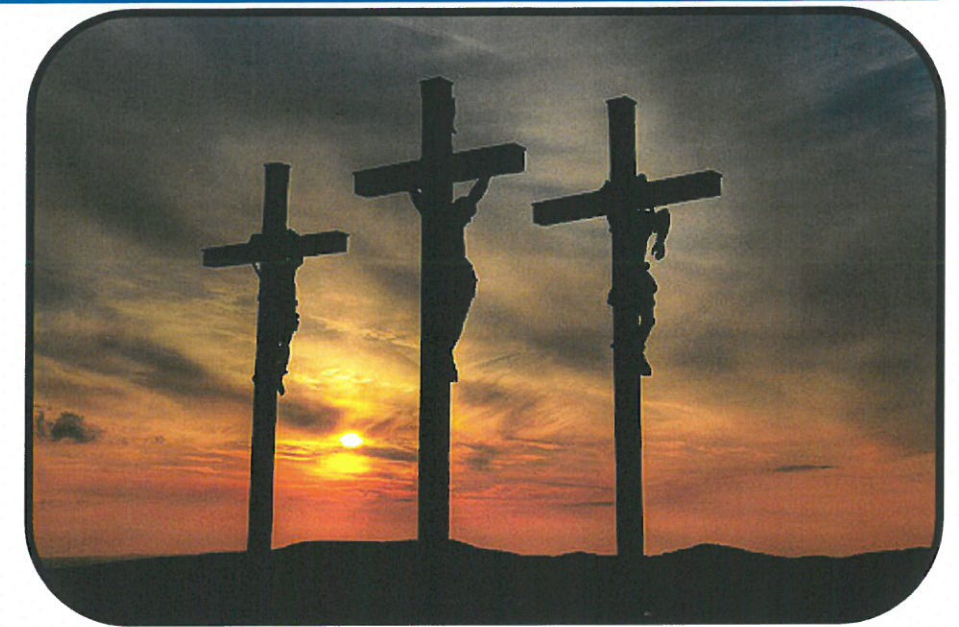
## Some 2,000 years ago

About 2000 years ago, God our Father decided to enter His own creation and fix things up. He did this in the man called Jesus!

Jesus, the son of Mary, all human, but conceived by God's own Holy Spirit, the very Son of God. Jesus was to be our Saviour!

**For God loved the world so much that He gave His only son so that everyone who believes in Him may not die but have eternal life.**

John 3 : 16



## The time is now

Yes, Jesus came to rescue us from Satan's domination in that terrible place we call hell.

He came to rescue ALL who believe. It doesn't matter whether we are Christian or Jew; Muslim or Hindu; LGBT or Straight; Black or White; there are no exceptions! John 3 : 16 clearly uses the word "EVERYONE".

In fact, he gave his own Son to die in our place, so that our spirits may live in heaven forever. God laid His hand on us His children in a big way! The crucifixion of Jesus was God's response to our human need.

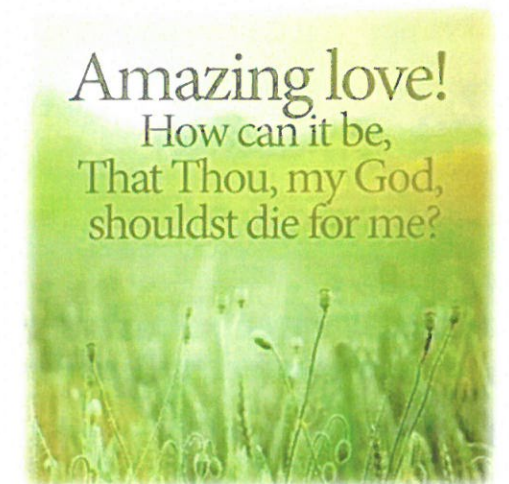
## Do you understand this?

I don't think it can be over-emphasised. Nearly 2,000 years ago, when Jesus was dying nailed to a cross, he was thinking of us today and saying to himself: 'I am dying in the place of Reggie', or 'I am dying in the place of Anne', or I am dying in the place of Dave'. Just add your own name and the thought will be true.

On the cross, Jesus was thinking: 'I am dying in the place of all the prodigal children in the world who will have their sins forgiven and be reunited with my Father in heaven for all eternity—if they believe that I am dying in their place!

Amazing Love!

How can it be  
That Thou, my God,  
Shouldst die for me?



# A MIDWIFE IN MALAWI

by Lydia McMullen

**L**ast year, after working as a nurse, I went back to Queen's University Belfast to complete a shortened course to become a midwife. As part of this course I had the opportunity to complete an elective placement, working wherever we wanted for a month. Where better to go than Malawi?

I travelled to Malawi with my friend Joy, who I worked with as a nurse and with whom I now am completing the Midwifery Studies programme. Some of you will have met her at the coffee morning we had before we set off. Joy has worked as a nurse for 11 years and even worked on the mercy ships before becoming a midwife, so she was definitely the right person to be with!

I know that a lot of people in West have various connections with Malawi or have visited before. Our tutor had worked in the Ekwendeni Mission Hospital for a number of years before teaching at Queen's and so with her connections, we headed off. Ekwendeni is a small rural village, approximately a 20 to 30 minute drive from the closest "city" Mzuzu. We stayed in a local guest house, a 10 minute walk from the hospital every day. We were linked up with the school of nursing and midwifery that is part of the hospital, however in true African style there was no such thing as a schedule and we were happy to help in any way we could, in the different areas in Maternity.

A visit to the Maternity Ward is like going back in time: the facilities and equipment the hospital has are far from adequate but the midwives are highly skilled and do the best they can with what they have. It took some time to get used to the way things were and honestly, I still don't think I quite have taken it in but when we arrived, there was no time



Pictured above, Lydia in Ekwendeni and right, midwifery conditions

no time to waste.

A lot of hospitals here in the United Kingdom are really understaffed but we didn't realise the real meaning of being 'understaffed' until we reached Ekwendeni. There is one trained doctor to cover the entire hospital and so there is a clinical officer who covers maternity: this person is really the equivalent of

less than a Junior Doctor at home, for 3 years, complete a one year internship and then start work.

Maternity has as little as 3 midwives on duty at once, and they cover the Antenatal Bay (where mothers travelling a distance are allowed to stay close to their delivery date); and the High Risk Antenatal Bay (for unwell mothers

antenatally, and a very busy bay during the high risk malaria season when we were there). The staff also covered the Labour Ward, theatres and the post-natal ward which is where the mummies go to after they have had their babies. The new mums are kept in hospital for one night only and then have to walk home, sometimes for hours, the next day with the baby on their back, and all they things they've had to bring for delivery on their head. Finally the staff also cover the Nursery and Kangaroo care units which are essentially for sick, premature babies, but unfortunately there are no facilities for incubators and so when I say "kangaroo" babies, these babies are nursed skin to skin with their mother in an attempt to generate heat to keep them well.

The hospital really provides the bare minimal due to poor funding and staffing; the mothers must bring everything with them, including a guardian. Their guardian is



Lydia, with her close friend and midwifery colleague, Joy

essentially their birthing partner, a mother, grandmother, or simply a female from the village. The reality of working in the Labour Ward was that the women had to bring a bin bag to use as a sheet; they didn't have any pain relief to avail of and they were encouraged by guardians to be silent during delivery. However, I really feel that we were meant to be there to support women through their labours, to try our best with the lack of resources and

just be with the women as best we could. Maternity care in Malawi has recently become free of charge because the maternal death rate was increasing as women couldn't afford to pay their medical bills. As well as that, the rate of untreated HIV mothers was increasing as again mothers couldn't afford to pay for the treatment.

We were keen to be involved in the community life at Ekwendeni and linked in as much as we could. We helped lead the local Girls' Brigade on Sunday afternoons, including taking them resources from the UK for craft, and telling them about GB in the UK. Before I left I had spoken with West GB girls, who, as part of their badgework, were doing 'random acts of kindness'. They all made up a wash bag for the women in hospital; it included toiletries and a pair of pants (see the GB page later in this magazine for a photo).

A local company, 'rooted in love' funded by Aimee Lennie, had partnered up with me and for every clothing item they sold, they provided a reusable sanitary towel for the women in the Labour Ward post delivery. Some other helpers from church learnt how to make these same products to go with the washbags.



Cont'd over

The 3Cs had also been extremely busy knitting blankets, hats and cardigans for the babies. The mothers were absolutely delighted with these gifts and loved being able to dress their babies in their new outfits together on the post-natal ward.

We also linked in with the local church and joined the international Bible study which we loved being part of with other local missionaries who were also based in the hospital. A local missionary from the Netherlands was working on a project with a local couple which included teaching locals to use sewing machines and showing them how to make reusable bags. The rubbish disposal system in Malawi is non-existent and they are passionate about reducing the consumption of plastic and teaching the locals new skills: for example they teach the locals how to make tote bags to replace plastic ones. They sell them for a fair price in the UK and this allows one to be given to a Malawian for free.

Many of you will remember Barenice who was connected to West while she was studying at Belfast Bible College. She lives in Mzuzu



**Pictured above, Lydia, with the 3Cs ladies with their knitted gifts**

With her husband Sam and their 3 girls. We really enjoyed spending time with them on our days off and see the local ministry that they are involved in, 'SCOM' Student Christian Organisation of Malawi. We were able to visit the local university in Mzuzu and be part of a meeting with the students.

I can't thank everyone enough for their support in planning for this adventure. As I've mentioned so many people took a lot of time helping me prepare to head out, supported Joy and me at our coffee morning, and as a church praying for us while we were out in Malawi.

**Pictured below left, one of the babies Lydia was privileged to deliver. Whilst in Malawi, Lydia was able to fulfil her delivery requirements and complete the 40 deliveries required to qualify as a midwife. Below right is Lydia with Barenice, enjoying some catch up time.**



**Changes in Districts : New address**

- |                                    |                      |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 202 Gordon & Barbara Cunningham    | 502 Anne Millar      |
| 304 John & Iris Elliott            | 602 Kathleen Kennedy |
| 401 Keith & Caireen Brown & family |                      |

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

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 102 Briege Carleton             | 604 Alison Magee                             |
| 303 Robert & Margaret McQuiston | 1102 Daniel & Leslie Campbell, Anna & Joshua |
| 505 Nicola McWhirter            |  |

**The following were brought for Baptism or Dedication**

- |                                  |                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 27/01/19 Jonah Alfie Garrad      | 17/02/19 Zach Thomas Peter Jennings |
| 03/02/17 Gabriel Nathaniel Bates | 10/03/19 Rebecca Andrews            |

**The following were Baptised on Profession of Faith**

- |                      |                              |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 09/12/18 Cal Ritchie | 03/03/19 Victoria Mary Croft |
|----------------------|------------------------------|

**REMOVE the following who have transferred congregations: District**

- |                                       |                   |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 503 Joanne Turner                     | 604 David Baillie |
| 504 Martin & Gillian Bradley & family |                   |

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

- |                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| 21/11/18 Mr Desmond Graham | 502 Mrs Sadie Aicken |
|----------------------------|----------------------|

**Lovely spacious 2nd floor apartment available for weekly rental in Portballintrae**

- Adjacent to the Bayview Hotel
- Free Wi-fi
- 2 double bedrooms, one en-suite
- Beautiful view across the ocean
- £500 p/w peak times (excluding British Open)
- £450 p/w off-peak
- Not suitable for children or pets

**For any other information please contact Beth on 028 9181 4152 or 07828 099679**



# GOD WAS WORKING IN A POWERFUL WAY

by Liz Clayton

I arrived back from Ghana, West Africa, on 11th February, after yet another Mission Trip to this wonderful country. My trip was eventful and exhausting and it is good to share it with you all while everything is so fresh in my mind. Like all good Presbyterians, I am going to divide this report up into 3 different sections!

## An update about Laudya who is severely disabled with Cerebral Palsy

I was so glad to see Laudya again and I do believe she recognised me but I was so disappointed to see that there was no improvement in her condition. It had been hoped that the 2 eight-week sessions of therapy (3 times-a-week) would have loosened up her muscles but the exercises she was having at home are not happening. The house help, Joyce, left after 3 years in November and the family has not as yet been able to get a suitable replacement. This is a shame as Joyce was very good with Laudya. It is encouraging to see that Laudya is kept spotlessly clean and she is well fed but unfortunately just sits in her wheelchair all day with no stimulation at all.

I was keen to visit Tema, where the warehouse is for "Wheels for the World". Pastor Joel who looks after things there was telling me that Cerebral Palsy Ghana has not really taken off due to the lack of government backing. We got a better wheelchair for Laudya which will tide her over until May when a new consignment arrives from the United States. Shipping is becoming more and more difficult. The facility is amazing and there are great plans for physio and respite etc. but at the moment these are just plans.

I spent time with Laudya massaging her feet and hands and talking to her. She responds with her big smile—it would be wonderful to know what is going on in her wee mind. God bless her.



One of the children explaining the Wordless Book

## Meeting the children at Sunday School and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Our Girls' Brigade had given some New Testaments and the teenagers were very pleased to receive these on the first Sunday. We had a lovely time together sharing God's Word. The teaching materials from Child Evangelism Fellowship were invaluable and greatly used and I was able to leave these with the Sunday School teachers. I also had some beautiful flash cards on Noah's Ark and the Easter story.

The 3Cs here at West sent 20 knitted teddies. The children loved these, in fact, so did the adults!

It was a great privilege to share the wonderful Bible stories with all the children—they loved the stories and learning memory verses and songs.

Rev. Obed Bansah, at the Presbyterian Church, got up to 80 local children together for three evenings. We had a great time and there was a lot of competition at the quiz on the last night.



Pictured above, Liz with Laudya & below, the prizes for the Quiz Night at the Children's Meeting.



## The visit to prison

The application for my visit permit had been made in November and I understood all was in order. However, on my first Sunday, I heard from Erasmus who was organising everything that he would collect me at 9.30 am on the Monday morning to go to the Ministry office. I thought he meant the Prison Ministry but it turned out I had to meet with the Director at the Ministry of the Interior to present my credentials! This was quite daunting but thankfully it went well and the visit was scheduled for 3rd February.

I had bought six dozen flip-flops, six dozen toothbrushes and toothpaste, two boxes of soap and at the last minute I was asked if I would get some Bibles.

God really worked here in an amazing way. Just the week before I left for Ghana a group in our church gave me a very generous gift. This gift paid

for the Bibles and I only had to put £8.00 to it.

Some people asked me why I wanted to visit a prison and before I went I really did not know, but I know now. I needed to see our mighty God at work in a powerful way and this I saw and experienced in prison.

After going through a lot of security at the Nsawam Medium Security Prison, I thought a CD must be playing—the music and singing was so anointed and powerful. As I approached the "Worship Hall" I saw that it was 500-600 men praising and worshipping God. The presence of the Holy Spirit was tangible and I was moved to tears. It was amazing. I spoke on Romans 8 having heard a great sermon on it here at West and the "Amens and "Hallelujahs" went on and on. Praise God.

We also went to the Women's prison (although the visit had not been planned for that day) and two ladies came forward and gave their lives to Jesus Christ. We had 16 prison wardens who were invited to the front for prayer and the ladies prayed for the wardens! We prayed for a lady who was being released the next day after 14 years and we also prayed for seven ladies who were to be in court the next week. I will never forget that day. I am sure Heaven was rejoicing!



I would like to thank EVERYONE who helped make this trip possible. I am so grateful for the prayer support.

In 2016 I said I was going for one last trip but here I am two trips later. I am so glad I did this trip even though it was exhausting and to be honest took a lot out of me.

Again I am thankful to have been able to share the Word of God and see God working in the lives of others.

I do feel that this will be my last trip to Ghana but I will be keeping in touch with Gifty, George and family.

In the future I would like to put pen to paper and share my journey from 1997. Maybe my experiences over the years would be of help to others considering a Mission Trip.

Blessings and thanks to all my church family, in Jesus Name.

Liz

# RETRACING THE HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION

by Lindsay & Norma Conway

Our recent stay in Geneva, turned out to be very educational and cultural. Following a few days in Inter-laken we moved to Geneva on the Wednesday. Arriving in a blizzard we explored Geneva on foot, to get our bearings, find the lake, our transport options and of course the local restaurants.

On the Thursday we set out early to catch a tram, planning to visit the Red Cross Museum. On our walk to the museum we discovered we could visit the United Nations. Following tight security and the checking of passports Norma was issued with a very impressive pass. We had a fantastic visit, with a very gifted tour guide. We were able to visit the main meeting rooms and debating chambers, hearing the history of the UN and an overview of how business is conducted. On display in the corridors and public areas was impressive art and sculptures donated by member countries. It is a busy working complex, employing nearly two thousand multi-national staff, discussing and debating life changing issues that impact on the world stage and effect everyone of us.

On the Friday morning we crossed the bridge to the Old City of Geneva to follow the Reformation Walk. Ten stages of the walk follow the story of the Reformation; not all was straight forward but we got there in the end. Walking along the cobbled streets, there is a great sense of history, with many buildings untouched from the time of the Reformation: imposing facades and shop fronts have all the character that you would expect in an historical city.

The first stop in our walk was the International Museum of the Reformation. The museum was founded in 2005 with the aim of "showcasing the living history of Geneva and the



College Calvin, founded by Calvin in the 16th Century

reformation." We discovered that the museum had only reopened that morning following a major refurbishment. The introduction of "once upon many times" exhibition told Biblical accounts of Eve, Noah, Moses, Jonah and many others in animation and music. These film shows were spread throughout the exhibition area at the end of each section, bringing life and a Biblical context to the exhibition.

The main exhibition retraces the history of the Reformation movement initiated by Martin Luther, John Calvin and others. The exhibition tells the story through books, paintings, engravings and artefacts from the early church. One particular painting depicts the early church meetings in a very plain church, pulpit in the middle, clearly illustrating the word of God at the centre; no distractions were in view, no paintings, statues or ornate furniture. Men were dressed in black from head to toe and the women were sitting in the gallery. Early

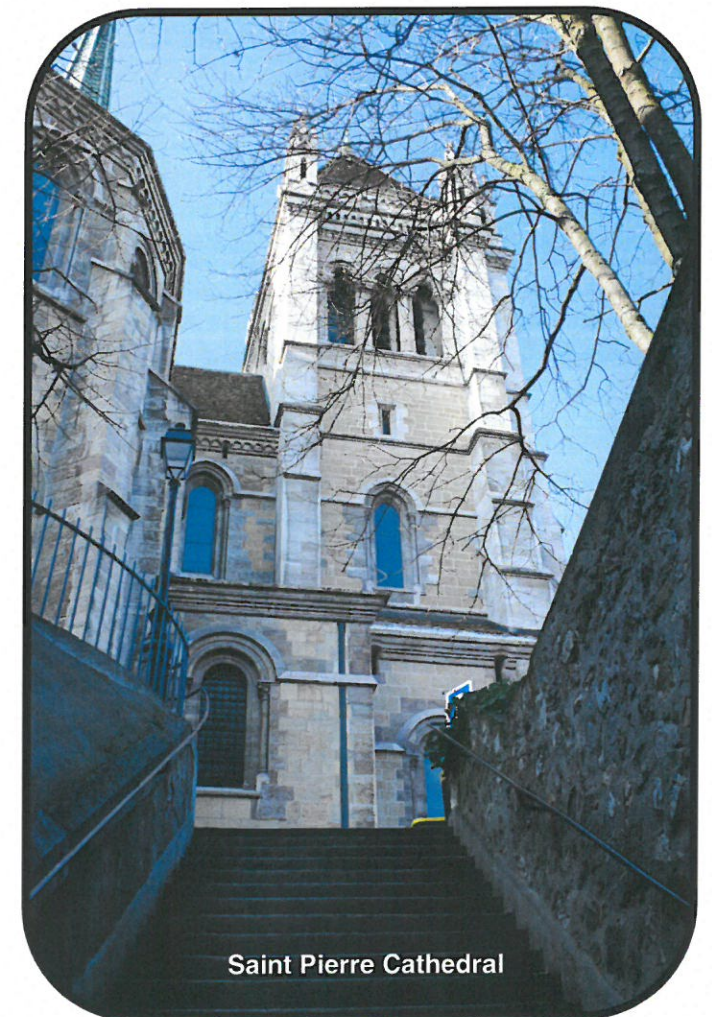


Statue of John Calvin

publications were on view, many printed on the newly invented presses. There were accounts of the Catholic Bishops changing the words of the early pamphlets, and unbelievable stories of the hardship and persecution of those who were associated with the split in the church. Geneva in Calvin's time became a city of refuge for thousands of exiled Protestants from France, the Netherlands, Italy and Scotland. The everyday life of these exiles is well told and illustrated. The Bible exhibition informs visitors that the Bible was at the core of the Reformation, with one particular display emphasizing that this was vitally important to Martin Luther as he embarked on the process of reform, returning time and time again to scripture, seeking God's will in all that he did. John Calvin set out to create a new way of living and expressing our faith, focusing on our personal relationship with God and not with the institutions of the church. The museum walks visitors through that whole process of convincing, not converting the early reformers of a new way to express our Christian faith and worship. The Reformation also contributed to the economic growth of Geneva, as merchants, bankers, goldsmiths and intellectuals converged on Geneva, which was renamed the "Protestant Rome". We also saw an early example of the Moderator's robes.



Just round the corner from the International Museum of the Reformation, is the Saint Pierre Cathedral. Built between 1150 and 1250, the Cathedral has been restored and rebuilt a number of times. It is an imposing building that is saturated in history and a place of great peace. Stripped of all decorations and paintings this became the church where John Calvin preached twice on a Sunday and once on week days. From the Cathedral we walked down a set of very impressive steps, back onto the cobbled streets to find the College Calvin, founded by Calvin in the 16th Century, welcoming boys from the age of 7. Teaching was for ten hours each day, six days a week. Walking past the Hotel-de-Ville we continued our walk to the Reformation Wall – we eventually found, with some difficulty, not easy to find, this impressive monument, located at the foot of the old city wall. Built between 1909 and 1917, ten statues make up the wall under the motto "Light after Darkness". The four largest in the middle are of the four leading figures Guillaume Farel, John Galvin, Theodore de Beze and John Knox. Throughout the walk we were conscious that we were literally walking in the footsteps of the early reformers, a reformation that is still ongoing.



Saint Pierre Cathedral



# WE ARE ALL THE CHURCH OF TODAY

**O**ur population is ageing, fast. It's a hidden time bomb that no-one in the church is talking about. In the last 60 years, the number of people aged 65 has doubled, and the number of people over the age of 85 has tripled.

Kofi Annan, former president of the United Nations, described it as "a revolution that extends well beyond demographics, with major economic, social, cultural, psychological and spiritual implications".

## An Ageing Population

The proportion of older people in the UK is forecast to increase dramatically over the next two decades.

- In 1901, only 4.7 % of the UK population was aged over 65 years.
- In 2018, this figure has risen to 18.2% (ONS, 2018a)
- By 2040, this figure is predicted to rise to 25% (Age UK, 2018)

Those aged 85 and over, are the fastest growing age group in the UK. It's predicted that 20% of people currently in the UK will live to see their centenary (DWP, 2011).

Those over 85 are more likely to experience frailty, ill health and dependence, with 75% of over 85s suffering from limiting long-standing illnesses. Whilst the numbers of those in the third age (65-74) is predicted to stay relatively static over the next 12 years, those in the fourth age (75-84) is forecast to grow by 25%, and those aged over 85 by 50%.

Due to the drop in the numbers of young people attending church, the church is ageing more acutely than society (Brierley, 2015).

- In 2000, the over 65s accounted for 25% of church attendees.
- By 2030 it is predicted that

45% of church goers will be over 65.

## That's a massive change!

In past generations, it has been the church that has led the way on social reform. Think of Cadbury and William Wilberforce who were well ahead of their time.

The church model we now live with was established decades ago. Our outreach programs are often designed for a population that comprised mainly of families with young children or teenagers.

With a changing population, our church models have failed to change and grow with them.

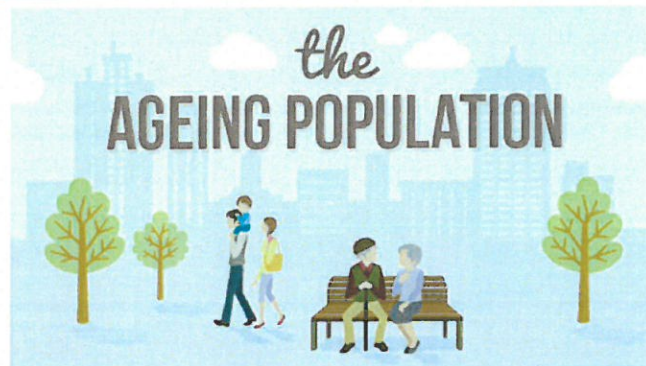
Many churches have Youth & Children's workers, but few have anyone assigned to older people, let alone a strategy for mission and discipleship of their older community.

A cursory glance at church movements and websites shows a glaring hole in any provision for those aged 65 and over. We believe that, as it has through history, the church should be taking the lead on the issue of a changing world around us. It should be the church who seeks to bridge the growing generational divide.

The ageism that is so prevalent in society can so easily spill over into the church. Yet, the church should be leading the way in expressing the worth, dignity and value of the older generations to us as a society.

Jesus told His followers that the world would know us by the love that we have for one another.

The hallmark of the church should be diversity in unity. "For there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there



male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Gal 3:28)

There's a saying that "The young people are the church of tomorrow". The church needs to stop seeing older people as the church of yesterday and instead show the world that we are all the church of today.

It's time for the church to change the way we view and value older people, both in our churches and our communities. The church has the chance to be a trailblazer, reaching out to and serving the growing population of older people. We have the chance to develop and establish ministries and programmes for the retired and the elderly.

We stand on the brink of a massive social change. The church has an incredible opportunity to shine the light of the gospel as role models or intergenerational connected, enriching the lives of young and old alike.

## Where can I get started?

- Listen to older people and find out what's on their heart
- Ask God to show you how you can empower and serve your seniors to live later life in all its fullness
- Honour older people in your congregation for their commitment and service.

*We were given permission to publish this article written by Jen Carter & Tina English, for Care Home Friends.*

# FRESH HOPE...SPRING IS ON THE WAY

by Mike & Lorraine Cahoon

**F**or now we are writing this title in faith, as a howling blizzard is roaring around our home. It's now early March and we know that things will soon change as Spring arrives, but for now we're still in winter's grip. At the same time we don't want to chase winter away too soon, as it has its own beauty and purpose, and we always embrace and enjoy it!

Our ministry continues at a regular pace, and it is such a joy to us to see people being set free and beginning a new journey of walking out their healing. Especially exciting for us is when married couples come to the ministry room, and already we have two couples booked for ministry during the summer time!

At church recently, just before Valentine's Day, we were invited to preach the main message in the morning service on the subject of inner healing, with a special emphasis on marriage. We also applied many of the principles we spoke about to other relationships as well; as many of our relationships need a tune up...family, friendship, workplace, church...and in every realm of life really! We had a lot of response afterwards, and discussion was very lively and healthy!

We've also been asked to take leadership of the altar prayer ministry which takes place during every service at the church. Often prayer can spontaneously be called for during the worship time or after the message: so we've been asked to develop a team who are able to move at the request of whoever is leading the service, and be willing to pray for specific needs that arise during that time of fellowship.

Yesterday we attended a Mennonite service with a friend who had asked us to support her by our presence when she spoke about "hearing God's voice". She gave a wonderful testimony of how she had grown in her relationship with the Lord, and how He spoke to her in

different ways during the seasons of her life. The Mennonite services, like their overall culture, is community-based, and many men and women take part in leading each part of the service. It was so good for us to be in a new environment, and part of the service reminded us of West Church, so we felt a touch of home there!

We've had great encouragement recently from our friends in Thunder Bay. The whole Bay area has had extremely cold conditions all winter (we're in the tropics here in the minus 20s) compared with them in the minus 40s!). This of course impacts the work of the Command Post, but the team recently had the idea of bringing the work of the ministry indoors, and hosted a special day of pampering, good food, prayer, fun and connection with the women who live on the streets. There were wonderful results: Carole and her team reached out to the community in Thunder Bay, and an added blessing was a uniting of two of the churches and also Teen Challenge, who all supported this Ladies' Day by volunteering. About 20 women, plus their children, were served and blessed. Here are some testimonies from Carole:

*"We had a prayer tunnel and most walked through before leaving. K and S who were both under the influence of drugs went too. K was one that we really wanted there. I talked to her Thursday night ... everyone in the place was praying for her breakthrough."*



Above, Community programmes

*"D ... 75 years old ... first time to get her nails painted. I thought that was the highlight of her night, then as we talked she gave her life to Jesus. She told me she felt peace. Then God blessed her with a prize. She won a box of chocolates and a \$50 gift certificate to get her hair cut. She physically shook with excitement and turned to me and grabbed and hugged me. She was getting a haircut!!! Every time I think of her I just feel so much joy."*

*"M talked to K about joining Teen Challenge. She just got out of jail yesterday, wanted to change her life. They will connect on Monday."*

Thank you for praying!

And so with those words of encouragement for you all, we'll sign off until our next epistle. Meantime we've just booked flights to Dublin, and are looking forward to celebrating Mother's Day in Bangor! We hope to see (or have seen) you at West on March 31st.

Loads of blessings,  
Mike and Lorraine Cahoon

# BUILDING COMMUNITY AND DEEPENING FAITH

by Andrew McClelland

## Easter Mission 2019 important dates & information

Crocodile Dock  
15th—20th April  
10.00 am—12.45 pm  
P1-P7 children

- Pre-registration ~ Saturday 23rd March with doors opening 9.00 am
- Team training ~ Saturday 30th March 2.30—4.00 pm
- Adult volunteers still needed in various areas throughout each Easter Mission morning. Sign up sheet is on the Welcome Desk.
- 24/7 Prayer sign-up sheet will be out soon



We are already so excited for all the pre-planned and information events that will be happening this summer.

As well as our camps and mission trips, there will be BBQs, bowling, picnics, water fights, day trips, worship nights, campfires and much more. These event dates will be out nearer the summer.

- **Summer Madness**  
28th June—2nd July (Year 11+) - If you've always wanted to go but never been able to, this year we will be offering single day trips up to the festival for young people to experience what Summer Madness is all about.
- **Abaana Uganda Trip**  
14th—29th July
- **Young Life Scotland Camp**  
13th—19th July
- **WyldLife Scotland Camp**  
9th—13th August
- **Keady Mission Trip**  
Dates to be confirmed (it will be early August)

# PRAY.

During the mornings of Easter Mission we will be teaching children that God is with us, that God is powerful, that God does what he says he'll do, that God gives us love, and that God cares for us. These are powerful declarations about God. Pray that everyone will know not only that they can shout these statement out loud but that they'll really know them deep in their hearts.

Easter Mission cannot happen without a firm foundation built on prayer, so in the coming weeks please pray for the team of young people and adults who will lead the whole week. Many young people will be sleep-

ing over in West: pray for good rest, pray for safety in the mornings, the afternoons and evenings. Pray for the building of community and the deepening of faith amongst our teenagers, that those who already have faith will just want more of Jesus and those who don't quite know Him will fully jump in.

We have the incredible opportunity to not only allow children and young people to have a fun, exciting week, but potentially change lives and futures. We want a new generation of passionate Christian children, young people and adults to do awesome things for Jesus in their lives. **We want our town to know revival!**



COFFEE BAR  
FRIDAYS 3.30-5.30PM  
YEAR 8 AND UP  
WEST CHURCH



**Coffee Bar** is open to anyone in year 8 and up. It's on every Friday and it's a great, relaxing space to unwind after a week of school. It's the perfect place to invite your friends. We look forward to seeing you there!

# MEET ARADHYA

by Georgie Hopkinson

When we live overseas and folk ask why we're in a particular country I always reply that we're a World Vision family. Grenville may be the actual employee but it's a whole family calling, in terms of where we live, where the kids go to school, what church we go to, what work I do - everything. 'We' have worked for World Vision for 8 years and in that time we have lived in 3 different continents, 4 different countries, 6 different houses, attended 5 different schools and picked up a dog along the way. So why do we do it? Why put up with so much change? Why stretch our kids by moving schools so often? Why put up with the daily frustrations of living with limited water, patchy electricity, sporadic food availability and challenging security situations? Well, because we believe World Vision does some incredible work. As a Christian humanitarian and development agency, it deliberately seeks out the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable children, families and communities around the world and endeavours to help them, giving them dignity, hope and a future.

World Vision is 70 years old and started when a Christian evangelist was compelled to respond to the devastation of the Korean war. With God's grace it has grown into one of the largest child-focused, charities in the world with 40,000 staff, running humanitarian responses, local development programmes and advocacy campaigns that directly support 3.2 million sponsored children and touch the lives of 200 million people in almost 100 countries.

The majority of World Vision's funding comes from child sponsorship which is used to deliver long term, community projects - projects like clean water, health, education, agricultural development and child protection so that every child has the opportunity for life in all its fullness as inspired by John 10:10. For every 1 child sponsored, 4 children benefit. It's so exciting that West

Church, in the form of J Club are joining the World Vision family by sponsoring Aradhya.

Aradhya is 2 years old. She lives with her father and mother in Vaishali, Northern India. We don't know for sure but Aradhya's surname (Kumari) is commonly used by low caste (dalit) families and her father may well be a bonded labourer. As a sponsored child Aradhya will receive regular visits from local World Vision community workers. Her health (weight, vaccinations and nutrition) will be monitored. Her parents will be invited to join income generating projects if required. When she is old enough she will be able to go to school as fees will be covered and she will be able to participate in World Vision children's clubs. But the best part of World Vision's approach is that her whole community also benefits. World Vision will run health clinics to monitor nutrition levels and provide food supplements for all children in Vaishali. Vaccinations will be provided to all children. The Vaishali water supply will be investigated and clean water will be provided for everyone. Hygiene and sanitation education will be provided for the whole community. Education support will not only benefit Aradhya but her teachers will be trained in literacy skills that will help the whole class and school management committees will be set up to improve her whole school.

There are the tangible benefits of being in the World Vision family, but most sponsored children tell us that



Aradhya, the little girl being sponsored by JClub through World Vision

the best bit about being a sponsored child like Aradhya, is simply knowing that someone, thousands of miles away cares about you and wants to give you hope, a future and life in all its fullness.

### So, why are we a World Vision family?

Because with World Vision, every 60 seconds...

- a family gets clean water
- a hungry child is fed
- a family receives the tools to overcome poverty

Thank you JClub and West Church for making this come true for Aradhya and others like her in Vaishali.

# World Vision®

Building a better world for children

# BUILDING INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

by Miss Alison & Miss Wendy

In December 2017, the pre-school children of Bangor West Nursery Playgroup performed their Christmas Concert to a delighted audience of mums, dad and grandparents. Such was the success and excellent feedback we received, an idea began to germinate in the minds of the staff; perhaps we should showcase the children's talents further afield.

So, in December 2018, our three and four year old children performed their Christmas Concert a total of three times! In addition before performing the concert to families and friends, the children delivered a dress rehearsal to a happy audience of seniors at West. One church member commented, "They were so good it should be on the TV!"

Subsequently, we took our production 'on the road' and the children, costumes and music were

transported to Carnalea Care Home. The residents and staff of Carnalea welcomed us as the pitter patter of 'little feet' entered their dining room. Everyone not only enjoyed the children's singing but their company too. Each child gave the residents a little gift of sweets. This first visit marked the beginning of our pre-school's relationship with Carnalea Care Home with regular visits planned.

The team at Bangor West are optimistic and excited about having the opportunity to be involved in intergenerational relationship initiatives such as this. Research has concluded that the process of bringing young and elderly together can be very positive for all concerned. Engaging with children can invigorate and energise older adults and it also provides an opportunity for both to learn new skills.



We are looking forward to our next visit to Carnalea Care Home. The children and residents will undertake Easter craft activities (involving a lot of tissue paper and glue!). There will also be the opportunity for a sing along as the children perform their Easter and spring songs.



# GIRLS' BRIGADE NEWS



by Cheryl Miller

As we draw to the end of another session our celebrations are only just beginning. Our 40th Anniversary Display will take place on Saturday 6th April in Bangor Academy, when we will celebrate the past and look forward to the future. Girls' Brigade NI is also celebrating its 125th Anniversary and there are events planned that we will be taking the girls to, Belfast Zoo for the Explorers and The Jungle, in Moneymore, with the Juniors. Our older girls will have a day out in September once exams are well out of the way!

The leaders, past and present will also enjoy a celebratory dinner in Clondeboy Golf Club, all before the Expedition season starts for our Duke of Edinburgh's Award girls. We are also keen to 'recruit' volunteers to help us out with our Expedition work. If you have a love of the outdoors and either have or would be willing to obtain Expedition training, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

If you have a hidden talent that you would like to share with the girls, please do let us know or, if you would be interested in helping out with some of our Scripture classes in our new session, please get in touch. Volunteers are always very much appreciated.

I would like to extend a very heartfelt thank you to everyone in the congregation who has prayed for the leaders and girls over this session and to those who give willingly of their time to help us with badge-work on Wednesday evenings.

Cheryl

Pictured below, is Lydia McMullen visiting a Girls' Brigade Company in Livingstonia; and the Malawian girls very kindly sent some handmade bracelets and necklaces back to West GB with their good wishes.

Pictured opposite, top left is our Senior Volleyball team who won the District heats and played fantastically at the Northern Ireland finals in University of Ulster, Coleraine. Top right is a few of our girls who took part in a PSNI Scamwise pilot scheme for a new programme on scam awareness for teenagers.

Middle right is our Junior Dodgeball team who again won the District heat and progressed to the Northern Ireland finals in Lisburn Racquet Club.

Below right are some of our Brigaders with their Valentine's floral arrangements for their mums.



# EMPOWERING THE CHILDREN OF AFRICA TO BUILD A BRIGHTER FUTURE

by Harry McBride

**O**n the 14<sup>th</sup> July a group of 14 young (and youngish) people will be flying 4,333 miles to Uganda for two weeks of mission, serving alongside the charity Abaana.

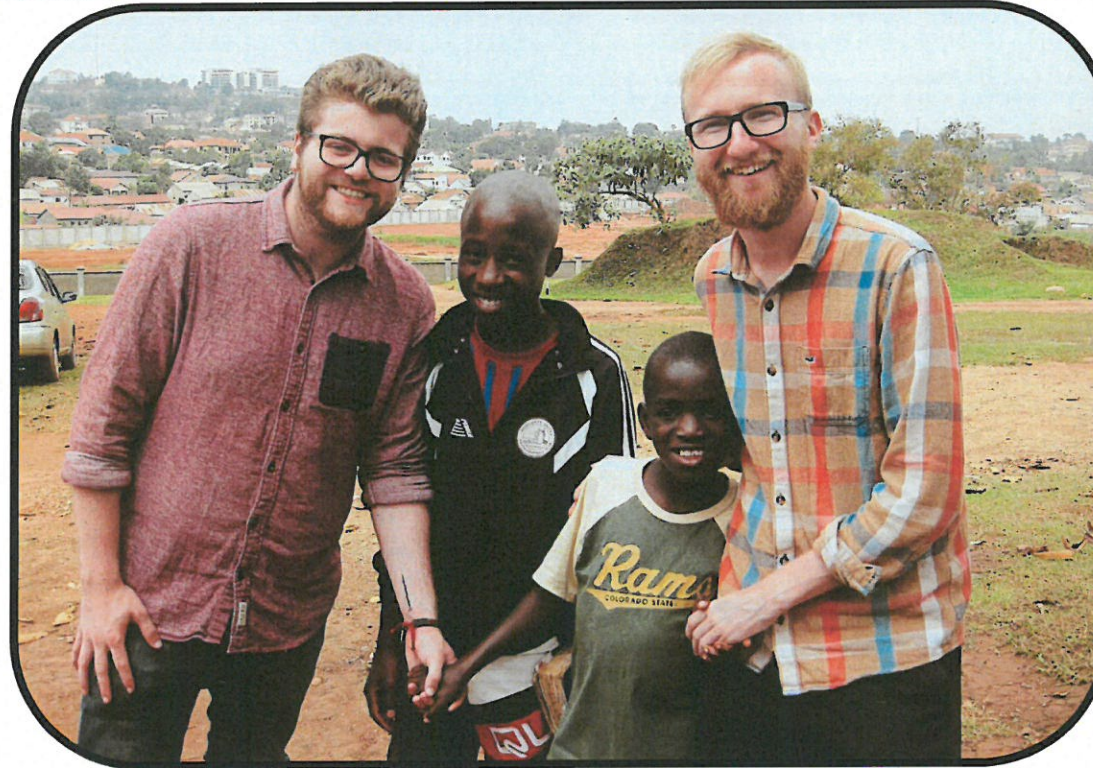
Abaana is a charity that was started in Bangor and has had a big impact on young people from our town and our church in allowing them to get first hand experience of serving in Uganda. This summer Young West, in partnership with Abaana, is sending a team out to take part in schools work, a building project and work with children living on the streets of Kampala.

Abaana hopes to share the love of God in a practical way with those who need it most. Most of Abaana's work is geared towards children in Uganda and exists to show the love of God, transforming the lives of impoverished children and their communities, through raising funds, awareness and motivating people to give sacrificially.

The Young West team is made up of young people who have been part of West for a number of years, who have helped and led at Easter Missions and Keady summer missions over the past years. They are all excited about the opportunity to experience what life is like for countless children, young people and adults alike. It is life in which modern-day comforts don't exist, where many may never have seen a computer or television screen, nor have access to

water or electricity.

We are so excited to see our team from Young West go out and take part in this work and to get involved in empowering the children of Uganda to build a brighter future for themselves. We will be doing this by building latrines for a school in Lweza. In Uganda 75 percent of the population does not have access to improved sanitation facilities and we want to be able to help the community around Lweza by offering new



Jordan Galbraith and Harry McBride on their last mission trip to Uganda

latrines which will help with hygiene. One of the activities that the team is really excited to be part of is Street Reach; the team will play games, teach the Bible, make crafts and provide food and water for children who live on the street in Uganda and would not normally have these opportunities. We will then, in the afternoon, visit the New Life Homes and spend time with children who were formerly living rough on the streets and are now being cared for. This will be an opportunity to witness first-hand the dramatic difference that love, care and shelter can make to a young life.

The team will also be taking our Easter Mission programme, Crocodile



Join us for our fundraising Coffee Morning on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April between 10.00 am and 12 noon all proceeds will support community projects in Lweza



Dock, on tour to some of the schools in Uganda. This will allow us to share the message that that these kids can shine for God right where they are. Every year we share with our children, but now our young people will be able to spread this good news to a new group in a completely different context.

We are looking forward to seeing how this trip can help the young people to grow in their faith, become empowered to make a difference and to see how they fit into God's mission.

If you would like to support the team and the work we are doing, we will be holding a coffee morning on the 6<sup>th</sup> April. We also have a team entered in the Belfast Marathon on the 5<sup>th</sup> May and we would appreciate sponsorship. You can give to us via our JustGiving page at <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/westchurchuganda>. All money raised will be going towards the building of the latrines to offer a safer more hygienic option for the community at Lweza.

Harry McBride, Jordan Galbraith, Rev. Andrew Gill and Courtney Thompson will be heading up the team with Thomas Haddock, Angus Bell, Tom Kennedy, Daniel Conway, Niall Warden, Jessica Dorrian, Jordan McKee, Sian Lindsey, Ana Savage, Orla Stevenson. Prayer for the team members would be very much appreciated while we are out in Uganda but also in the build up and preparations for the trip.

**Pictured left and above right are some the children & activities that the team will be working with while on Mission**



# YOUNG LIFE—TEENAGERS WERE MADE FOR THIS!

by Keith Morrison

## Beginnings and purpose

Young Life ([www.younglife.org](http://www.younglife.org)) was founded in the USA in 1941 and has now grown to have a presence in 103 countries around the world.

Craig Mawhinney, a Presbyterian Minister and a member of West Church, is the Country Developer for Young Life International in Ireland. Craig established Young Life in Northern Ireland in 2010 and the ministry has been growing steadily since then. Young Life is going from strength to strength with more and more ministries starting up and further growth planned throughout Ireland in the coming years.

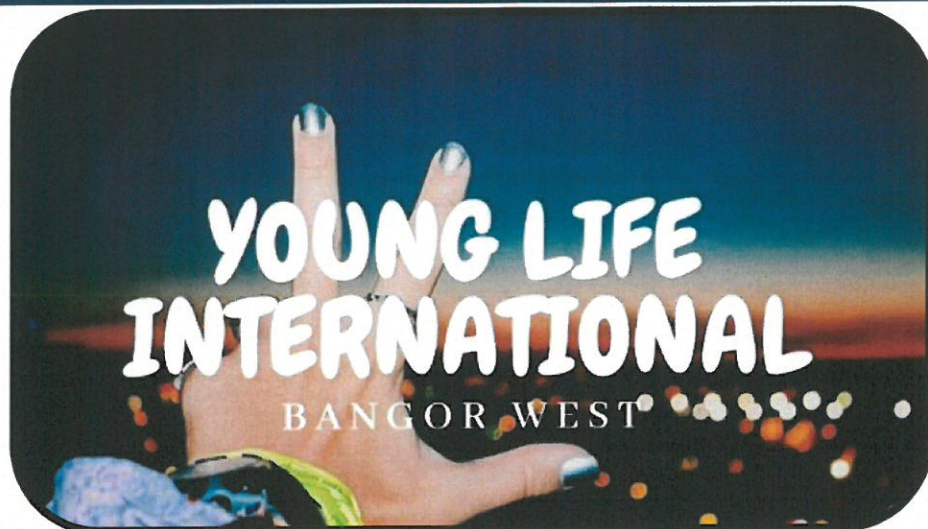
Young Life's purpose is 'to introduce young people to Jesus and to help them grow in their faith' and we do this by spending time with our teenagers in their world. We particularly aim to reach the kids that would never normally consider church or faith.

## The five Cs of Young Life

Our leaders spend quality **Contact** time with teenagers during the week, hanging out with them in their world and doing life together. Every weekend we bring kids together for the best day of their week at one of our local **Clubs**. Young Life also provides the opportunity for kids to have the best week of their life at **Camp** in Scotland every summer.

For those kids who have a faith, Young Life **Campaigners** prioritises their discipleship, bringing them together in small and large groups to look at all aspects of being a Christian. In recent months we have disciplined kids on issues such as prayer and generosity.

Finally, Young Life loves to engage adults in supporting our work. Our volunteer **Committee** members help to support the growth of Young Life – they pray for us, they help us raise much needed funds, they help advise on strategy and they support the team members spiritually and practically.



## Who goes to Young Life and when is it?

Young Life West Church currently engages with two age groups. Kids in Year 8 and 9 (P7s can get a taster from February onwards) come to Wyldlife Club at West and teenagers in Years 10 to 12 come to Young Life Club at West. Both clubs run on a Saturday night from 7-9pm.

## What can kids expect at Club?

On a typical Saturday night at West Church we will have about 70+ kids at Wyldlife and another 70+ at Young Life. This is so encouraging and we're always looking for new kids to come along. A typical Saturday night will include music, games, fun sketches and crazy characters, and a structured talk about Jesus and faith. Kids and their friends get time to hang out with their Young Life leaders in a safe and welcoming space. It's a big party with a purpose and it's all about relationships. Relationship between kids and leaders. Relationship between kids and Jesus.

## What about camp?

Every summer Young Life

International gives kids the opportunity to spend the best week of their life at its camp in Cairn Brae, Scotland. This year we hope to take about 280 of our kids to camp where they will again have tons of fun, spend quality time with their friends and leaders, learn more about Jesus and take time to consider faith.

## Cairn Brae Camp



## What's the difference between Young Life and Young West?

Young Life International is a separate organisation to West Church and it works with different schools and churches throughout Ireland. Young Life runs on the basis of the 5 Cs explained earlier with two Clubs at West Church on Saturday evenings. Young West is West Church's own youth provision, with its own Sunday youth service, leaders, small groups and events.

There is a very special partnership between Young Life, West Church and Young West which started 2013. Many kids go to both Young Life on a Saturday night and Young West on Sunday morning. Lots of our wonderful leaders serve at both Young Life and Young West, ensuring consistent and high quality relationships with our kids and teens. Many of the activities cross over, such as discipleship groups, coffee bar, Young Life Club and the Young West Sunday service. And tons of the Young Life staff and volunteers are active members of West Church life.

West Church generously supports the Young Life ministry with prayer, volunteers and finances. The partnership continues to grow and has real benefits for West Church, Young Life and our teenagers.

## How can I get involved?

Young Life depends on the support, prayers and generosity of volunteers. First and foremost, if you have kids of the right age, then please encourage them to come along to Wyldlife or Young Life.

If you don't have teenagers, don't worry – there are plenty of ways to get involved. We passionately seek people to pray for the ministry – for our kids, for our staff and volunteers, for growth to reach more kids. There are some prayer points below and we'd love your prayer support.

You can volunteer to help out on Saturday night. We always need people, particularly mature leaders, to help set up, welcome kids, make snacks, and to build supportive relationships with our kids. Young Life will take care of all the necessary child protection clearances and training.

## Prayer points : Please pray for

- The staff and volunteer leaders in Young Life and Young West
- More kids to come to Young Life and Young West
- More kids to know Jesus
- More volunteer leaders for West Church and other clubs
- More funding to support the growth of Young Life through Ireland and the UK

## Contacts

For more information on Young Life please contact...

**General** - Craig Mawhinney, [cmawhinney@ylinternational.org](mailto:cmawhinney@ylinternational.org)  
Sonia Mawhinney, [smawhinney@ylinternational.org](mailto:smawhinney@ylinternational.org)

**West YL**- Bronte Cromie, [bcromie@ylinternational.org](mailto:bcromie@ylinternational.org)

**West WL** - Andy Shields, [ashields@ylifeinternational.org](mailto:ashields@ylifeinternational.org)

**Finance** - Keith Morrison, [kmorrison@ylifeinternational.org](mailto:kmorrison@ylifeinternational.org)

## Funding and the Nehemiah Project

All funding for Young Life is raised by our staff and volunteers. We are heavily dependent on, and enormously grateful for, support from churches, individuals and Christian business trusts. We are always looking for new financial supporters and every pound donated really helps, especially as we are growing. There's currently a big incentive to support us.

These are very exciting times for Young Life International in Ireland, north and south. We are seeing continued growth throughout the island with several new clubs opening recently and more kids coming to Young Life events each week. The work has been recognised by Young Life USA who have chosen Ireland to spearhead an initiative in growing sustainable youth ministry internationally. The project is called **Nehemiah** and it involves two main strands.

The first is the funding of a staff member dedicated to supporting local fundraising and growing a community of adult supporters around Young Life Ireland, with the clear objective of increasing the financial sustainability of the ministry as it grows. The second strand is a fund to support local growth. As long as Young Life continues to increase its income, this growth fund will generously match new local donations, or every increase on current local donations, with an equivalent amount from the USA.

This unique project really does provide an exciting and unique opportunity for Young Life to partner with others to support local growth and to reach even more kids. Please consider supporting us financially if you can.

Keith Morrison,  
on behalf of Young Life

# EMBRACING MISSION EL ABRIGO, CALI, COLOMBIA

update on behalf of the Mission & Outreach Team

**F**or some of us the introduction to Colombia in general and Cali in particular came two decades ago when in West we projected an incredible video documentary called "Transformations" produced by the Sentinel Group. This organisation is "Dedicated to helping the Church pray knowledgeably for end-time global evangelization and enabling communities to discover the pathway to genuine revival and societal transformation." It was founded in 1990 by George Otis, Jr. Otis, who, after working in "frontier" evangelization efforts for many years, became concerned about spiritual oppression and its persistence. His investigation into this problem took him into more than fifty nations. As a result of his investigations Otis presented in "Transformations" his first synopsis of four distinctly different communities that had experienced significant transformation as a result of deliberate spiritual action taken by the churches at the heart of those communities. Cali was one of the communities where, as a result of the assassination of Julio Ruibal, one of the influential pastors, the pastors of the city united the churches in corporate prayer. As a consequence Cali had experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and an entire drugs cartel was defeated almost without a fight.

For most of us, however, the connection with Cali is through Pastor Hendrik Hoere who has been to Northern Ireland 18 times and has visited us at West on 17 of those occasions. Hendrik's family is originally from a Dutch gypsy background and it was Hendrik's father who taught him the gypsy jazz guitar style. It was an interest in guitar music that connected Hendrik with Paul Shields when he first visited Cali in



2004 and the two became great friends. "We agree on almost everything musical and theological" Paul says. Hendrik was converted to Christianity from atheism in his late teens through reading John's gospel. He immediately felt God's call into mission and soon after, at a summer placement at Wycliffe Bible Translators in Buckinghamshire, England, he met his Finnish wife Teija. In 1986 they made their first visit to Cali and shortly thereafter took up a post as youth pastors to the aforementioned Julio Ruibal before being released by Julio to launch their own ministry just prior to his death. Hendrik had originally felt led to mission in Bolivia and since Julio was a Bolivian, he thought

perhaps this was the connection; however after serving for 25-years in Cali the door finally opened for church planting in Bolivia and he and Teija made several trips there every year.

Hendrik is the founding pastor of El Abrigo de el Altísimo (Shelter of the Most High) church. This Church has three distinct ministries:

- Distribution of Christian literature in Spanish (all of which is printed by Every Home Crusade in Northern Ireland and shipped in 18 tonne loads);
- A music ministry using Christian music as an evangelistic tool in terms of concerts, recordings, radio and television promotions, etc.

- Providing food and care for poor children through the establishing of a Children's Foundation on the edge of one of the poorest areas of Cali. (See picture right)

**Pastor Hendrik summarises the history of the ministry as follows:**

*We started the church in our living room in 1994 as a church plant. Soon we began to get people knocking on our door who wanted to start attending. Finances were very little and the country was in very bad shape. There was violence all over the city many times related to the presence of the drug cartels. It was a dangerous time full of uncertainty. We had to move the church to various locations sometimes for financial reasons and sometimes because we were growing in numbers.*

*When the [drug] cartels disappeared in their present form it was the guerrillas who began to put pressure on the people and sometimes on churches for finances. As a result of having had to deal with many visits of people who identified as guerrilleros, we decided to move the church to a different location without a sign on the building or anything identifying us as a church. We moved to a new and very nice place in the year 2000. We stayed there for nine years. When we began to understand that the building was owned by the mafia and used to launder money we decided to leave. We moved into a much bigger place that needed a lot of work to make it fit for the church. We worked with teams of volunteers for many weeks. We began to find out that this area had a lot of problems. My car became an object of persecution when they scratched it up all around with a sharp object. While we were in a meeting a brother who came to the*



*church had his car taken from him by gunmen in the door of our church. We had to face robbers and thieves many times, even a stabbing with a screw driver and different forms of violence.*

*The owners of the building were very wealthy but every year the rent would go up to such an extent that it became impossible to cover it. Then we found the building where we are at present. It was a relief and our people welcomed the change. We have been here for six years now, and the church has really had a chance to grow stronger. We have seen many people come to faith in Christ here. The owners are elderly people and have been very nice to us. When we mentioned the possibility of buying the building from them, they were very supportive and easy to deal with. The neighbourhood loves us and we count with the acceptance of everybody. We believe that we can make a difference in this area for many years to come.*

West's association with Hendrik and his church began in 2004 through an introduction by Paul Benison. Since that time thirteen mission teams have visited Cali that have included members of West. Ian McAleer observes:

**Many West members have visited Cali either as part of a team or independently. In fact, more people from West have been to Cali than anywhere else and we enjoy warm ongoing friendships and a heart connection with the brothers and sisters there.**

Looking back at that first visit in 2004 which comprised Heather Thompson, Glenda Eddis, Eileen McKee, Simon Logan and Paul Shields, Paul recalls:

**We were very much aware of the dangers of Colombia, having over-researched the subject prior to our departure; however the reality of the dangers became evident when four gunmen gained entrance to the home where two of us were staying, looking for "the Gringos". It was only after our return that we found out that at that time 45% of the world's kidnappings occurred in Colombia. By divine intervention we had left the house earlier that morning than on previous mornings. The owner of the home was Elirio, a member of El Abrigo and an uncle of Wilmar Gomez Coque. This event brought about our introduction to Pastor Wilmar and subsequently to the senior pastor of his church, Pastor Hendrik.**

In 2008 Heather returned to Cali with a team of ladies from West that included Mary Phillips and Ann Andrews, to conduct training on women's ministry. This trip almost coincided with the first visit of a team

Cont'd over

from Divine Healing Ministries (DHM) of which Paul Shields was part.

From January until April 2010 Lois Shields and Pete McAvoy, both members of West at the time, worked with Hendrik at El Abrigo Children's Foundation. Late in 2009 they wrote:

**When a team from Colombia visited Northern Ireland earlier this year we were both encouraged by the team to travel over to Cali and work at the Children's Foundation. Many of the children are at risk of being drawn into drug trafficking, prostitution and violent crime, however the Foundation provides them with regular meals, health education, dental checks and help with homework for school. PLEASE PRAY FOR US!**

Paul Shields accompanied Divine Healing Ministries (DHM) to Cali again in 2010 and in 2013 he led the DHM team. Since that time Pete McAvoy returned to Cali twice accompanied firstly by Carly Shields prior to her marriage to Andy, and secondly by his sister Kerry.

The relationship between Hendrik and DHM has also continued after Brother David Jardine's recent retirement, and Fergus McMorrow, the new Director of DHM (and guest speaker at this year's Men's Fellowship Weekend), has already accompanied Hendrik to Bolivia. For West, however, 2016 turned out to be a watershed year when Andrew Seaton and Thanney Pyper were invited to join Paul Bennison on a trip. This visit deepened our relationship with El Abrigo as a church through its leadership team, which consequently visited Northern Ireland in 2018, and through the instigation of a construction programme which Thanney continues to sustain. In 2017 Johnny Mawhinney joined the ranks of the Colombia bound Westies who, despite leaving for Cali with chronic backache, managed to labour consistently on the El Abrigo building site. Most recently it is Thanney who has kept us up to date and amazed us with the transformation he has made through his construction work at the El Abrigo Children's Foundation. We have also observed the transformation God

has made in Thanney himself through this work.

In March 2013 Paul Shields stood on the open roof of the present El Abrigo church building and viewed the adjacent buildings several storeys higher but built on the same footprint. The potential was obvious and at that time he, together with Pastor Hendrik and Pastor Wilmar claimed the building for God's purpose in that district. The first thing Thanney did when his original building plans were scuppered was, with the permission of the owners, to roof an open area at the entrance of this building. There are of course obvious dangers in improving a building that belongs to someone else. Each time the El Abrigo team improved the previous building the owners put the rent up! Hendrik writes,

**Having to meet in a rented building has been an obstacle for further expansion. We have not been allowed to remodel and make it more fit for our purposes. Buying would be the way to go and in doing so we would ensure the stability of the church and a better ground for expansion in many ways in the years to come.**

Over the past 15-years the floor space of the Children's Foundation building has more than quadrupled mainly through the financial and practical building resources from Northern Ireland. Funding to reconstruct the building (not an El Abrigo building) that Thanney closed down in 2016 on its original site has been provided from as far



**Pictured, Pete McAvoy & Lois Shields**



away as Australia; however raising a lump sum for the purchase of the main church building remains elusive. Consequently, we are hoping to bring the basis of a proposal to the congregation in the near future as to how we might assist Hendrik and El Abrigo in this regard.

**Thanney writes:** My first mission trip to Colombia was in 2016. I had agreed to go with Paul Bennison, to install toilets and wash hand basins in a building for street children. When I arrived I discovered that the building was unstable and at risk of collapse. So instead I condemned it and closed it down. Why would God bring me the whole way to Colombia to do that?

It later transpired that not only was the building unstable, but also the lease would not be renewed. Meaning any work completed would only give short term relief and would be for naught in the longer term.

After struggling with this on my conscience for some time, God gave me a vision. I had to build a new place for those children. I was to go three times in 2017 and after the third visit the building was to be finished.

Hendrik then contacted me for building advice regarding another building owned by the El Abrigo foundation which would provide immediate benefit to the work they are doing in Cali. During these conversations it also came to light that the government were opposing any efforts to secure the original building for the longer term. It was

therefore clear that this was the building that I needed to complete first.

The enormity of this vision, was daunting. I am a builder, so I knew how to carry out this work and what it entailed and I knew how to organise my time to get it done. On the first of my three trips I set to work, four days in and everything I tried to do failed. For me to admit defeat crushed me and to realise that I was incapable of fulfilling the vision that God had shown me, I was devastated. After the fourth day I finished early in the afternoon and went back to the apartment to meet Paul Bennison and I told him that there was no way that this was going to be achieved. Finally I realised that I was trying to achieve all this with just my own ability and strength.

We prayed, asked God where we should go from there, as I was defeated. When finally I said, 'here you go Lord, it is over to you'. I totally surrendered myself to his will. Immediately all things started to come together, way beyond anything I could have imagined. This was simply a miracle. By the end of the third trip, the entire building had been completed in just 8 weeks, with one skilled tradesman and two unskilled Spanish speaking Colombian workers. We communicated by pointing and gestures to get the work done. To cap it all, two weeks before the final trip I broke my left hand; this just proves that it was not completed by my strength, but by his. Just try doing anything with one hand. God was in control of the entire build.

**So what next?** In July 2018 I went back to build a kitchen so that they could cook breakfast and lunch for the children, as their facilities were



**Building work on the roof and below right, Anna, the house mother**

basic and inadequate. With the Lord's blessing they now have a fully equipped remodelled kitchen, instead of a small cramped area with a metal railing with muslin type cloth draped over it to divide it off from the rest of the room and no means of extracting heat in the unbearable conditions.

While still in Cali, the government was still stalling progress, but on my last week Paul Bennison who was unable to fly because of his health condition, then suggested contacting Don Jaine and his daughter Alba (pictured right) to have a talk with them about the situation, (Don Jaine is a big business man and travels all over the world in connection with his business). We met up the next day and explained the whole project and what we wanted to do. He offered to help us on his return from an imminent business trip. We thanked him, but I said that I would be leaving on the day he would return so we would have to reschedule for my next visit. Later that night Alba phoned me and asked me if I could call round to their office the next morning for a coffee. When I ar-

rived Don Jaine was there, he said that God had spoken to him and told him that this was far more important than his business trip. He got immediately to work calling officials and arranged for a meeting at the

old building. When we arrived there around 11.30am I was introduced to them by Alba who spoke perfect English; they must have been in discussion for around an hour and I was just standing there not knowing a word of Spanish. I talked to Alba about all the work that had been done at the other building. They then stopped and spoke briefly to Alba and she told me that her Father had spoken to them about the whole situation and got them to give us a minimum of 100 year lease with the option of staying on indefinitely if the Church of El Abrigo still wanted to use it. More importantly we would not have to pay them anything for the land that the old building was on; we would be building a 4 storey high building with the ground floor for the total use of the Church to run services in. As there are no Churches anywhere near this area it is another testimony to God's good grace that He has once again shown that He will and can do all things; all we have to do is believe in Him and to see His great works.

I truly feel blessed that he has used me the way that he has and done all these miraculous things, spiritually, physical and financially.

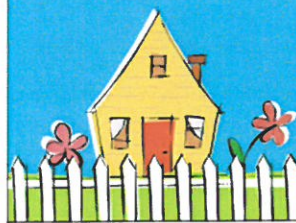
God bless you all,  
Thanney



**The reclaimed building**







# PROGRESS IN PERU

by Beverley Bryans

Dear friends,  
I write on behalf of Faith Children Services (FCS) Association members to inform you of a necessary change for the coming year for the children. When I was with Miriam and the children in November 2018, they were all progressing well apart from Gloria, who was having some teenage changes. It was wonderful to see them developing confidence and academic abilities. However, Miriam was feeling the need for urgent replacement house-parents to give her the consistent support on a 24 hour basis and we agreed to explore this possibility as a matter of urgent prayerful action. She felt she could continue with the temporary help she had until the end of December when the children would return to a relative/guardian for the summer holidays (January/February).

However, not long after I left, she took a very severe bout of Cholecystitis (gallbladder pain). I am sure anyone reading this who has experienced this type of pain knows just how severe it is. A scan revealed she has multiple gall stones and is now due to have her gall bladder removed possibly in the spring.

Because of the short timescale before their summer holiday break, Miriam suggested setting up a Casa Hogar Community Programme, March to December 2019. During this period, Miriam will undertake monthly visitation, (pre and post her surgery), to the children in their own communities where they will be with an arranged relative/guardian.

Miriam has already undertaken an initial visit to most of the children in January to set up registration in local schools and to make contact with local churches to ensure the ongoing spiritual welfare of each child. Further emotional and practical support will be given to each child, and Miriam, a trained secondary school teacher, will oversee school progress from their school materials.



Gloria & Marcos who will live with their grandparents in the jungle

FCS Association will sponsor each child for their schooling and material needs at £40.00 monthly to ensure, in the very poor economic circumstances, that children's schooling continues and other practical support is provided. Miriam will also ensure the money given is spent only on the ongoing welfare of the child.

This change which came unexpectedly because of Miriam's health problems needed urgent action and the community programme suggested by Miriam was one she felt she could implement, the welfare of the precious children being so important to her and to us.

She will continue to secure an allowance of £250 monthly and travel expenses to visit the children in their communities. These range from more locally in Huánuco to outlying jungle areas up to 8 hours distance in the case of a few of the children.

Miriam is now, after a February break, preparing a further visit to each child at the start of March in preparation for local schools restarting on 11th March.

She has continued to have intermittent pain but not to the severity of late November. Due to her previous poor experience with the local health provision (which is extremely basic), initially giving misdiagnosis of the severity of Secundo's condition and later Violetta her sister, she is somewhat fearful of the same. She was going to try to teach to raise some money to go to a private clinic. We thank God for the provision of a gift enabling us to forward £1,200 which will enable her to have the surgery privately and recover in

good time to resume the community visitation as quickly as possible.

I have a trip booked for late May/early June when I will have opportunity to visit each child with Miriam in their community settings and will report back accordingly. We believe in 'all things God works together for good' so trust Him during this time of change.

May we ask for your prayers for the precious children and perhaps you could especially 'adopt' one or a pair of siblings for your particular prayers for safety, well-being and progress even in less desirable circumstances. We thank God they have taken the news well, knowing Miriam will remain in contact.

Please also pray for Miriam's recovery to full health and for the divine emergence of much needed house-parents with a definite call from God for the home.

Please remember Rosy, the 10 year old from the home, who has gone to the far side of Peru to a relative willing to care for her; also remember Johnny who has been relocated by Miriam, that we will be able to support him on a mechanic apprenticeship in Huánuco.

Thank you so much for your faithful interest and support over the past fourteen years for the work and for your future support. Should you wish any further information please do not hesitate to contact me and if led to support the ongoing programme financially in any way, this can be done via the office or myself.

Thanking you for your continued love and prayers for these very special children that they will grow in grace and His knowledge and love for them,

Most sincerely in Him  
Beverley

## MUCHAS GRACIAS AMIGOS!

by David & Ruth Black



Pictured left are the shoes Eliazer makes and below, one of the stalls at the sale.

West Church and friends have raised an amazing £3330 for the building of a regional hospital for St. Luke's Clinic to help those children with cleft lip and palate who are badly in need of vital life changing surgery.

It isn't easy to quantify the efforts of so many who volunteered, donated and supported **The Love Peru Coffee Morning and Sale** on 16th February. Beverly and the Peru Team would like to say a big thank you on behalf of the staff at St. Luke's who are so appreciative of all that West Church has done.

There was something for everyone with stalls groaning with bric-a-brac, jewellery, toys, clothes and soft furnishings. Great bargains all round! A particular thank you must go to June our "Queen of the Stalls" whose home was swamped for weeks with donations for the sale. We hope that all of you who attended enjoyed yourselves and thank you again for your generosity!



# VENICE ~ A TRULY

"To build a city where it is impossible to build a city is madness in itself, but to build there one of the most elegant and grandest of cities is the madness of genius" So said, Alexander Herzen, and I couldn't summarize it better myself.

Phil and I took advantage of easyJet's newly launched route and flew to Venice from Belfast International at the end of January for four nights. We couldn't have planned it better, as we had five glorious days of clear blue skies and crisp, fresh air.

Arriving somewhere new can be daunting, but our research paid off, and we were pinching ourselves as we traveled from Marco Polo airport to Venice via the Aigualuna transfer service at 15 euro each, one way. It seemed so surreal to arrive at our stop by boat, getting a great view of the city as we travelled. We choose a hotel approximately 15 minutes walk from Rialto Bridge (one of three bridges connecting the two aisles).

After a warm Venetian welcome, and settling in, we set off for some sustenance. We dandered through the calli (alleyways), round corners, across piazzas, until we found a restaurant that looked good and enjoyed our first of many tasty meals. The tiramisu lived up to expectations!

On our first full day, we enjoyed two walking tours with an excellent company called La Bussola. As well as being informative and entertaining, they were invaluable for orientating ourselves and learning more about Venice and exploring many nooks and crannies. They were also good for advice on how to travel round where to eat/what to see in more detail.

There's an excellent water bus service or "Vaporetto" to travel round Venice's network of 118 smaller islands, 400 small bridges and 120



churches, just for starters. As well as for individual journeys, tickets are available for 24 and 72 hours, giving you unlimited travel, and much better value.

We enjoyed discovering Venice on foot; the only way to discover the Gelaterie (ice cream shop) and Osterie (pub/ restaurant), off the beaten track. Our tour guide pointed us in the direction of an osterie close to the Rialto Bridge where more than once we enjoyed cicheti (small plates, similar to Spanish tapas) and a Spritz. The tasty food was so welcome, and the Aperol refreshing, after our intrepid exploring. While so close to one of the major tourist areas we were surprised at how reasonable it was at 14 euro, to avoid the tourist trap and enjoy eating with the locals. On the subject of food, it's hard to ignore the various shops with the alluring chocolate fountains, a must for those with a sweet tooth. Cadbury's hot chocolate will never again match up.

Another tip picked up on our tour, was to buy a coffee at any bar for €1.50, and then avail of their facilities. This is much better than toilets which are reportedly often dirty....

we did not venture forth to see if this was true, we just took their word for it!!

It takes one hour to walk from one side of Venice to the other, so if you find yourself walking for longer you may be well and truly lost; don't rely on Google Maps either, carry a good old street map just in case you arrive at a dead end where you'd prefer to see a bridge!

We used our 24 hour water bus access to travel to the smaller islands of Murano famous for its glass blowing and Burano, famous for its multicolored beautiful houses and lace production.

We had fun on a gondola in Venice. These are pricey at 80 Euro for a half hour journey/ tour, but they can hold six passengers, so make some new pals while you wait, and split the cost! We took advantage of it being off-season and at the end of an afternoon we enjoyed bargaining with Luka our gondolier for a cut price guided tour in style. If you prefer, you can take a cheaper option and cross the Grand Canal on a one euro Traghetto, which is a commute gondola.

Venice is full of all things artistic, and as I lean towards the musical

# MAGICAL PLACE

by Sarah Taylor

side, so we didn't explore too many museums or galleries. When staying in Vivaldi's home town we just had to go to a concert of his music. We went to the Chiesa di Santa Maria della Pietà - the acoustics of this church were absolutely glorious, and we enjoyed an Intepeti Veneziani concert, the best chamber music I think I've ever heard; our musical tastes differ vastly, but even Phil enjoyed it!

One piece of art that did blow us away was found on the ceiling of a church of San Pantalon. This is the biggest canvas painting in the world, and the unfinished sombre front of the building belies what you find inside.

Well worth seeing are St Mark's Basilica in St Mark's Square (avoid if you're scared of low flying pigeons!) and the Doges Palace, Bridge of Sighs, and also T Fondaco Dei Tedeschi, which is a beautiful department store, where you can book in advance (for free!!) to visit its roof terrace and enjoy the panoramic views of Venice.

We booked a tour of the majestic Gran Teatro La Fenice (Opera House), which has risen four times from the ashes, once as recently as 2004. This tour was on our last morning and we regretted not going to an actual performance, but it has given us a good reason to return!

All in all, we found that five days in Venice was a luxury although a weekend trip would be very doable. We avoided rushing and cramming and enjoyed taking it all in. Venice is a truly magical place, and we would highly recommend it!



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