

ALEXANDRA

SPRING EDITION 2017 **NEWSLETTER**





GOOD NEWS CLUB

We have an increase of children joining the Good News Club over the past few weeks. Instead of having games every week we have crafts and children have enjoyed that. In January we were looking at the life of David and the children really liked the story of David and Jonathan.

Julie Fenton came in February to tell the children about camp in the summer and show us some photographs. The camp is in July this year and some of our children are interested in going. Over the next few weeks we are looking at the life of Christ and that will lead into the Easter story. We will be finishing at the end of March with a party.

I would like to thank Lawren, Katie, Cara, Dianne and Dakota for all their help.

May



The children enjoyed their final night at Good News Club on Monday 27th March. After some games and party food, May told them the true meaning of Easter. They finished their night with an Easter egg each to take home.



Congratulations to Mr. Philip Massey who won "Best Teacher 2017" in the Family First Awards. Philip was nominated for this award by the public in appreciation of all his hard and excellent work.



The Victoria Cross is the highest award for bravery that can be won by members of the British and Commonwealth armed forces. Dr Johnson Beharry of the 1st Battalion, Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, is a British Army soldier who was awarded the Victoria Cross for saving members of his unit from ambushes twice, once on 1 May and again on 11 June 2004.

During the second of these incidents he was badly wounded and sustained serious head injuries. General Sir Mike Jackson said of Private Beharry: "He is an example of selfless service." Of his own actions Johnson Beharry modestly said: "Maybe I was brave, I don't know. At the time I was just doing the job, I didn't have time for other thoughts."

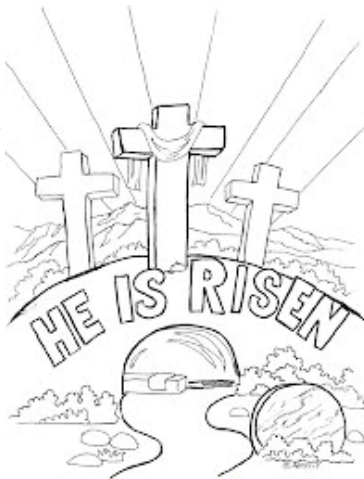
While we applaud the bravery and service of Private Beharry, I want to remind you of another who was the supreme example of selfless service. We read in Philippians 2:6 8, "[Jesus] who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross."

These verses teach us how the Lord Jesus Christ was the supreme example of selfless service. Like Private Beharry, Jesus was also given a cross for his selfless service. Unlike Private Beharry, this cross was not a prestigious award, but the means of his execution. Unlike anyone else, Christ was without sin, but on that fateful day many years ago, Jesus paid the penalty for sin as he was crucified on the cross.

Jesus willingly and obediently gave up his life to pay the penalty for sin. His supreme act of selfless service means that we when we put our trust in Him as Lord and Saviour, we can know the joy of salvation, the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. May we over this Easter period remember this supreme act of selflessness, and may we ponder the significance of it all.

I trust that the Lord will bless you as you read these words and I hope that you have a wonderful Easter.

Yours,
Jonathan





VACANCY UPDATE

Our commitment is to keep you fully updated as together we move through the process of obtaining permission, then seeking and selecting a new Minister, called by God to Alexandra.

On Sunday 5th February, our pulpit in Alexandra was declared “Vacant”, following the resignation of our previous Minister, Rev. Samuel Newell due to ill health.

We are delighted to welcome Rev. Ronnie Hetherington as Convenor of the Vacancy Commission, appointed by North Belfast Presbytery. His role is ensure that Sunday Worship in Alexandra continues; to support and mentor our Assistant Minister, Jonathan Porter; to help us in our pastoral care of the bereaved and sick; and to support the Congregation through the vacancy process.

As a Kirk Session and family of Alexandra, we warmly welcome Rev. Hetherington to Alexandra; thank God for him and look forward to serving God with him.

“Leave to Call” is simply a process to verify that a congregation is able and ready to invite and support a new ministry. The first phase requires Kirk Session to complete questionnaires on the life and witness of the Congregation ; number of members; number attending worship; membership of organisations and activities, etc. Kirk Session also provide a Mission Statement, or vision for the future of the congregation, which on this anniversary year is built around the theme of

Reconnecting with:

- Our God
- The community that we are called to serve
- The family of Alexandra

The Congregational Committee are also required to provide information on the finances of the congregation; have a property survey undertaken and to obtain gas and electrical certificates. Together Kirk Session and Committee agree on the salary and expenses to be offered to a new Minister.

This information was presented to the Vacancy Commission of Presbytery, who met with Kirk Session and the Congregational Committee for review and discussion on 20th March.

The Vacancy Commission then make a recommendation to a meeting of Presbytery.

Presbytery, we trust, will make a proposal to a central Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, called the linkage Commission and it is they who have the final say in giving a congregation “Leave to Call”.

Please join us in ‘praying our way through this process’. At time it may seem slow and a little hidebound, but over the years the approach has been proven. These few months provide us with an opportunity to take stock, to seek God’s will for our future and to reflect on the gifts and attributes that we want a new minister to bring.

On occasion, the life and witness of a congregation can stall during a vacancy, with attendance at worship on a Sunday dropping off, etc. However, we trust that during this anniversary year the family of Alexandra will be encouraged as we look to the future together and will continue to support us through this period.

Through updates on a Sunday and the Alexandra Newsletter, we will continue to keep you informed and ask for your ongoing informed, prayerful support.

Mervyn

(For and on behalf of Kirk Session)



The children at the Christmas family service in December performing their nativity. All their wonderful rehearsing paid off as they entertained the congregation with their singing.



LEAGUE OF CHURCH LOYALTY



Our Annual League of church Loyalty was held on Sunday 12 February, At the beginning of January 2016 we had 18 children in our League of Church Loyalty but unfortunately we lost a few but gained one so we begin 2017 with 14 children.

Children normally start when they are 3 and continue until they gain their 10 year prize. This year we have 2 children receiving their 5 year prize which is a Childrens Bible. Lewis Bennett & Annabelle Junk.

Gillian McBride

Notes from the choir...

Sunday 29th January was a sad occasion for all of us, because Samuel and Audrey were leaving Alexandra. Samuel was always very appreciative of our anthems each Sunday and on special occasions particularly. He chose the praise that morning, and we sang the anthem entitled 'Each step I take' at his request. The Praise Band also took part in the service, and I know we all miss him joining with the band with his accordion. We wish them God's richest blessing in the future. Our bass singer, Bill MacKenzie, has been missing from the ranks of the choir since before Christmas because of illness, and we are very happy to have him back with us. We hope Marion will soon be fit and well again too.

We continue to meet for practice on designated Thursday nights – if you enjoy singing, why not come and help us to make melody in our Sunday services – you would be made very welcome!

Ellen Smyth



TEENS BODYBUILDERS

On Saturday 4 March 12 young people and 3 leaders travelled to Todds Leap near Ballygowley, Co Armagh. The Community Police provided the transport which was great.

Todds Leap is an Outdoor Adventure Centre- which isn't for the faint hearted!

The three activities we chose to do were the Zip Line, Off Road Driving and Giant swing. All the young people thoroughly enjoyed the day!



After the activities we had tea which was proved for us in the centre restaurant.

Thanks again to the police for taking us and we hope to have another couple of outings in the coming months.

May, Gillian & Arlene

Ignite

Ignite is open to all young people from Year 9 up. We meet two Sundays a month usually the second and fourth from 7pm -8.30 in the upstairs room next to the McCloy Hall. This room is newly decorated - thanks to Robyn & her team! Its worth a peep!

The evening begins with a few games, then Study time, this session we have been using a DVD "Life Explored" we finish the evening with a light supper. On average we have had round 12 young people but we would love to see more!



Mervyn's Musings

Easter is a special time, in fact the film makers got their calendar wrong as it really is Easter that is "the most wonderful time of the year".

While the first Christmas was brilliant, as God came to earth, that was in fact the first stage which built to a climax some 30 years later at the first Easter.

Of course, much about that first Easter had happened before and would happen again as the Jewish people celebrated Passover.

Those were cruel times; being betrayed by a close friend for money was not uncommon; scheming leaders; a cowardly judge; a baying mob; an unjust verdict, they were cruel times.

Crucifixion was a "spectator sport" at which Romans excelled. A slow, cruel, painful death, used as a deterrent to impose Roman rule, as anyone who has watched the film Spartacus will recall.

Jesus death and the way in which he died was common. It had happened many times before and would happen many times again.

However, that first Easter was special and thousands of years before, the prophets foretold it in great detail

A great mystery that we can never understand or even process, "the immortal dies". Jesus, the son of God, that part of the Holy Trinity, died and as we are reminded by the creed, "He descended into hell".

But even more amazing, He rose again. The man, the son of God, irrefutably died and irrefutably rose again.

However, these evidenced facts are not the most wonderful part.

What makes Easter special is why this happened, why Jesus died and rose again, and that was for each person reading this article, individually.

"There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin.

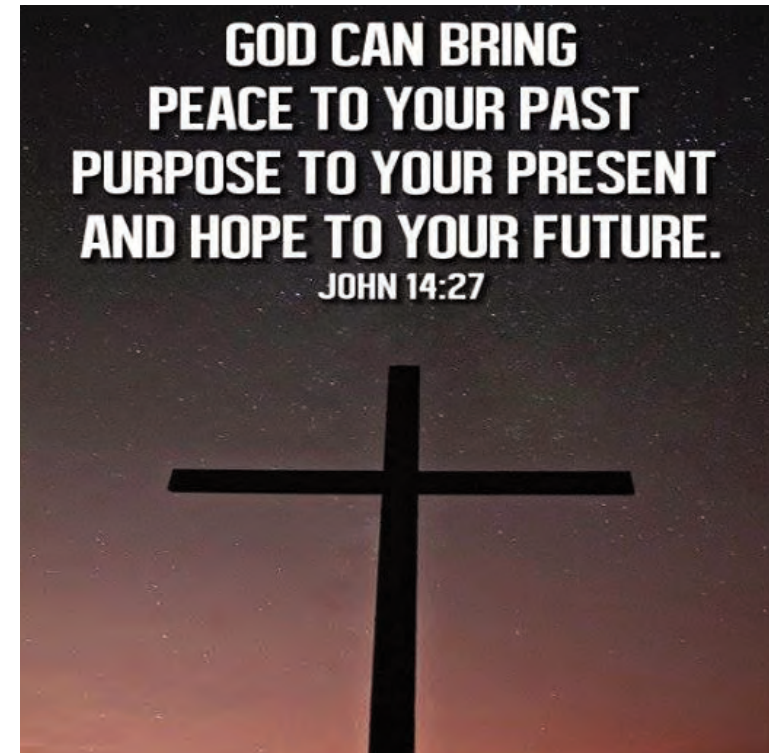


He only could unlock the gate of Heaven and let us in."

This Easter, may we each know the most wonderful time of our lives as we know the risen Saviour.

God bless,

Mervyn



Thank You

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Mr Jonathan Porter for the care and attention he gave to our Dad, Gordon, while he was in hospital. We also thank him for his sympathy and understanding when Dad passed away. For the lovely funeral service and for continued support we are most grateful.

Jeffrey and Neil Dobson

National Competitions

CHESS

In the 1st round we defeated the B team from 1st Glenwherry, however we narrowly lost by 5 games to 4 against their A team in the 2nd round.

TABLE TENNIS

The team from 1st Charlemont were just too strong for our team and we were easily knocked out in the 1st round.

MASTERTEAM QUIZ

Having been placed 2nd in the 1st round of the quiz in Armagh we travelled to Cookstown for the 2nd round. We competed against teams from Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, Granshaw and Cookstown. However we didn't gain enough points to qualify for the finals (unfortunately we were a player short that evening).



Belfast Battalion Competitions TABLE TENNIS

The Battalion competition was held in our halls where we had players using 7 tables. The organiser was John Weatherill from Jennymount Methodist BB. This was a very successful evening with our only company competitor being Jake Nixon. He certainly enjoyed his games and was also most helpful on managing the tuck shop whose profits went to Battalion charities. We thank Coca Cola for providing bottles of River Rock water for the competitors. A new cup was presented to the Battalion for the senior singles winner by the 58th Old Boys' Bowling Club.

CHESS & DRAUGHTS – Battalion Chess Champion

Congratulations to REECE SLOAN who won the Belfast Battalion Senior Chess Competition held at Mountpottinger Baptist Church. Cameron Withers also took part in the chess competition while Jordan Sloan was a competitor in the draughts competition. We again thank Billy McKittrick for coaching our boys in chess and organising the Battalion competition.



75TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

A Reunion Dinner has been planned for Saturday 14th October in Corrs Corner Hotel. We are trying to contact as many former members as possible to invite them to this event and would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to secure a place.

COMPANY NIGHT

We have been enjoying looking at DVDs about the history of the Boys' Brigade movement especially in Ireland and have also spent time looking at aspects of safety in the home including problems relating to the risk of fire. We have also explored the Fair Trade industry.

VISIT FROM GARY McALLISTER

We were privileged to have a visit from Gary McAllister, Chairman of the Northern Ireland Football Supporters Clubs who had brought with him the GRAND VERMEIL medal which had been presented to him by the Mayor of Paris. This medal was an acknowledgement of the excellent behaviour and sportsmanship of the Northern Ireland football supporters during their time in the European Cup competition. We thank Cameron McGaghey's dad David for accompanying Gary and organising this special visit.

VISIT FROM P.S.N.I.

The P.S.N.I. community team paid us a visit to discuss the problems relating to the abuse of drugs in our local area. We thank them for their time and look forward to joining with them again to see other aspects of their work.



NIGHT OUT

For our night out prior to Christmas all our sections went to 'We are Vertigo' where we had lots of fun and used up a lot of energy. The Company Section boys finished their evening with a visit to McDonalds. The following week the Junior Sections had a super Christmas Party.



58TH OLD BOYS' BOWLING CLUB

Our members celebrated winning the N.I.B.A. League Division VI Cup by enjoying a meal at Murphy Browns on the Cavehill Road. We now look forward to the challenges ahead meeting new teams in the higher division of the League. Matches are every other Saturday afternoon at Grove Park commencing at 2pm on 23rd April when spectators are welcome. We would be delighted to recruit a few new members and if interested please contact me.



Wesley Lewis



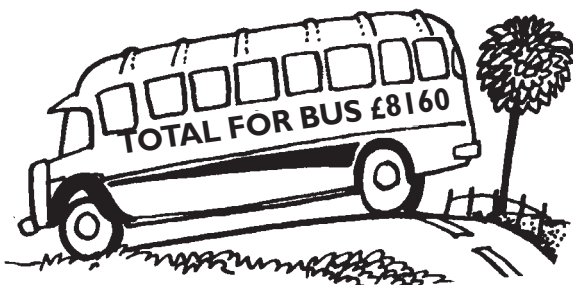
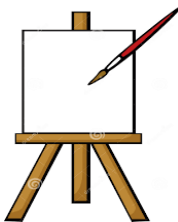
CASH FOR CANS

We continue to collect aluminium cans for recycling and our first delivery of 2017 raised £21. Please bring your empty cans to the box at the Church Hall door.



ART GROUP

Our group was part of the North Belfast Community Arts Festival and during the first three Thursdays in February were privileged to have the artist Debbie Fitzsimmons giving us advice and tuition under the heading 'Improving your Painting'. We are pleased to see a few new members join with us and as always anyone is welcome 2.30-4.30pm on the first three Thursdays of the month.



MINI BUS

The bus continued to be in good use over the Christmas and New Year period and of course is used each Sunday bringing people to church. Thanks for donations to the Future Needs Fund- the total is on the bus.



New year 2017 began in PW with a visit from Dr Ian and Mrs Ann McNie sharing through power point their very busy Moderatorial year. The evening was much enjoyed by us all and we were able to chat together informally and renew friendships over a cup of tea.

Next meeting Hannah and Sammy Smith (Hansam Crafts, Kells) came with a selection of handmade cards, jewellery etc and introduced us to 'decoupage'. Several of our ladies enjoyed taking part in a workshop, decorating slate, heart shaped, wall hangings or vases, a take home memento of the evening.

In February our assistant minister Jonathan along with his friend Sergei took us on a 'Holy Land' journey telling of their interesting experiences while visiting Israel.

Next stop Poland with a visit from Joanna Tinsley. Joanna, from Krakow, powerfully and movingly told of her journey to faith. From childhood and through teenage years she searched for a meaning to life and through the words of 'Jesus name above all names' Joanna was persuaded to find out who Jesus was through reading the Bible. She told us how Colin, her husband came into her life and how they both now live to serve God through outreach to children- a wonderful evening.

At our first March meeting Deaconess Sharon Heron told us about the International Meeting Point on the Lisburn Road. I.M.P. is a welcoming environment for all who come through its doors providing lunches, advice, English lessons, Bible studies and much more. What an eye opener to hear about the different nationalities, a percentage of who are Iranian refugees who have fled their homeland for their safety and have found a hospitable refuge at IMP. IMP has 3 project workers and many volunteers and anyone is welcome to visit.

In PW we are celebrating our Church's 75th Anniversary with a Daffodil Tea and we will close this session with our PW Service on 26th March. Our special speaker on this occasion will be Mrs Margaret Grayson, PW Vice Home President 2014-2016 and Elder in Mountpottinger Pres. Church.

For our summer evening outing on May 5th we will be visiting 'The Potting Shed' for supper and we have still to arrange our June outing.

In PW we meet together in friendship to support and encourage each other as we seek to fulfil our Motto 'Living for Jesus'.

We would dearly love more of the ladies in Alexandra to join us. Please do give some thought to joining with us when we recommence in September.

You will be most welcome.

V. Lewis

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Church flowers...

Grateful thanks to members of congregation who made donations or provided flowers for our Church building between June 2016 and February 2017. Your continued support is very much appreciated. We are also grateful for the floral tributes left following weddings and funerals.

Mrs Margaret Johnston, Mrs Kathleen Fenton, Mr Bob Lewis, McCormick Wedding, Mrs Mary Copeland, Mr Robert Cobain, Mrs Lily McDonald, Miss Joyce French, Mrs Kathleen Glass, Miss Agnes Henry & Miss Myrna Henry, Mrs Christine Barr, Mrs Ann Sterritt, Mrs Rose Beattie, Miss Betty Beggs, Mrs Maureen Savage, Mrs Annie Nesbitt, Mr & Mrs Jack Porter, Mrs Rita Blair, Mr David Barr.

E Kane



AGM

Our Annual General Meeting and Social was held this evening. Many thanks to the ladies for our supper. Thanks too to Des (our homegrown answer to Roy Walker) and to Tommy & Hugh who had us tapping our feet and singing along. A very enjoyable evening.



Dylan has been selected to represent Northern Ireland at the London Mini Marathan in April. The Mini Marathan begins ahead of the main Marathan and athletes run the last 3 miles of the marathan route which passes Buckingham Palace. This is a great honour for Dylan and he is looking forward to wearing the Northern Ireland Vest!

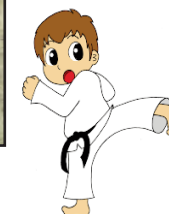
Gillian McBride

CONGRATULATIONS



Well done Jordan!

Well done to Jordan Barr on successfully completing the Larne half marathon on 18th of March. Jordan finished in a very impressive time of 1 hour and 46 minutes and was able to raise financial support for the continued work in Romania through the organisation EMF.



Well done Noah!

Congratulations to Noah Junk, who had his Taeqwon-do grading in March and was awarded his 'black' stripe belt and certificate by UTKC.

Cara Junk



Congratulations to Annabelle, Tara, Ella, and Orlagh who have all passed their Grade Two Classical Ballet exam awarded by The British Theatre Dance Association (BTDA).



Cara Junk

SAMUEL'S FAREWELL SERVICE

GOODBYES...

At the start of the year we as a congregation said farewell to Rev. Samuel Newell. Sadly, Samuel was unable to continue with his ministry in Alexandra as he had to resign on health grounds. In appreciation of all that Samuel and his wife Audrey meant to our congregation we were able to have a farewell worship service and a delicious lunch afterwards on Sunday 29th of January. It was lovely to see the church filled with many different people who benefited from their ministry.

During our service of worship we were delighted to have our own church choir bring a ministry in song. It was also lovely to have Currie Primary School Choir with us, who sang two songs in appreciation of all the interest Samuel took in their school. After the service we had a number of speeches and presentations for both Samuel and Audrey. Following the speeches we all made our way into the halls for a sit-down lunch. This allowed people to share their own personal thanks with Samuel and Audrey. It was an emotional day as we said our farewells and gave thanks to them for their many years of faithful service.

As a congregation we are thankful to God for how he has used Samuel and Audrey in many different ways to be a blessing to us. Not only have we as a church been blessed by them, but God has also used them in our community. Even though Samuel's health will no longer allow him to be with us in his current role, we will continue to remember them in our thoughts and prayers.

Jonathan Porter



SAMUEL'S FAREWELL LUNCH

This morning, the family and friends of Alexandra gathered to say farewell to Samuel and Audrey Newell and to give thanks for their time with us. Thank you to the choir of Currie Primary School and to all who made the service so special. Thank you too to Root Soup for a lovely farewell lunch afterwards.



Samuel & Audrey, we will miss you but we know that God will continue to guide you and we wish you both every blessing for the future.

"The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His face on you and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)



Alexandra Presbyterian Calendar 2017



Thank you to all who made contributions towards **OPEN DOORS** for the 75th Anniversary Church Calendar. The sum of £650 was presented to the representative from 'Open Doors' when we met on Thursday 16th March at the Alexandra Missionary Fellowship meeting.

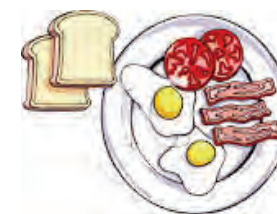
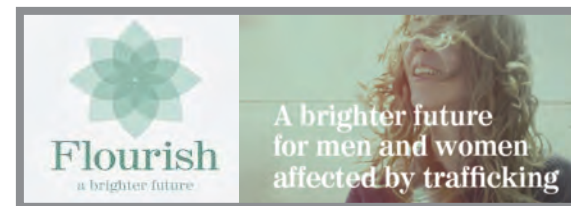


Alexandra Christmas Card Fundraiser

A big thank you for the tremendous effort from all those who donated to this worthwhile charity instead of sending Christmas cards.

The total raised was £450 and Jonathan Porter is photographed here presenting the cheque to a representative from Macmillan Cancer Support.

LADIES BREAKFAST



On Saturday 11th March we had 60+ women gather together for a Ladies Breakfast in support of Flourish NI. We started our morning with a full Ulster fry – many thanks to David Adamson and Hugh Muise for giving up their time to cook for so many of us!!

Our breakfast was followed by a full programme of worship / prayer / Bible readings with our speakers being Jill Robinson and Elizabeth McKee, the founders of Flourish NI.

Flourish NI is a local charity which is dedicated to the support of people whose lives have been impacted by human trafficking. The issue of human trafficking affects an estimated 27 million people worldwide, which can be quite overpowering, however, we were encouraged by a famous quote by Edward Everett Hale who said:

"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do"

Throughout the morning we heard real reports of lives rescued from Human Trafficking here in Northern Ireland and the work that Flourish NI undertakes to support these people.

I think all who attended the morning got a real awareness of the issue that is prevalent within our country. We also heard how we could help through prayer / financial support / raising awareness with friends, family, neighbours of the issue.

It was lovely to have so many ladies from our own congregation attend the breakfast and also to share with other ladies from our local churches in the area.

Thank you to everyone who came along to support the event – to date we have raised £560 which will all go directly towards helping those rescued from human trafficking in our province.

May Adamson



CHILDREN CHANGE COLOMBIA (CCC)

As you will know from our previous magazine, Children Change Colombia (formerly Children of the Andes) is 25 years old this year. Throughout the year we receive newsletters containing information on the work of CCC.

Below is an extract from the latest newsletter.

“The work of Children Change Colombia is not really about numbers. Our emphasis has always been on the quality of our work so that we can be sure we are making long-term improvements in children’s lives. But sometimes, of course, numbers do help when you’re trying to grasp the scale of something. So here are some numbers.”

Q. “How many children and adults have we reached?”

A. “Figures from the early years are difficult to come by, however, based on the figures we do have, we estimate that at least 1,072,000 children and adults have been affected significantly by our work over the last 25 years.”

Q. “How many partner organizations have we worked with?”

A. “We have supported 46 partner projects. We aim to work on the issues that others overlook e.g. child labour in the coffee industry, child abuse in the tourist industry, street living, landmines, disabilities, young people leaving care etc.”

Q. “How much money have we raised?”

A. “Up to the end of 2015 we had raised a staggering £11,610,781. Since 1991 our income has generally been on an upward trend, thanks to our supporters’ generosity and understanding of the challenges facing children and young people in Colombia.”

And finally, a word from Duncan Millar, Executive Director, to all supporters of CCC.

“Children Change Colombia is 25 years old. Many of the children that we supported in our early years will now have children of their own. Are these children living safer, happier childhoods than their parents did? For many, we think the answer is yes.

This is partly because of the support that their parents received from you during their own difficult childhoods. You have helped thousands of young people find safety and love and develop the skills and confidence to establish fulfilling lives for themselves and come to have healthy and happy children of their own.”

You can read more about the work of CCC at www.childrenchangecolombia.org.

Many thanks for the bags of pennies and for filling the sweet jar in KFC.
Since Children’s Day in June we have received a fantastic £170

Isobel Kane

ALL IRELAND CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

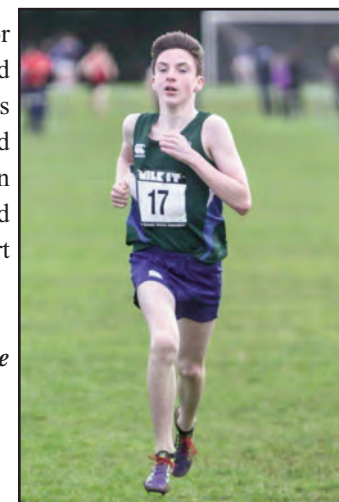


On Saturday 11 March hundreds of Cross Country Athletes both male and female gathered together for the Annual All Ireland Cross Country Championships. This event changes venue every year but this year it was the turn of the North of Ireland to host so the venue was Mallusk Playing Fields.

Dylan had already won the Co Down District in his category (year 9) which was held at Kilbroney Park, Rostrevor then he had went on to win the title of Ulster Champion and today it was his turn to take on the rest of Ireland.

Dylan lined up with approx. another 100 boys for the 3k race. As we all watched on as he took the lead and stayed there for the duration. Seeing Dylan cross the finishing line and being crowned "All Ireland Cross Country Champion" was a brilliant occasion for all his family, Club Coach, school friends and club teammates. Thank you for all the support Nathan & Dylan get from their church family.

Gillian McBride



WHEN A HUNGER GAP BECOMES A HUNGER CRISIS - Tearfund calling....2012 About 13 million people across West Africa suffer poverty and severe malnutrition – always hits the young and the frail first and worst!

Now there is a famine crisis in East Africa – Tearfund calling....2017. This time the countries affected are Somalia, Ethiopia. Kenya and South Sudan The UN has formally declared a famine in parts of South Sudan, the world's newest country, and the situation is set to worsen as food stocks become depleted.

- More than three years of conflict combined with the continued devaluation of the South Sudanese Pound, acute malnutrition, difficulties in transporting aid, and below average harvests, have brought about this scenario.
- 4.9m people [more than 40 percent of South Sudan's population] are in need of urgent food, agriculture and nutrition assistance.
- Because of poor harvests, many households continue to rely primarily on fish and wild foods to survive.

Donald Mavunduse, Tearfund's head of Eastern and Southern Africa, says: 'This is a desperate situation for South Sudan to be facing and we are worried that it is only going to get worse in the coming months with famine spreading more widely. Already, 4.9m people, more than 40 per cent of the population, are in need of urgent food, clean water and nutrition assistance. Inflation has rocketed to between 800 and 900%, so buying food has become impossible for ordinary people, and there is little sign of the conflict coming to an end.'

In Motot, Jonglei State, Tearfund is providing children and pregnant and lactating mothers with treatment for malnutrition, along with nutrition and hygiene education, whilst providing boreholes along with training in safe water use. Also, Tearfund is providing food assistance to displaced people in the capital Juba.

Within South Sudan's borders there are 1.89m displaced people - and a further 1.5m have crossed borders into Ethiopia and Uganda.....and are not free there either - with the potential for violence and hunger there too. Let us lift our prayers to God on their behalf and support Tearfund in their efforts to bring relief.... Tearfund Sunday in Alexandra planned for May 7th 2017

Check it out online: www.tearfund.org

HOPE FOR HONDURAS – TEARFUND AND YOU NEWS: HONDURAS IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST VIOLENT COUNTRIES, AND HOME TO THE MOST VIOLENT CITY IN THE WORLD.

• YOU ARE ACTUALLY MORE LIKELY TO BE KILLED IN SAN PEDRO SULA THAN ANY OTHER CITY ON EARTH*. HOWEVER, IT IS IN PLACES LIKE THIS WHERE WE CAN FOLLOW JESUS TO MAKE THE MOST PROFOUND DIFFERENCE. (*OF ALL CITIES NOT AT WAR)

• ANGELA IS A MOTHER FROM SAN PEDRO, SULA. THE SLUM SHE CALLS HOME IS PERCHED PRECARIOUSLY ALONG THE RIVERBANK RUNNING THROUGH THE CENTRE OF THE CITY. EVERY DAY IS A STRUGGLE.

• FOR FAMILIES IN THIS COMMUNITY TO FIND THE WORK NEEDED TO SURVIVE. IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE HOW THEIR CHILDREN CAN FORGE A BETTER FUTURE, WITH SCHOOLS OUT OF REACH AND THE CONSTANT THREAT OF DRUG TRAFFICKING AND GANG VIOLENCE. JOIN US IN A PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION: DEAR HEAVENLY FATHER,

WE PRAY THAT THE VIOLENCE AND CORRUPTION IN HONDURAS WILL GIVE WAY TO A PEACEFUL AND JUST SOCIETY FOR ALL. LORD, GRANT THAT THE RIVERBANK COMMUNITY WILL BE ABLE TO MOVE AND LIVE IN SAFETY.

WE ASK FOR JOY TO OVERFLOW WHERE IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE RIGHT THERE, RIGHT NOW.....IN JESUS' NAME WE PRAY, AMEN.

• YOU CAN HELP BRING JESUS' TRANSFORMING POWER TO PLACES LIKE THESE

YOUR GIFT WILL BE USED WHERE THE NEED IS GREATEST.

PLEASE COME TO OUR TEARFUND SUNDAY SERVICE AND LUNCH
ON MAY 7TH IN ALEXANDRA



Castleton Lanterns

Great War Centenary Roll of Honour

On the 100th anniversary of their deaths in the Great War we remember the following members of our congregations who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Died between 8th & 10th April 1917 –
Robert Alfred Browne, Duncairn Gardens, aged 20 –

Lance-Corporal, 4th (Ross Highlanders) Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders -
commemorated at the Nine Elms Military Cemetery, Thelus, France -
York Street congregation.

Died 24th June 1917 – Samuel John Paisley McClure, 'Rosalee', Whiteabbey
(previously Deacon Street), aged 21 –

Gunner, Royal Field Artillery - commemorated at the Poperinghe New Military
Cemetery, Belgium - Castleton congregation.

Died 14th July 1917 – William Robert Nelson, North Queen Street, aged 38 –

Sapper, 91st Field Company, Royal Engineers - commemorated at the Ypres Town
Cemetery Extension, Belgium - Castleton congregation.

Died 16th August 1917 – Thomas Robinson, York Road, aged 32 –

Sapper, 150th Field Company, Royal Engineers - commemorated on the Tyne Cot
Memorial, Belgium - Castleton congregation.

Died 21st August 1917 – Robert Fletcher Dixon, St Paul's Street, aged 37 –
Private, 47th (British Columbia/Western Ontario) Infantry Battalion -
commemorated at the Vimy Memorial, France - York Street congregation.

We will remember them



Castleton Lanterns

The Ulster Scots Agency created a pop-up exhibition of the Castleton Lanterns which we had on show at our talks earlier in the year. We are now taking it around various venues and giving talks on the men of the Lanterns. Hopefully we may be able to make contact with more families and identify more of our men.

In September the exhibition was on display in the Duncairn Cultural and Arts Centre (formerly Duncairn Presbyterian Church) where it stayed during the run of 'The Lantern Man', a play set in 1916 Ireland. The finding of our lantern slides actually inspired the playwright to base her play on a man inheriting lantern slides of First World War soldiers.

The exhibition has also been in the Public Records Office for a month and is currently touring the Libraries (normally for a month at a time) having already been to Grove, Chichester, Colin Glen, Tullycarnet, Shankill, Lisburn, Dundonald and Newtownbreda Libraries. At present (March) it is in Cregagh Library with a talk on 29th March and it will also be on show at the Ulster Scots Agency Visitor Centre, date yet to be arranged.

If you get a chance why not come along and visit us on our tour or stay for a talk.



DATE FOR YOUR DIARY (Monday 15th May)

A little while ago Castleton Lanterns put Alexandra's name forward as a possible venue for a band concert in May. We are delighted to report that we have been successful and that Alexandra has been chosen to host the Band of the Royal Marines in a community concert which will be held on the evening of Monday 15th May. Last year we had an army band, the Irish Guards, and this time we are looking forward to hosting the navy band! There are few loose ends still to tie up but if all goes according to plan the concert itself will be free, however booking will be essential due to limited space. There will be an opportunity to donate to a charity, possibly the Sea Cadets, at the concert. If you are interested in attending please give your name to Faye Rice and state the number of tickets you require. (There will be sheets at the back of the church for names). It is envisaged that there will be a lot of interest in this concert and these places will book up fast so get your name in as soon as possible.





THE SERMON

"Just one small thing before we finish"
 Said the preacher to his flock,
 The people sighed and rolled their eyes
 And thought about the clock.
 "Next Sunday's sermon's from Mark 17
 It's all about telling lies,
 If you could read it for next week
 Then you'll be truly wise."
 Next Sunday came and they gathered in
 Sat looking smug and smart,
 Hymns and prayers and then it was time
 For the main sermon to start.
 "Can I ask who read Mark 17?"
 Hands everywhere - up they went.
 He turned his eyes up to heaven
 And a silent prayer he sent.
 He paused awhile before he spoke
 Furrows came to his brow,
 He took a grip o' the pulpit sides
 Like a man behind the plough.
 "I see I have some work to do
 To lead you out of the dark,
 Because in your bible I think you'll find
 Only sixteen chapters of Mark!"

The following Brian Rankin poem would make me smile if there was no truth in it.

Shared from Hiram Higgins

BOXING DAY FOOTBALL MATCH



Once again we were pleased to have a lovely day although quite cold for our annual Boys' Brigade Boxing Day football match. We were allowed to use the new changing facilities at Seaview, home of Premier League Champions Crusaders. We had 25 players, mostly former members of the company eager to enjoy the special 4G surface and soon the teams were announced, one wearing yellow shirts and the others in blue. Some photographs were taken by John Craig. Official referee Alan Crowther in his accustomed black attire and ably assisted by Grant Wilson perfectly clothed for the cold day, soon started the game.

The match got off to a lively start with lots of end to end play. Shots were blasted towards goals but rose only into the newly created stands. We were pleased to have Colin Barr taking part this year with his sons Nathaniel and Joel who along with Joshua McConkey and Jackson Oliver were showing some neat touches and were not overwhelmed by the bigger players around them.

Towards half time Ryan Wilson opened the scoring for the yellow team with a neat strike to beat blue team goal keeper Lawrence Wallace. When the second half started Lawrence Wallace was again involved when he rushed out of the goal mouth to cover a gap in defence, however Jordon Barr seized the opportunity and cleverly lobbed the ball into the net making it 2 goals to nil for the yellow team. This fired up the blue team spurred on by Alan Logan and lively work by Craig Taylor put Samuel Allister through to score past the yellow team goal keeper Andrew Harbinson. Shortly after this a free kick was awarded to the blues and Samuel McCormick headed home to make the score 2 goals each. Stalwarts Mervyn McCormick and David Muise continued to give of their best blocking out the yellow team efforts of Jonathan Montgomery, James Todd and Kyle Barr. Once again it was the blue team with the ever lively Samuel Allister (as he did last year) scored with the best shot of the match to make it a win for the blues by 3 goals to 2.

The sun had been shining brightly across the pitch and forced a small band of supporters to find areas where they could see more clearly and we do hope they enjoyed this friendly encounter. Thanks again to referee Alan and to Brian Moore Crusaders





Gift Aid is a very valuable source of income for the church and our thanks goes to everyone who is a member of the Gift Aid scheme. Last year we received a refund totalling £19,267.24 from HM Revenue & Customs in respect of Gift Aid claimed for the year ending 31st December 2015.

Gift Aid allows us to claim the tax which you have already paid on your donations. For every £1 which you donate HMRC will give us 25p, without costing you anything further.

If you are a tax-payer and you don't already do so, please consider Gift Aiding your contributions. Just ask Faye Rice for a Gift Aid form; we only require your name, address and signature.

Also, may I highlight, if you do participate in our Gift Aid scheme (especially if your circumstances have changed) that you check that you still pay enough tax to cover your donations and if you need to be removed from Gift Aid scheme please let me know.

In the tax year from April 15-16 the amount which the average person was allowed to earn before paying tax was £10,600 per annum. In 2016-17 the allowance had increased to £11,000 per annum. As from April 2017 it will go up to £11,500 per annum meaning that people will either pay less tax or will move out of the tax bracket and no longer pay any tax. Please check if you are affected. If you're not sure if you are in the scheme please ask Faye Rice. If you have any questions about Gift Aid please also ask Faye Rice (if I don't know the answer I will try to find out).

Once again thank you to all our Gift Aiders, your participation in the scheme is greatly appreciated.



The Cracked Pot

An elderly woman had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which she carried across her neck. One of the pots had a crack in it while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walks from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the woman bringing home only one and a half pots of water.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it could only do half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, it spoke to the woman one day by the stream. 'I am ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house'.

The old woman smiled, 'Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, so I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you water them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house.'

Each of us has our own unique flaw. But it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so very interesting and rewarding. You've just got to take each person for what they are and look for the good in them.

So, to all of my cracked pot friends, have a great day and remember to smell the flowers on your side of the path!



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Bereavements

"I am the resurrection and the life."

Mrs. Mary Graham – Died on 7th of December

Mr. Gordon Dobson – Died on 12th of December

Mrs. Margaret Hagan – Died on 23rd of December