



# tidings

DIOCESE OF TUAM, KILLALA AND ACHONRY



CHRISTMAS ISSUE 2024



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## tidings

### CHRISTMAS ISSUE 2024

The magazine of the Church of Ireland Diocese of Tuam, Killala and Achonry.  
[www.tlk.ie](http://www.tlk.ie)

### VIEWS EXPRESSED

Views expressed in Tidings are those of the contributors and are not necessarily the views of the Editor or the magazine committee.

### ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES- DEA SCEALA.

Those interested in advertising in Dea Sceala should contact the editors, Ros Stevenson and Janet Bray, in 2025 [magazine@tlk.ie](mailto:magazine@tlk.ie)

### EDITOR

Canon Andrea Wills  
Assisting Editor: Heather Pope  
[tidings@tlk.ie](mailto:tidings@tlk.ie)  
Editors of Dea Sceala:  
Ros Stevenson and Janet Bray

### DESIGN & PRINTING

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## THE BISHOP WRITES

Dear Friends

There's a certain 'hand of history' moment, at least in diocesan terms, in the writing of this letter. For this is the final issue of Tidings as we have known it, the end of many years of a magazine serving Tuam, Killala and Achonry; and an opportunity to gaze towards the style and content of the new-look Tuam Limerick and Killaloe magazine that will greet us in 2025.

Moments like this, even when textured with excited anticipation regarding what is to be, nevertheless also deserve and demand an inevitable backward look. Tidings is the fourth diocesan magazine to which I have contributed regularly during my ordained years, and my younger days were characterised by the constant presence in the house of a fifth.

It's interesting to note how the style of these publications has evolved. Tidings is these days a production of high quality in terms of design. Decades ago, production was a much more amateur matter than it is now ... some magazines were virtually home-produced, using typewriter, stencil, duplicator and stapler. Even those magazines which were professionally printed were almost entirely without photographs, and the few pictures that did appear were in blurred black and white. As notes were often contributed from the parishes using old typewriters and worn ribbons (some clergy even submitted handwritten notes as recently as the 1980s), the potential for errors in printing was huge. Printing firms had to typeset everything from scratch, and production deadlines meant that the reading of proofs was often done very hastily. I remember magazine readers whose chief interest seemed to be finding the most amusing misprints in a particular issue.

And back then the content was very different too. Many parishes didn't have newsletters of their own, let alone

websites, Facebook pages and the like, so the Diocesan Magazine was the one place outside of the pulpit where clergy could air their views in public. Hence "the rector's letter" was often long, and exhortatory in style. There was much less regard for confidentiality than would be the case today ... parishioners in hospital were often mentioned by name without their permission being previously sought, and sometimes readers were even told what was wrong with them. People loved to see their names in print, and it was said that one read the magazine not to discover new information, but to read what one knew already, comforted by the fact that seeing it in print meant that it must be important. Clergy of a more imaginative and literary inclination, who found it hard to know what to write month by month about the doings of their tranquil parishes, sometimes invented fictitious parishioners and wrote about their adventures in the pew, at the mart, or on their holidays. I recall one rector who wrote every month for twenty years about the doings and views of an entirely imaginary parishioner, whose strong opinions on matters of faith, politics and economics could be relied upon to mirror the views of the rector. When said rector eventually retired, he described movingly the funeral of the fictitious character in his final set of notes. For years afterwards, many readers in other parishes continued to believe that the allegedly deceased parishioner had actually existed.

The advertisements too told their own story. In days of yore, the purpose of many of them was to encourage members of the Church of Ireland to be aware of, and to support, businesses run by other members of the Church of Ireland. There was undoubtedly a culture of supporting 'our own'. Of course there have always been the advertisements for the schools, the agricultural suppliers and the undertakers. In more distant times I recall that there seemed to be rather a lot of advertisements for pharmacies, who

seemed to compete with one another regarding the excellence and efficacy of their in-house cough cures and other tonics. Remarkably, the Diocesan magazines of my youth frequently carried advertisements for cigarettes - perhaps to induce the sore throats which could then be cured by the pharmacists' compounds. And, amid the more 'personal' advertisements, there were always those involving the search for companionship. A 'gentleman farmer' would seek the company of an 'educated lady', for 'friendship and maybe more'.

One could go on and on ... But I say these nostalgic things with a serious purpose, relevant at this juncture in the story of our diocesan publications. It is undoubtedly the case that our regular magazines, despite their amusing aspects and their quaint phrases, are the nearest thing we have to a continuing chronicle of diocesan life. Sometimes it is only when they are re-read many years after initial publication that their real value emerges. They are an important source for local history, and they allow us to enter the minds of those who carried pastoral responsibility in previous times. Much of what they contain may seem rather trivial, yet taken together it is also the story of decent people, united in the fellowship of the Gospel, who sought to make life a little easier and happier for others, who cared for their churches, and whose family life and church life were closely intertwined. Despite more recent transformations in how information is shared instantly and internationally, there is still a place for an imaginative and attractive hard copy chronicle of diocesan life. We have no idea whether, one century or several centuries from now, the huge volume of material we commit to 'The Cloud' will still be accessible. But we can be fairly confident that there will still be libraries! We owe it to our own generation to communicate effectively both online and on paper, we owe it to posterity

to place our doings and the manner of our spiritual quest on the record, and we owe it to our forebears to continue the laudable tradition they established of chronicling their pursuit of holiness and happiness amidst the cares of the everyday.

And so, in December 2024, Tidings passes into history. We give thanks for those too numerous to name who have served it generously, and we look forward to the excitement that its TLK successor will bring. We are grateful to the key members of our editorial teams over the years, currently in particular Andrea Wills and Heather Pope, whose experience and support will be vital to the production of the new quarterly publication, due to make its first appearance in late February, as notes are garnered and assembled from the TKA area of the bishopric. We thank the contributors, columnists, readers, advertisers, designers, distributors, printers and financial supporters (individual and corporate) who have kept faith with Tidings through the years. We believe that what has been for so many a labour of love has been eminently worthwhile. Charles Wills deserves special mention here for his generous and energetic role in relation to distribution ... often getting the magazine to the most unlikely places where its presence has definitely been noticed ... and that work will we trust continue with the new publication.

You'll be reading these words in the early days of Advent. Relish its atmosphere of expectancy and illumination, cherish its music and its sense of longing ... and in due course have a truly Blessed Christmas. And, come 2025, Dea - Sceala ( Good Tidings ) beckons.

Michael Tuam Limerick and Killaloe

## TIDINGS – NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

We thank everyone for their support of Tidings over many years. A new publication will appear in 2025 embracing the whole Diocese of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe entitled "Dea Scéala" Good Tidings!

For our advertisers, who have been so loyal, this means a much bigger circulation as we learn more about our enlarged Diocese which extends from Dingle in Co. Kerry to Skreen in Co. Sligo.

While it is sad to lose the uniqueness of Tidings our magazine for Tuam, Killaloe and Achonry we look to the future with a new bumper exciting publication which will be published four times a year and continue to be distributed free of charge.

We are deeply indebted to our graphic designer Amanda Moore, and our printers KPS Colourprint Ltd, Knock and to all clergy and parishes who have contributed such vibrant images and reports showcasing all that happens in the Church of Ireland in these parts.

We have really enjoyed bringing Tidings to you, many memories have been made, and we wish the new editorial team well.

*Heather and Andrea*



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Nov 30th UDYC Events Multi Activity Day**  
St Mary's Cathedral, Bridge Street, Limerick City V94 E068.  
3rd - 6th Class National School. Action packed day to include: Multi Fun Activities with Play It By Ear from Belfast @ St. Mary's Cathedral, Ice Skating @ Limerick on Ice, Fast Food tea @ Supermac's, Ending the day at Praise & Pizza Worship Event
- Nov 30th UDYC Events Praise & Pizza Worship Event.**  
St Mary's Cathedral, Bridge Street, Limerick City V94 E068,  
From 6.45 pm to 9.15 pm. This event is for everyone from 0 to 99 years but primarily for teenagers with plenty of energy!!!
- Dec 10th** 2pm Diocesan Council McWilliam Park Hotel, Claremorris
- Dec 28th UDYC Events Mega Christmas Day Trip to Dublin.**  
Age 10 Years and upwards. Contact Email: [udyc.info@gmail.com](mailto:udyc.info@gmail.com) or your Rector for more information.



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## MOTHERS UNION REPORT

A great big thank you is due to outgoing AI President June Butler who has almost completed her term of office but will be taking up a new one for Ireland and the organisation as Zonal Trustee at Mary Sumner House. Congratulations to Kay Clarke, currently AI Faith and Policy Coordinator and already well known within MU for her previous roles who is the newly elected AI President for the next triennium starting in January 2025. Jacqui Armstrong has really opened the eyes of the Church and MU members to the scourge of Domestic Violence in all its forms during the last ten years. That campaign continues...

Across the decades, Mothers' Union has expressed concerns and advocated for victims of domestic abuse. In 2014 this piecemeal approach was replaced with a worldwide dedicated strategy to end violence against women and girls. 2024 marks 10 years of this dedicated activism.

MU is very aware that men, women and children are victims of domestic abuse and believe that any form of gender-based violence is abhorrent. We pray for a day when everybody in our communities can feel secure in the safety of their home and domestic abuse and domestic violence are no more. Still, evidence reveals that the great majority of victims and survivors are female. Since 2020, a staggering 58 women have died in Ireland! Globally, almost 1 in 3 women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their life. This violence is often perpetrated by current or former intimate partners. Each year, to highlight this disproportionate effect against women, Mothers' Union participates in the 16 Days of Activism.

### What is 16 days of activism?

The Global 16 Days Campaign was initiated in 1991 as a worldwide call for the elimination of gender-based violence (GBV), to speak up, raise awareness and inspire people to do something to change the story of violence against women. It runs annually from November 25 (International Day Against Violence Against Women) to December 10 (International Human Rights Day).

### Where do we fit into this?

For too long we have turned a blind eye to domestic abuse or, even worse, colluded with it. Research indicates that 1 in 4 people in our pews is affected by

domestic abuse and / or domestic violence. It falls on our shoulders to shed the light of the compassion of Christ on the subject.

MU has introduced the RISE UP Campaign to support churches in taking steps of awareness and to offer simple practical supports and prayer resources to parishes across Britain and Ireland. The central tenet of the Mothers' Union RISE UP Campaign is the Bronze, Silver, Gold Award Scheme for Branches and /or Parishes across Britain and Ireland.

### To achieve the Bronze Award a branch or church should:

1. Place RISE UP posters raising awareness of domestic abuse in appropriate public places.
2. Commit to pray for those affected by domestic abuse.
3. Develop a connection with a local domestic abuse service.



By undertaking these three simple steps communities will become aware that people care, it is an issue on which we will no longer sweep under the carpet but encourage speaking up and speaking out as we break the silence and lift the lid on the shame to shift the blame from the victim to the perpetrator.

In all dioceses events are happening over the 16 Days of Activism. Check out dates and venues at [www.mothersunion.ie](http://www.mothersunion.ie). The Church is in every neighbourhood, every nook and cranny. We have enormous influence and respect in and outside of our walls. Let's harness this and work together to RISE UP to change the story of domestic abuse in our communities.

For further information on RISE UP head to [www.mothersunion.org/RISEUP](http://www.mothersunion.org/RISEUP) where MU RISE UP Resources are available and / or contact [muchangingthestory@gmail.com](mailto:muchangingthestory@gmail.com) for Ireland updates.

**RISE UP is changing the story of domestic abuse in communities.**

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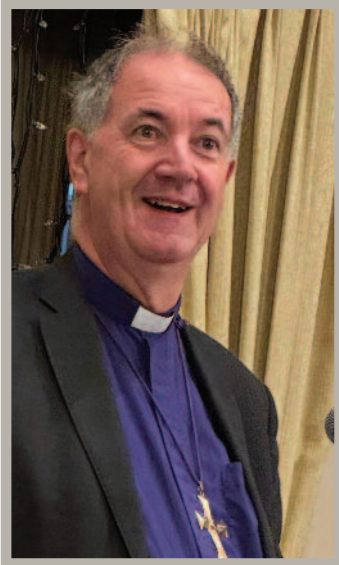
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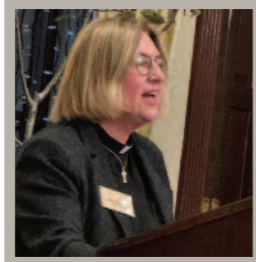
# REPORT OF THE DIOCESAN SYNODS OF THE UNITED DIOCESES OF TUAM LIMERICK AND KILLALOE 2024

A Meeting of the Diocesan Synods of the United Diocese of Tuam Limerick and Killaloe was held at the Hotel Woodstock in Ennis on Saturday 19th October 2024. The conference began at 10:45 with a service of Holy Communion, using two of the set readings for that day, Ephesians 1: 15-23 and Luke 12:8-12.

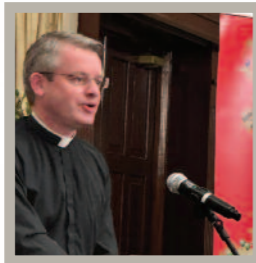
Bishop Michael Burrows preached on the Gospel explaining he was following the good Anglican principle that you preach about the scripture that confronts you as opposed to choosing what suits you. The sermon, he said would also form his Presidential Address.



Bishop Michael



Rev Suzanne



Very Revd Niall JW Sloane

He began by noting that in this passage we are immediately confronted with an extraordinary phrase uttered by the Lord, 'whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven'. We can be forgiven for what we say against the Son of Man, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. It was on this that Bishop Michael wanted to focus, and began by suggesting that to sin against the Spirit is to sin against the truth, because it is the function of the Spirit that leads us to the truth, and if we turn our faces against the truth we are blaspheming against the Spirit.

Bishop Michael then went on to describe two ways in which we sin against the truth. He thought the most obvious example of that was to deny that the climate is changing, and that it is changing very quickly and dangerously. He thought that some of us may think global temperatures increasing a degree or a degree and a half since the industrial revolution seems a very small thing in the scheme of things, but we should remember our bodily temperature and its balance. He pointed out

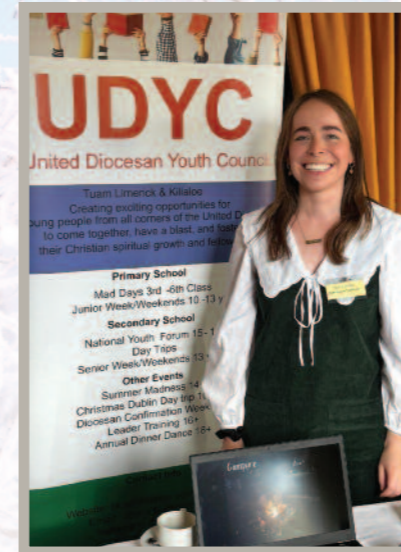
that we are very carefully constructed beings and our body temperature remains at 37. If it's 38, we feel quite miserable. If it's 39, we feel awful, and we probably need to be in hospital. If it's much over 40, we're dead - and the same is true of the planet!

The bishop's second example of sinning against the truth was our tendency to accept ambiguity and denial, and not facing the truth about ourselves. He reminded the synod of past sadnesses, mother and baby homes, abuse of religious run educational establishments. He thought that while we may have corrected this corporate hypocrisy with some of the recent referendums, we are still a society agonizing with the truth about itself, and doing this instead of exporting its problems and seeking to remain righteous. He thought that we sin against the truth by this denial and ambiguity. He said these are the sort of issues we would face squarely at the Council for Mission conference for young adults and discipleship in the coming weeks.

Bishop Michael then turned to look at the church and the diocesan synod and how it might be tempted to sin against the truth. Firstly, he thought we should consider what a synod actually is. A synod is a gathering of people on the way. The bishop then looked to our ecumenical friends of the Roman Catholic Church and their present process concerning the nature and experience of synodality, which he thought was far removed from our sort of neo parliamentary and adversarial way of doing things. Together on the way is what being in synod is, and therefore it's not static. It's certainly not a place for the backward look. It is not a mere AGM. It's a place of vision and waiting on the spirit and then moving forward together strategically, harmoniously and courageously. In this way he said it is dynamic, it sits lightly on the past, it takes risks.

The bishop said that he once heard a distinguished bishop, now departed this life, describe timid conservatism as the devil's best tool in the Church of Ireland. He hoped that today, whatever we were discussing no eavesdropper would conclude that this synod was a place of timid conservatism. The other way in which a synod can sin against the truth is by being a victim of delusion. Looking out the window and seeing things that nobody else sees because it suits us to think we see them. And then managing to convince ourselves that we are right. So that in that way we tell ourselves that we are keeping everything out there going perfectly well.

Bishop Michael said that we needed to realise that traditional church attendance has been in rapid decline, that there were faithful people who stopped going to church during the pandemic and realised they didn't miss



Valerie Walker



Andrew Coleman



Frankie Hill-Thornburgh

it very much, that participation in what was offered was for most people very erratic, that large numbers of young adults have little regular need of us, and none of this should necessarily make us despair provided we are realistic about what we see.

However he reminded us, we do well in these circumstances to be an outward looking, undeluded body, which has flexible membership boundaries and is clear in its role in the world. In that way he thought we could be a beacon for those who still yearn for hope, holiness, and meaning. We can welcome those who occasionally wander in and out, perhaps in search more of peace and space than traditional worship. We could shun the type of harsh, exclusive righteousness that the bishop feared was becoming far too obvious in much of the Church of Ireland these days. We could recultivate our relationship with the arts. We could address the world with intelligent social comment rather than pious piffle and in this way, we could be interesting and excite curiosity rather than being repulsively morally upright. Bishop Michael ended his presidential address by referring to the debate on Baptism at the last General synod, where he thought the repulsive moral uprightness had done the church a great deal of harm.

Having earlier welcomed our ecumenical guests, Bishop Fintan Monahan, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Killaloe and Rev Jackie McNair from the Methodist Church in Adare, Ballingrane & Christchurch Limerick, synod moved on to its formal business. Apologies for absence were received, supplementals were appointed and it was confirmed that there was a quorum of members. Synod was reminded of the Conflict-of-Interest policy and the minutes of the previous meetings were approved and signed. There were elections for one Lay and one Clerical representative to the General Synod Board of Education 2025-2026. As there were two nominations for the Lay Representative post an election was held by

secret ballot and Ms Margaret Brickenden was elected. The Clergy Representative, Revd Suzanne Cousins, was elected unopposed.

The Reports of the two Diocesan Councils were presented to Synod. The report from the Tuam Diocesan Synod was proposed by Revd Suzanne Cousins and seconded by Dr Rachel Latey. The report from Limerick and Killaloe diocesan council was proposed by Mr Adrian Hilliard and seconded by the Revd Canon Jane Galbraith. There were then heard two motions from the Tuam Diocesan Council and one motion from the Limerick and Killaloe Diocese. These were all passed. The synod then broke for lunch. After lunch, the synod watched a video produced by the Pioneer Ministry Team which introduced our new Diocesan Co-Ordinator for Spiritual Tourism and Pilgrimage, Valerie Raitt and explained the vision behind Pioneer Ministry. There were then Resolutions from the Limerick and Killaloe Diocesan Council to bring Select Vestries together to form new Unions of Parishes. The first resolution was to join the separate Select Vestries of St Ruadhán, Lorrha, Locken and Dorrha become a Union of Parishes.

The second resolution was to join the Select Vestries of Cloughjordan and Ballingarry, Borrisnafarney and Templeharry and Borrisokane into a new Union to be known as Cloughjordan and Borrisokane Union. Both were passed and it was further resolved that the consent of RB to these decisions be sought. Synod then heard Reports from different committees and Boards. The report of the Tuam Diocesan Board of Education and the Report of the Limerick Board of Education were proposed, seconded, and approved. As was the United Diocesan Council for Mission Report and the United Diocesan Youth Council Report.

Standing Orders were suspended to enable the recently



Luke Hawkins



Rachael Murphy

As Bishop Michael said when introducing this item the single diocese working group wasn't just bringing

appointed Diocesan Safeguarding Compliance Officer, Damian Shorten, introduced his report. Bishop Michael commented that the diocese was privileged to have him on board and thanked him for the confidence and vision that he brought with him for training and advising on Safeguarding. While Standing Orders were still suspended the next report was the Communications Report which was introduced to synod by the Diocesan Communications Officer, Mr Stephen Fletcher.

After Standing Orders were restored Mr Peter Whyte gave a report on the work of the Single Diocese Working Group.



Joyce Sparkes

Mr Whyte set out what he called a Green Paper showing the ways this could be achieved. Bishop Michael thanked Mr Whyte and the Single Diocesan Working Group for their work. There were no Private Members Motions, so the Synod then closed at 4:45pm after Bishop Michael's closing remarks, thanking the diocesan secretaries, Heather and Lorna, for their work in organising, coordinating and running the synod and he concluded the Synod with prayer.

**Stephen Fletcher**  
Diocesan Communications Officer  
21st October 2024

matters in the two dioceses into line with one another, but beyond that it was charting a possible future course by which over the next few years the two dioceses could become truly one. Not two dioceses sharing a bishop, but one diocese with one bishop and one synod, conforming to the proper Anglican understanding of what the nature of a diocese is.



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school tours abroad, kayaking, orienteering, cricket, equestrian activities, Agricultural Science, horticulture (polytunnel and sheep paddock), Amber Flag, Young Social Innovators and many more.

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## SPIRITUAL TOURISM

As we in this Diocese of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe start our new project in Spiritual Tourism & Pilgrimage - I firstly would like to share with you regarding the Pioneer Ministry Launch on Sunday 5th February 2023 in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin where a Candle was lit for our diocese. On this candle it clearly states in a verse of scripture what our vision is to be. - Isaiah 43 : 19  
*"For I am about to do something new. See I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland"*

The Pioneer Ministry's focus is to reach those with little or no connection to church. Within our vast diocese - there are many different places we can meet in new ways. The launch of the project of Spiritual Tourism and Pilgrimage in this diocese of Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe seems fitting as :-

- we look to travel the Wild Atlantic Way not only by terra firma on our roads and paths but by water to the islands on our western shores, and also in our diocese, places near our largest river in Ireland - the Shannon within our Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.
- We seek to engage people where they are - rather than inviting them to come to us.
- We will embrace all that we have to share with others in our respective parishes.
- On our visits to monastic sites, our parish walks, the heritage and spirituality that we have in abundance within this island of Ireland will unfold for us all to enjoy,

- In all of the above, we will have opportunities to share our hospitality (friendship, generosity, entertainment and love of a Stranger) not only within our parishes and communities but with those who come from other places, cultures and traditions
- We, as the Church of Ireland are a Christian Community in the Anglican Communion where our outlook is truly ecumenical.

As I embark on this journey myself, the verse in the bible that resonates with me is from 1st Peter 4 : 10 and yes google it and you will read *"Each of You should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's Grace in its various forms."* This statement helped Early Church Christians know how to live so that their lives (both individually and collectively) would glorify God.

In Ireland and especially this diocese we have so much to offer. Whilst our parishes are rather spread out and in places isolated. This project, I embark with others, is an opportunity to breath new life into our church; energy into our people and bring together our communities. This injection of something new will be a challenge but it is an opportunity for all members of our faith to become involved in who we are, see our country and share fellowship that will enrich our faith.

I note also that We are called to move towards Christ in Love and one another. As we draw together to meet and grow - we shall listen to everyone's stories and we will have a better understanding of each other as we

walk this new path. We will be open to the movement of the spirit and how the spirit is moving through our relationship with the scriptures and with others ! This will transcribe into the community that we each live in, and that of others, as we congregate together socially, travel, visit all that this beautiful country has to offer and learn from what has been here before . I hope that this will feed us in body, mind and soul. (physically, emotionally and spiritually)

We are not here to be judged by the way this project will evolve as we are open to trying new ways. This project however will only be successful if we all come together; practice hospitality and educate ourselves in all that we have to offer. As we gather all that we have to offer in this diocese, we shall start our Pilgrims Ways, learn of our Celtic Christianity, our Saints and Scholars and all that this Emerald Isle has to offer us.

Christ refers himself as the Light and the Way. So let there be light as we start this project of Spiritual Tourism and Pilgrimage in this Diocese. May 2025 be a year of new beginnings. Our Irish Heritage is all around us. It is there for everyone to see and share not only in our

culture but in our language. In conclusion, An Irish Blessing that many of us are so familiar with, be it on a tea towel or a souvenir from Ireland that our visitors can purchase to take home.

May the road rise to meet you, May the wind be at your back, May the sun shine warm upon your face  
 May the rain fall softly on your fields, And until we meet again, May you keep safe in the gentle loving arms of God

For everything there is a season, A time for laughter  
 A time for tears and pain, In all things - God is near - always guiding your way..

Saying this to each and everyone as ONE person.  
 Go n-éirí an bóthar leat which means word for word  
 May the road rise with you or "May your road / journey be successful"  
 May OUR road and journey be successful.  
 Please feel free to contact me by email on spiritualtourism@tlk.ie

le Gach Beannacht / Every blessing  
 Valerie Raitt

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# UDYC NOTES

Our UDYC Summer Programme was a great success this year with our journey to Portglenone for Summer Madness, Gurteen for our Senior Camp and Muckcross for our Junior Camp. It was great to see so many familiar faces as well as some new ones throughout these events. Memories were made, stories shared and as usual very little sleep! We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible next summer.

On Friday 4th-Sunday 6th October, we held our part one of Taking a Leading Role in Cloughjordan. We had a number of aspiring leaders in attendance where they learned what it meant to be a leader and searched for the reasons why they want to be a UDYC leader. It is lovely to see former participants take that jump to



become a leader and share their faith journeys with the youth. Next year will see the following two parts of this event where we see them grow into being an inspiring UDYC leader!

Friday 25th-Sunday 27th October saw our Confirmation Follow Up Weekend with Bishop Michael Burrows held in Birr Outdoor Education Centre. From the very first interaction it was clear that the group that gathered were enthusiastic for the weekend ahead. A massive thank you to the clergy who joined us on the weekend including Canon Jane Galbraith, Reverend Andy Pierce and Reverend Alistair Doyle. Through their discussions and workshops we gained an insight into their faith journeys and what confirmation meant for them.



Activities on the weekend included mountain biking and gorge walking which brought smiles to the kid's faces.

On Saturday evening we prepared a eucharist service which we were sharing with the congregation of St Brendan's Church in Birr. We wrote our own prayers, picked the hymns, did the scripture readings and even wrote the sermon about someone who was a saint in their own lives.

It was a great success and even better to have conversations with the congregation afterwards over a cup of tea. A massive thank you to Bishop Michael for hosting the event.



## MY DWELLING PLACE ADVENT RETREATS



But it can also be where I feel at home, at ease, accepted and have a sense of belonging, tucked into God's heart.

The sessions will run as a series of online mini-retreats with guest contributors sharing stories that capture for them what their 'dwelling place' is. Then facilitators Lydia Monds & Carol Casey will offer a piece of scripture and/or a poem or piece of art, and people will be given the opportunity to sit with it, to wonder about it, and then to slow right down and to

"like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house..." (1 Peter 2:5a). Join the Church's Ministry of Healing: Ireland from November 25th – December 16th, Mondays at 11.30am – 1.00pm for our online Advent Series 'My Dwelling Place'.

The title evokes so many images and wondering questions. We can ask ourselves where our thoughts dwell or what story of our lives do we dwell on? My dwelling place can be where I live, or the body I inhabit.

pray about it, listening to God's voice in this season.

We particularly want to welcome people who find the build up to Christmas difficult, for whatever reason, and who might enjoy a quiet time to rest in their true belonging. To book your place, go to [www.ministryofhealing.ie](http://www.ministryofhealing.ie). There is no cost for joining this series, but if you donate whatever you can afford, it will help to keep our work going, as we are fully funded by donations.



# SCRIPTURAL REASONING: DEEPENING OUR FAITH AND COMPASSION

by **Kenn McLaughlin, Castlebar Parish, United Diocese of Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe**

I believe I am what is called a “blow in”. I am an American-born newly-minted Irish Citizen recently joining the foreign-born registry and moving to County Mayo, the home from which my ancestors emigrated decades ago. As I continue to build relationships here, I have been working to connect my life-long spiritual journey to the practices of Ireland and find the ways in which God seeks to use me here in my new home.

I recently attended an online event titled Scriptural Reasoning: Deepening our Faith and Compassion (5 November 2024) which was sponsored by the Church of Ireland Interfaith Working Group with Dublin City Interfaith Forum. I was deeply moved by the time in communion with the group assembled. I was especially engaged through the core question of the event: What does a call to be compassionate sound like in varied faith traditions?

Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Romain MBE used a compelling story which followed Rabbi Judah the Prince on his journey to a compassionate life, and included kidney stones, a calf and kittens. The Islamic tradition of beginning each and every action with a centering call to align with mercy and compassion was shared by Dr Mudafar Al Tawash, and Mark’s Gospel story about Jesus’ compassionate response to two blind men was offered from Methodist Minister Rev Dr Stephen Skuce. Each of these spiritual leaders provided historical and cultural contexts for their choices of material and then our large group was split into two breakout sessions, where rigorous conversation began. In my small group, the interconnected layers of the material, and the varied responses to each reading made for a deep reflection on the nature of human compassion and our capacity to both employ compassion and to miss the opportunity to do so.

Taken as a whole, the event allowed for a widening of perspective regarding an issue central to human life – our power to offer compassion to others, especially those in most need of it. Interfaith practice allows for myriad faiths to be seen in both affinity and relief, confluence and contrast. The result, to my mind, is a deepening of my spiritual walk and a more meaningful connection to the community around me; a community made up of people who think and pray like I do, and those who meet and engage with God in ways very new to me. I look forward to more events like this one and encourage everyone to give such interfaith explorations

a worthy try. God made a magnificent, diverse world. How much more of it will we see when we look for it with fresh eyes? asked the “Blow-in” to whom all things look wonderful and new in Ireland.



*Kenn McLaughlin, far left, at Dublin City Interfaith Forum in the Mansion House Dublin, September 2024, to mark International Peace Day. Also in photo: Roger McGreal (Westport), Brad Thien (Castlebar), Tony McCabe (Westport)*

Additional note on the contributors to the Scriptural Reasoning event:

Jonathan Romain is the Convenor of the Reform Beit Din, the rabbinic court serving synagogues throughout the UK. He is Chaplain to the Jewish Police Association and President of the Accord Coalition (campaigning for inclusive education). His many books include The Jews of England and Till Faith Us Do Part; his latest book is Confessions of a Rabbi (Biteback).

Dr Mudafar Al Tawash – is a founding member of Dublin City Interfaith Forum and is a doctor in Agriculture, now retired and who contributes to the work of a number of not-for-profit organisations.

The Rev Dr Stephen Skuce is the North Western District Superintendent for the Methodist Church in Ireland. Dr Skuce previously worked with the British Methodist Church in a number of roles including Director of Research, Director of Global Relationships, and Academic Dean at Cliff College. He served as a mission partner in Sri Lanka and his published work includes The Faiths of Ireland (Columba, 2006).



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## CHRISTIAN AID CHRISTMAS APPEAL: REBUILDING LIVES IN SOUTH SUDAN

Amani and her husband Rashid remember their old life, a time before they became refugees. The couple lived in the Darfur region of Sudan. Their five children, aged between 3 and 17 were thriving.

In Nyala city, Rashid worked as an architectural engineer following his retirement from the army, and Amani worked in a restaurant. But everything changed in April 2023 when war broke out in Sudan. "The bombing and the shooting was all around us. Two of my neighbours' houses were bombed, killing four children. A bomb fell on our house but it didn't explode," Amani added.

It wasn't long before they had militants knocking on their door. "They came looking for my husband as he'd been in the army. They wanted to take him away. It was very frightening," Amani explained. "My husband was out. I called to tell him that these people are waiting to take you away so don't come home," she added.

That was the day Amani decided it was too dangerous to remain in Sudan. She packed a few belongings and fled for South Sudan with her husband and two of their children. The journey took seven days and they faced danger throughout. "We travelled in a convoy of four trucks. There were robbers demanding money from each truck in order to proceed. Most of the money I brought from home was taken and I only had a little bit left when we got here," she said.

Arriving at Wedweil refugee camp in South Sudan, close to the border with Sudan, Amani and Rashid were

among thousands of Sudanese to receive cash support from Smile Again Africa Development Organization (SAADO), a local partner of Christian Aid. This cash support, funded by Irish Aid and the Scottish government, helped refugees buy food and other essentials.



Amani and Rashid with three of their children at Wedweil refugee camp in South Sudan. The family fled from Darfur in Sudan following the outbreak of war. Credit: Christian Aid/David Macharia

Although Amani and Rashid were relieved to reach safety, they'd had to leave three of their children in Sudan

with their grandmother. "There was heavy shooting as we were leaving, so the children couldn't return home. When I came here, I couldn't eat anything because I was sick with worry and I had no phone to speak to them," Amani explained.

Some weeks later, with Rashid still under threat, Amani made the brave decision to return to Sudan alone, to fetch the children. Despite the danger, all four made it back to the refugee camp where the family was reunited. Besides receiving cash to buy essentials, SAADO also provided the family with a business start-up grant which allowed Amani to open a food stall that has grown into a popular restaurant in Wedweil market.

Better still, the success of her restaurant enabled her to rent a plot of land where she and Rashid are growing vegetables. The farm feeds the family, supplies the restaurant and they sell the surplus produce for an income.

The family don't know when or if they'll be able to return to Sudan. But they have two big ambitions which they hope their business will support. Amani wants to travel back to Sudan to collect her mother, who's in poor health, and bring her to the relative safety of South Sudan. Amani's other goal is to fund her children's return

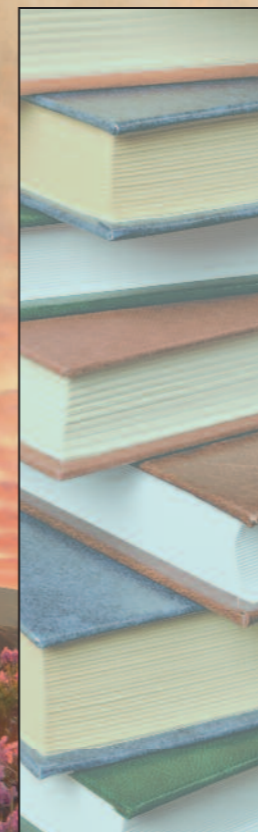
to school. She explained: "The most critical thing right now is education for my children. It's my dream for my children to get a good education."

With just a little start-up support from a Christian Aid funded programme, Amani and Rashid have built a successful business. The income they're generating isn't just protecting them and their five children from hunger and malnutrition; it's also creating a brighter future in the face of conflict and crisis.

Sudanese refugees like Amani and Rashid have been able to start rebuilding their lives thanks to support from Christian Aid's local partner but further support is needed to reach families in the camp still struggling to survive.

**Please give what you can to  
Christian Aid's Christmas appeal at  
[caid.ie/Christmas](https://caid.ie/Christmas)**

Please pray for all those who have fled war in Sudan, that God will provide for them and comfort them in their time of need. Please also pray for peace in Sudan so that those who have fled can return to their homes in safety.



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## REPORT ON LICENSING OF VALERIE RAITT AS PIONEER MINISTER IN TRAINING.



On Sunday 3rd November 2024 Valerie Raitt was Licensed by Bishop Michael Burrows as a Church of Ireland Pioneer Minister in Training in the Dioceses of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe. This took place in Valerie's home parish in Holy Trinity Church in Aughrim.

Valerie was presented to the Bishop by the Pioneer Ministry National Director Revd Rob Jones and was then commissioned by Bishop Michael assisted by the Archdeacon of Tuam and Killaloe, the Venerable John Godfrey and the Archdeacon of Limerick the Venerable Simon Lumby.

Speaking about the work of Pioneer Ministry Bishop Michael said: 'We want to send visitors home enriched and even transformed, so that like the wise men of old, they may return to their own places, speaking joyfully of what they have seen and of their encounters with God in prayer, people, creation, and history.' 'We hope to draw together a dispersed community across the

diocese of people passionate about our vision for spiritual tourism who will pray, serve, guide and lead. We want to renew and strengthen our diocesan family as people of faith, who no longer see heritage as a burden to be maintained, but as a context which enables us better, in a biblical phrase, to give to those who ask of us a reason for the hope that is in us.'

Bishop Michael welcomed the Ecumenical Guests; Fr Gerard Geraghty the Parish Priest of Aughrim, Fr Raymond Sweeney the Diocese of Clonfert Ecumenical Officer and Revd Steven Foster the Methodist Pioneer Minister for the Galway area. Music was provided by Organist Michael McCullagh with violinist Maya Donaghy and Valerie Seale sang the solo Ag Criost An Síol. The service was followed by refreshments in the neighbouring Glebe National School Aughrim.

Stephen Fletcher DCO 4th November 2024



## CHRISTMAS – MADE FOR CARING

### Hope conquering tribulations of seasonal poverty

Happy images of gifts and generous tables of festive food will be nothing but a distant dream for many people this December, with the spectre of inflation adding to the concerns of hard-pressed families.

Everyone is affected by price increases but for the more vulnerable in our society, the consequences are devastating, with Food Banks around Ireland yet again reporting increasing numbers looking for help, especially in the lead up to Christmas.

As the barrage of advertisements appear on television and other media, too many families will have already started to get into further debt in an attempt to give their children a glimmer of hope and something to look forward to – all of this in the midst of their personal financial difficulties, that are inevitably miserable and seemingly never-ending.

This Christmas, an austere time awaits many children and families who are already cold, hungry, and going without; families whose culinary experiences are dictated by the parcel they collect from the Foodbank – a harsh, difficult and often humiliating reality.

Today, children are growing up knowing their parents are unable to afford the food they need. They live with the stigma of the poor choices in the clothes that they can get from the charity shops, squeezing feet into ill-fitting shoes, feeling the pain of poverty with each step. Every parent wants Christmas to be a special time for their children, but when you're already having to make impossible choices between heating your home or putting food on the table, there is often little or nothing left over for gifts or treats. Struggling families have seen their household budgets stretched to the limit by inflation, often borrowing money in order to see their children's faces light-up with delight on Christmas morning as they receive gifts. Unfortunately, these brief moments of joy often bring hardship in the days and months after, with families often being victims of unscrupulous moneylenders who hover on the darker edges of society.

Christmas has long been touted as the time for generosity, but those who don't have the means to be generous invariably have to watch the festivities from the side-lines. This experience is not just about physical deprivation - the negative effects of poverty (let's call it what it is) are so profound that they can also trigger negative psychological health

consequences, locking people into a downward spiral. It can be tempting to ascribe some blame to these families for their financial difficulties, believing somehow that they are lazy, incompetent, or somehow at fault. A picture that in my experience, conflicts sharply with reality.

In Protestant Aid, we know of the deprivation that snarls loudly throughout the year, and at Christmas in particular, made worse by a media marketing frenzy that taunts those in need.

During 2023, we will have issued General Grants of over €500,000, much of it around Christmas, in an effort to bring some degree of comfort and assistance to those who need our help. And this is where your generosity turns darkness into light and despair into hope. We are merely the conduits of the kindness our donors have demonstrated year after year in a manifestation of love, care and compassion. The effect of this kindness was touchingly articulated in a beautiful letter of thanks, recently received from a grant recipient.

"This grant will be a massive help - it means I can take comfort knowing that I will be able to keep the house warm this winter. So, thank you thank you THANK YOU - it is always such an extraordinary feeling to think that there are people out there somewhere who genuinely care and who repeatedly make a world of difference to our mental, emotional and financial wellbeing. I can't tell you how much it means to me to have that sense of there being kind, generous people who care about us - a kindness that feels deeply nourishing on an inner level."

It is this care and compassion, given without judgement, that helps share the joy of what Christmas is known for, allowing families the respect and dignity so vital to their well-being. Together with our donors, we must be and are, all driven by the principles of compassion, empathy, and a desire to make a positive difference to those who need help. Generosity is a reflection of character and moral courage - as donors, you have helped Protestant Aid to create an environment, in which care and compassion can prosper and grow, not just a Christmas, but every single day or the year. What a joy and what a privilege. Thank you.

**Geoff Scargill**  
**Head of Charitable Services – Protestant Aid**  
[www.protestantaid.org](http://www.protestantaid.org)

## UNDERSTANDING THE LEGACY OF INSTITUTIONS FOR MOTHERS AND BABIES



*Professor Leanne McCormick, who co-chairs the Truth Recovery Independent Panel examining the history and legacy of Northern Ireland's mother and baby institutions, Magdalene laundries and workhouses, invites readers to share their experiences of four institutions.*

Can you help us understand more about Hopedene Hostel, Thorndale House, Malone Place or Kennedy House? A 10-person Truth Recovery Independent Panel has been appointed by the Northern Ireland Executive Office and is carrying out an independent truth recovery investigation into the workings of mother and baby institutions, Magdalene laundries and workhouses and their pathways and practices. These include the adoption and care system as well as private nursing homes and the cross-border movement of children. The panel's report and findings will help to inform the future statutory public inquiry. As part of this process the panel is asking for anyone who spent time in any of these institutions (the full list is below) or who has been directly impacted by them (such as children now adult adoptees whose mothers were in these institutions) to come and give testimony about their experiences.

We are also keen to speak to anyone who worked or volunteered in the institutions, who might have been a social worker, probation or police officer or medical professional who might have had any involvement with women and girls who were in the institutions. The panel is also interested to speak to clergy who might have advised parishioners about the institutions or had knowledge of how they operated. Each person's experience is different, people will have had more difficult times than others, but all accounts are important.

There is a perception that institutions for mothers and babies were Catholic and run by nuns, but in Northern Ireland more Protestant women and girls spent time in these institutions than did Catholic females. There were also more Protestant-run institutions than Catholic ones. This makes it crucial that the Independent Panel gathers testimony from people who have experience and knowledge about these institutions.

We are aware that for many of those who have experience of the institutions, speaking about their experiences may be something they have never done before and is personal and painful. We know that while society has changed, for many the stigma and shame is something that has stayed with them and they may be reluctant to come forward and give testimony. We appreciate how difficult it is to engage with a testimony gathering process, but we have an experienced testimony team and excellent support is available at all stages. Testimony can be given in your home, at our offices in Belfast or at any location where you would feel comfortable. The process is confidential, and your privacy and consent are central to everything we do.

Testimony is vital to the process of understanding what it was like for those who passed through institutions as well as the impact they have had on lives since. We want to hear about lived experiences as they hold the key to what really happened. We also face challenges with archival records which are incomplete and in the case of some private nursing homes (where some unmarried women were sent to give birth) do not exist at all. We rely on testimonies to help us understand how institutions operated and to allow us to build a complete and wide ranging a picture as possible.

If you would like to help us by giving testimony or if you are unsure if your experience or knowledge is useful to the panel, please contact the Testimony Team. We know that some people may feel their experience isn't important or relevant or what we are looking for but please contact the team as all experiences, no matter how small, will help. The Testimony Team can be contacted on 028/048 9052 0263 or by email at [testimony@independentpanel.org.uk](mailto:testimony@independentpanel.org.uk) or by writing to: Truth Recovery Independent Panel, 4th Floor, Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DB.

Further information about the work of the Truth Recovery Independent Panel, can be found at: [www.independentpanel.truthrecoveryni.co.uk](http://www.independentpanel.truthrecoveryni.co.uk)

### Full list of institutions Institutions

- Mater Dei Hostel, Belfast
- Marianville, Belfast,
- Marianvale, Newry, Mother and Baby Institution
- Thorndale House, Salvation Army, Belfast
- Malone Place/Belfast Midnight Mission Maternity Home Belfast
- Hopedene Hostel
- Kennedy House/Church of Ireland Rescue League, Belfast
- Deanery Flats
- Mount Oriel
- Workhouses across Northern Ireland

### Magdalene Laundries

- St Mary's, Belfast
- St Mary's, Derry/Londonderry
- St Mary's, Newry

### Industrial Home

- Thorndale Industrial Home/Salvation Army, Belfast

### Pathways and practices

- The Independent Panel is also investigating other practices related to these institutions including (but not limited to): the care system, fostering and adoption practices, related institutions such as 'baby homes', private nursing homes, and cross-border and international transfers of women and children.



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**Rathbarron/Killoran:** 9am 5th Sunday, united service as announced

On September 8th around twenty intrepid walkers gathered in front of the McGee Hall, Dromore West, and set off for Skreen to complete the "Loop the Parishes" walk, which had first begun way back on the 1st of April. That first day was only a warm-up with a walk from the rectory in Skreen over to Dunmorran Strand, along the beach to Aughris Head, and then back to the old schoolhouse for a Bar-Be-Que. On the 14th of April walkers again set off from Skreen,

this time heading for Christ Church (Dromard) in Beltra. It was a bit wet and a bit windy, but the walkers covered the nearly 12 km in good time and enjoyed hot tea, coffee and refreshments upon arrival. This would be repeated eight more times including, more often than not, the rain.

A few weeks later we walked from Christ Church to Rathbarron, Coolaney. Over one or two days a month from May through August we kept walking, past the foot of the legendary Knocknashee, to the former cathedral of Achonry, where members of the local community group, who are undertraining to preserve and maintain the building, met us with soup, sandwiches and traybakes. From Achonry we walked past Muckelty Hill, a smaller sister to Knocknashee, into Tubbercurry and St George's Church. From St George's we walked past Banada Peace Park and Banada Abbey to what remains of the church in Kilmactigue near Aclare, also now cared for by the local Roman Catholic community. It took two journeys for us to cover the distance from Aclare over the Ox mountains, past Lough Easky, and into St Mary's. Along our walk we were given donations from people as we passed them by, were joined by the Parish Priest of Mullinabreena and Achonry, and were treated like heroes with food and drink at every stop.

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**HAVE A HAPPY Christmas**



Together, all the walks covered over 110 km. We had opportunities to explore the ruins of mediaeval churches, old graveyards and a mass rock. For all the miles walked, the sights seen, and the people met, this was just a taste—an amuse-bouche to the greater serving of a pilgrimage from the wilds of Co Kerry and Kenmare to our own familiar coasts.

What was the point of this endeavour? Well, we did raise some funds along the way (nearly €5000—the collective generosity of people is always surprising). More importantly, however, we walked together—some rode bicycles; one a scooter—to signal to ourselves and to our churches that we are, from now on, on this journey together: what was once two groups of parishes, on opposite sides of the mountains, in two different dioceses, are now, by God's good grace, brought together, to serve together, the communities and people within them. What is left for us, is to discover how we are to do that.

There is no doubt that our walks presage our coming journey as a new and larger group of parishes. There was plenty of rain, but also the warmth of the sun. During our walk, events in the world around us caused delays—we needed to be flexible, especially taking the time necessary to join in lament when confronted with the fragile nature of human life. At other times we needed to press on even when we might have felt justified to have quit for the day. Our journey brought us to places where the vistas seemed eternal, and the beauty of creation or human accomplishment inspired awe and admiration. Not everyone was able to take every step and some were

not able to take any; nonetheless we were, and are, in it together, one more step along the way. The future beckons.

**Mothers' Union Notes**

(Rev Canon Doris Clements)

The Achonry Branch of the MU amalgamated with Skreen Branch to begin the season, with an Opening Service, followed by a Planning meeting and supper. Rathbarron hosted. We continued with our theme, 'Transformation – now'. Rev. Canon Doris Clements based the service on the Midday Prayers for November and Rev. Andy Pierce gave a very inspiring reflection on the Biblical sentences used during November for the prayers. Members have been busy producing the annual Shoe Boxes and a big 'thank-you' to all who continue to do this. Some of our Members joined The Kilmore MU at their 'Big Sing' service held in St. Paul's Church, Collooney, in September. It was a very enjoyable occasion.

**Parish Activities**

September brought a return to parish activities. After a few long years of absence table tennis has returned on a monthly basis (at least to begin with). Table tennis was once the competitive game of the parishes and there were some very serious players among the parishioners of both groups. It turns out there still are some very talented players about. However, the "games night" is not just table tennis but a range of games for all ages and abilities. The "Just older Youth" or JoY Club is a new activity for our older parishioners. While there are several models for this about, we have borrowed this idea and format (open



Mothers' Union



quiz, Bingo and treats) from the Virginia Group of Parishes in Cavan. (Thank you, Rev Craig McCauley, now in Naas.)

The Garden Club has also returned for its second

year. November and December are focused on crafts. For November, the members learned how to turn broken tiles into colourful mosaic pot stands and for decorating plain terracotta pots. In November they will be looking at handmade Christmas decorations.

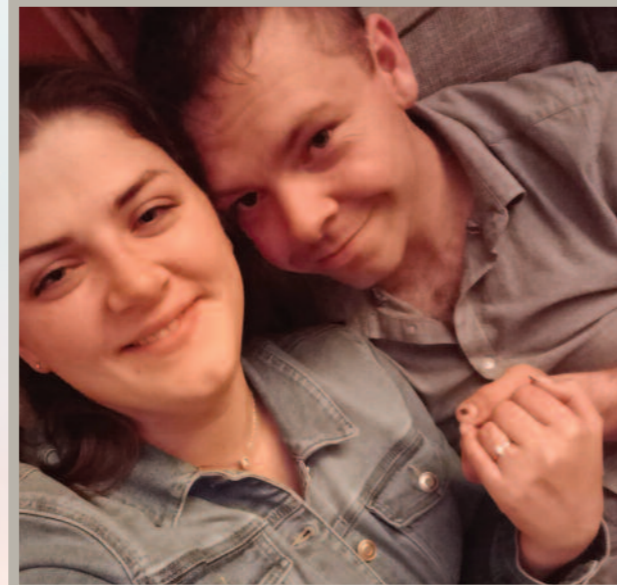
**Harvest Services**

It was very encouraging to see so many people out for our Harvest Thanksgiving services this year, especially since the service in Skreen had to be postponed a week because of Storm Ashley. A special "Thank You" to those who were able to attend all of them. Well done you! Having five churches gives us an opportunity to have services that are similar and yet different, as well as giving thanks on different days and at different times to allow more people to share in worship and Thanksgiving. This year our guest preachers were Rev Canon Edward Yendall, from the Boyle Group of



**Rathbarron News**  
**Engagement Announcement**

Shane Middleton, son of Tara Holden and the late Lester Middleton, Carrownacarrick, Coolaney, Co



Sligo, and Jennie McInaw, daughter of James and Michelle McInaw, The Pier, Salthill, Mountcharles, Co Donegal announced their engagement over the summer. We wish the couple the very best as they begin planning for their wedding and their future together.

**Wedding**

Alex Filmer, Herbertstown, Crossakiel, Kells, Co Meath and Keziah Mahiya, Rocklands, Cavan, were married in Rathbarron (Killoran) church on Saturday, September 21st, 2024. The reception was held in the Beach Bar, Aughris, Sligo. Alex, the son of Craig Filmer, Kells, and Sally Johnson, Lusk, Co Dublin, grew up in Cavan and attended the Royal School there. Keziah,



Parishes, Rev Canon Alex Morahan, Killala Group, Rev Luke Pratt, Drumcliffe Group. Alan Williamson and Hannah O'Neill from the Sligo Centre for Mission helped out in Tubbercurry and Skreen with sermons, prayers and crafts for the young and young at heart.



is the daughter of Allan and Shirley Mahiya, Rocklands, Cavan. We wish the lovely couple long life and happiness together.

**St Mary's, Dromore West.**

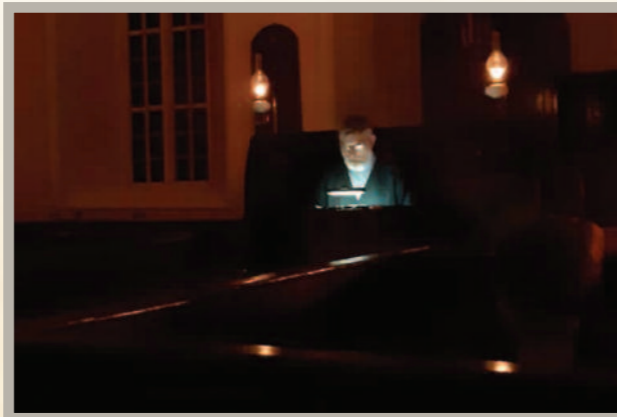
The funeral Service and burial of Ivan McGee took place on Saturday, 19th October at 2pm at St. Mary's Church (Kilmacshalgan), Dromore West. Ivan had been living in the Sonas Riverside Nursing Home,

Ballina, Co Mayo, for several years. He was 86 years old. Ivan was predeceased by his sisters, Audrey Mc Gee and Lorna Birdsall, his brother, the Very Rev Stuart Irwin McGee, his nephews, Samuel McGee and Timothy Birdsall and his grandniece, Rachel Peddie. He is fondly remembered and sadly missed by his family and his many friends across the community of Dromore West. Ivan will always be remembered as a committed member of the church and a devoted supporter of the parish.



**Christ Church, Dromard**

"Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it, because the time is near." (Revelation 1:3)



Rosie Higgins

It was a dark and moonless night on All Hallows' Eve as we gathered in the gloom to read about a dragon, angels, tribulation and catastrophe, the fall of Satan ... and the triumph of the Lamb. Reading the entire book of Revelation aloud seemed like a very good way to spend Hallow'een night, so we gathered in Christ Church to follow the Apostle John's instructions. Together in the lamplight, we took turns reading and listening to the story of the end of days, the resurrection of the dead and the glory of the new Jerusalem. With 65 books to go, we'll have many more opportunities to gather to read God's Word and share in fellowship together.

**Skreen Parish**

Nicholas and Gillian Higgins, Higgins' Lodge, Templeboy, Co Sligo, presented their daughter Rosie for baptism on Sunday, September 22nd, 2024. Rosie was born on 17th April 2024. Her godparents are Grainne O'Rourke and Gareth Ryan. We look forward to watching Rosie grow in faith, stature, and wisdom.

Achonry and Skreen are now on Instagram! Please follow us at "achonryskreengroupofparishes". It's a long name but worth the look. Thanks to Leanne Brett we now have another way to get the word out about what's happening in the parishes.

**Advent & Carol Services 2024**

**CHRISTMAS IN SKREEN**  
**SANTA'S GROTTO**  
 VISIT SANTA, SEE THE NATIVITY ANIMALS & WANDER THROUGH OUR AVENUE OF LIGHT  
**SAT DEC 14TH & SUN DEC 15TH 2-7 PM**  
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 FAMILY TICKET €50 (UP TO 2 ADULTS & 4 CHILDREN)  
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**ACHONRY & SKREEN**  
 groups of parishes  
 5 parishes One Church

- 8 Dec** 4:00pm, Skreen, Lighting of Trees & Carol Service
- 13 Dec**, 8:00pm, Rathbarron, Community Carol Service
- 16 Dec**, Blue Christmas, Lament & Healing Service, St Marys,
- 17 Dec**, 8:00 pm, Achonry Cathedral Community Carol Service



**AUGHAVAL GROUP**

Holy Trinity, Westport.  
 Christ Church, Castlebar.  
 Turlough. St Thomas', Dugort  
 Incumbent: Rev Suzanne Cousins  
 Rectory: 098 25 127  
 Mobile: 083 800 3233

Email: aughaval@tuam.anglican.org  
 The Rectory, Newport Road, Westport, Co Mayo, F28 HK31

Service times: **Saturdays** - Turlough, 7pm. (Please note new time.)  
**Sundays** - Castlebar, 10am; Holy Trinity Westport, 11.30am, St Thomas's Dugort, Achill, Oct-March inclusive, 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month at 3pm Holy Trinity Inishbiggle, as announced



### Launch and Light

The autumn got off to a good start with productive planning and the launch of our new Sunday Club in Westport. We are excited to see this established and are so grateful to those we have taken on the responsibility of teaching and leading; namely, Steffi, Paul, Shirley and Barbara. We are pleased to report another thoroughly enjoyable light party for the children of the parishes and their friends, which took place on 30th of October in Holy Trinity National School. Our Sunday Club leaders Paul and Steffi organised a bright and lively programme, and their own scientific bent show shone through the activities, with a fun science experiment keeping the children enthralled. Adding to the joy of the occasion, the children engaged with a positive and clear message that “the Light shines in the darkness and that the darkness does not extinguish the light” (cf. John 1:15). The children have sufficient, indeed, impressive Bible knowledge to enable them to identify the light of the



Light Party 2024 Team, Paul, Steffi, SC, Eddie



Supporting refugees by hosting weekly English classes

world as Jesus Christ, Saviour of the cosmos (John 3:16). It is a privilege in the churches to continue to teach the children that God is with them and us in the world, always, and to play even a small part in instilling in their young minds Christian hope and joy.

As I write we are looking forward to another Youth & Children’s event, with a cinema outing on 16th of November, for families and children of the parishes to see the popular movie, ‘Paddington Goes to Peru’. Our thanks to parents for supporting all the events, including the anticipated New Year Christingle and Messy Church similar to last year’s event.

### Turlough service time

A significant change worth mentioning is the new time of the service in Turlough Parish on Saturday evenings. This is now 7pm, and it is hoped that this earlier time will better enable young families to come along to church with their children a little more comfortably.



Turlough Harvest, John Dexter organist, with Canon Andrea Wills

### Buildings

They say that necessity is the mother of invention, and the necessity of progressing conservation and repair works in our church buildings is never far from the minds of those who sit on our select vestries. We have been glad to see the completion of the repair work to the second side of the vestry roof at Holy Trinity Westport. This work has been funded by a generous grant of €25,000 from the Heritage Council. We are so grateful for public and private support in maintaining this unique and special sacred space.



Works, Holy Trinity Westport, Sept 2024, thanks to Heritage Council Grant

### Remember, remember

At the time of writing, we are in process of planning range of services and events pertinent to this time of year and the seasons November being the month of remembrance we anticipate the solemn yet joyful remembrance of our departed loved ones, in a number of services called ‘Remembering Our Loved Ones’. Amongst those whom we remember with thanksgiving and fondness is Revd Maeve O’Herlihy, whose anniversary we noted and marked in October in St Thomas’s Dugort, Achill.



Guest Harvest Preacher 2024, Achill, Canon Cecil Mills



Holy Trinity Inishbiggle, Fr Chris Ginnelly, Ballycroy, & Valerie Raitt



Inishbiggle, after Harvest 2024

September saw us take to the sea and return to Inishbiggle for fellowship, worship and gentle

pilgrimage, with our ecumenical friends and partners, including Ballycroy Parish Priest Fr. Chris Ginnely. Our next service in Holy Trinity Inishbiggle is planned for Saturday 30th November, the Eve of Advent Sunday, when we will reunite with island friends and share an ‘Almost Advent’ service.



Returning by curragh to Inishbiggle, Sept 2024

### Pioneer Ministry

How excited we are to enter into the spirit of Pioneer Ministry in the TLK Diocese, which has received a great boost and resource (- human and divine?) with the appointment and commissioning of Valerie Raitt. We look forward to working with Valerie in developing opportunities to offer spiritual tourism and gentle pilgrimage across the whole Aughaval Group, including on our island parishes of Inishbiggle and Achill.

These more removed and remote parts of the Aughaval Parishes do not represent the only places of historical, spiritual and Celtic interest for tourists, visitors and locals alike. In the more urban setting, for example, of Castlebar, we are greatly looking forward (again, as I write) to a lecture on 21st November to be delivered by local historian Dr Michael O’Connor, to mark the 200th anniversary of the decision to rebuild Christchurch Castlebar, the original Church having fallen foul fire in the 1700s.

### Ecumenical Service of Remembrance

A moving Ecumenical Service of Prayer and Remembrance for people bereaved by suicide, took place on Friday 1st November in Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church, Castlebar. A pertinent and helpful message was shared by Fr Connell Eustace on that poignant occasion. Fr Eustace reminded the congregation that a person’s last act, may, in the eyes of world, be forever written over that person’s life and memory, but that, in contrast, Christ has rewritten the story and narrative of our life, so that a person’s life is not determined or summarised by their last act or circumstances. The example given was biblical, where

Jesus on the cross, in answer to the thief's request, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom", was, "This day you will be with me in paradise". How gently comforting are those words, in situations of loss in tragic circumstances, including suicide or accident.

**Prayer and our partnerships**

Prayer and our partnerships in the parishes continue to sustain and energise our activities, our outreach, and our worship. We include in these partnerships the



Chamber Music Festival Concert in HTW 2024, Mayo News

St Thomas's Dugort friends, after Harvest 2024

wonderful musical support provided by the organists who volunteer and serve for no reward to themselves. Special thanks this season go to John Dexter, Willem van Goor, Michele Gill and Achill singer, James Kilbane.

Not before time, we are pleased to be re-introducing to the churches the use of the Burse and Veil in seasonal liturgical colours, on the Holy Table, for the celebration of the Eucharist. We are looking forward to having Bishop Michael come to us on the 16th of February to dedicate these items for use in each of the churches.

In January, that quiet month, when the hustle of retail activity and parish productivity has slowed down, we hope to hold a New Year Table Quiz. The purpose will be social and spiritual, friendship and fellowship, and of course, fundraising, in anticipation of match-funding that the Westport-Dugort Union will be required to raise in order to avail of a grant promised this year and deferred until 2025, to the sum of €50,000. The well-worn secular slogan "Every little counts" applies,

and we are hopeful for an enthusiastic response and participation in this fun event.

**Some Advent and Christmas concerts and services:** 'Almost Advent Carol Service', Inishbiggle, Sat 30 Nov, 11am in the church

Turlough Advent Carol Service, Sat 7 Dec at 7pm. Cor Mhaigheo Concert, Sunday 8 Dec, 3pm in Holy Trinity Westport.

Castlebar Community Carol Service, in Christ Church, with Holy Rosary Choir and Castlebar Concert Band, Monday 9 December at 8pm.

Advent Carol Service, St Thomas's Dugort, Achill, Friday 13 Dec at 8pm.

Service of Nine Lessons and Carols, Holy Trinity Westport, with St Mary's choir plus a surprise contributor, Sun 15 Dec, 7pm.

St Mary's Westport Carol Service, Sun 22 Dec, 5pm. We are warmly invited.

**Pastoral care and enquiries:**

Rev. Suzanne Cousins, 0838003233; email aughaval@tuam.anglican.org.



**GALWAY & KILCUMMIN GROUP**

Rector: The Very Revd Lynda Peilow  
Tel: 091 521914  
Email: rector@stnicholas.ie  
Revd Carole Reynolds (OLM)  
Tel: 087 6067848  
Rev Alistair Doyle Tel: 086 608 1223



Email curateassistant@stnicholas.ie  
Lori Phillips, Administrator –  
info@stnicholas.ie

www.facebook.com/stnicholasgalway/  
Website: www.stnicholas.ie

**Service Times**

**Sundays:** 9:00 am Said Eucharist St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church  
11 am Sung Eucharist – St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church  
11 am Service in Kilcummin, Oughterard



10.30 am each Wednesday, Service in St Nicholas' Collegiate Church.

**Baptisms** – Oliver Maher, was baptised in the fellowship of Christ's Church on 6th of October. May

he shine as a light in the world. Proud parents are Shane and Thelma Maher.

**Confirmation** – Confirmation classes will begin after Christmas for those wishing to be Confirmed. Confirmation Sunday will take place on 18th May 2025. Please contact Rev. Alistair for more information.

**Wedding Bells** – Congratulations to Samantha McKinley and Cavell O'Donnell who were married at St. Nicholas' on Friday, 27th September. We wish them both every happiness in their future life together.

**Compline**- A contemplative candlelit service marking the close of the day- a night cap for the soul, will take place on 14th and 21st November. Compline on 7th November was an Ecumenical Service with our friends from the Augustinian Church and included our All-Soul's observance. Compline is sung by the University of Galway Choral Scholars. All are welcome to join in-person or online.

**Story Keepers**- We are happy Sunday School (Story Keepers) has resumed and we have already had a wonderful start to our autumn term. All primary school-aged children are welcome to the Side Chapel at the beginning of service for a lesson followed by



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games, crafts, and songs. We have an amazing group of dedicated teachers and assistants who give their time each week to serve the children of our parish.

**Mothers' Union** – An afternoon tea for the Galway Mothers' Union was recently hosted by Mildred Keyes. Everyone has a wonderful time of fellowship and food. We are grateful to Mildred for hosting this event in her home, and to Sally Cunningham for her work in reviving the Mother's Union in Galway. Our Mothers' Union group has also recently launched a Team Hope Shoebox appeal for Christmas, involving parishioners in taking a provided shoe box to fill and return for those in need.



MU Afternoon Tea

**Chatty Crafters** – Our Chatty Crafters group continues to meet each Wednesday after the 10.30am service, from 11-1. All are welcome to join for a chat, craft, or both.

**Conservation Works** –The South Transept works, removing damaging wall plaster has been completed thanks to a grant of €100,000 from the Community



Monument Fund. This is the next step in the process of restoration begun last year. The Community Recognition Fund grant of €140,000 has allowed us to upgrade wiring and lighting in the exterior of the church as well as provide much need landscaping to exterior of the church grounds. This begins our

ongoing work to create an Oasis Garden, a green space in the heart of the city that provides a space for rest and mental health for all. We also have a team that looks after our bell tower, ensuring its safety and structural security, and due to the diligence and keen eye of Niall McDonagh, we recently had the finials repaired and replaced.



**Christmas Services** – The season of Christmas is quickly approaching with its many meaningful services taking place, the first being our candlelit Advent Procession which takes place on 1st of December at 5pm. All are very welcome to attend any service, and pre-booking is not required for

services this year, however, seating is first-come for the more popular services.

**The Choristers** – We are well into a new term with our St. Nicholas' Choristers and we are pleased to announce we are at full capacity, with the addition of 12 new probationers. Under the skilled leadership of Music Director Mark Duley, and Dottie Knauer, all our choristers receive an excellent musical education.

Choristers sing at our Sunday service once a month and will participate in the Schola Cantorum Great Choir during the Christmas Season.

**Ecumenical Prayer Service** – In September, several churches in Galway gathered in the Franciscan Abbey Garden for an Ecumenical Prayer Service for the Season of Creation. This year's theme was 'To Hope and Act with Creation.' The service was led by Fr Gabriel with participating representatives from other churches in Galway, including Rev. Alistair. The prayer service included a lighting of the Eco-Congregation Ireland Climate Justice Candle, a hope and action prayer activity, and was followed by a blessing of pets and Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind.

**Ecumenical School Assembly**- Rev. Alistair, along with



Harvest Decorating & Tea



Ecumenical Prayer Service

priests from four local churches led an Ecumenical School Assembly at St. Nicholas' Church, that saw over 150 students attend from four local primary schools. The theme was 'To Hope and Act with Creation.' Students from each school participated in readings, listened to a devotion on creation, and sang songs together.

**Harvest Thanksgiving-** The church was sparkling and the decorations looked beautiful due to the hard work of parishioners who prepared the church for our Harvest Thanksgiving Service in October. The service, which was led by The Very Rev'd Niall Sloane, Dean of Limerick, was a beautiful reminder to be grateful for all we receive from the earth- past, present, and future. Participation, including readings from our Parochial School students, and a potluck following the service, topped the day and made for a memorable time together.



**Christmas Fayre** – Our annual Christmas Fayre will take place on Saturday, 23rd November from 10:30am-2:30pm. All are welcome to join this festive and fun-filled day, which also serves as a church fundraiser. For more information on how to participate, please email the church at [info@stnicholas.ie](mailto:info@stnicholas.ie).

**Sympathy**

Richard Flaherty – We extend our sympathy to the family of Judy Flaherty at the passing of her husband Richard.

Christa-Maria Knauer – Our deepest sympathies are extended to the family of Dottie Knauer at the passing of her mother Christa-Maria in Germany.

George Don Pedro- A service of thanksgiving was held in St. Nicholas' Church to honour of the life of George Don Pedro. We extend our sympathies to his wife Rosabella and all his family in Galway and Nigeria.



Rev Canon Alex Morahan



Revd Caroline Morrow (OLM)



Revd Clive Moore (OLM)

**KILLALA GROUP**

St Michael's Ballina (Kilmoremy) Killanley Church, Castleconnor Kilglass, St Anne's Easkey St Patrick's Cathedral, Killala St John's, Ballycastle St Mary's Crossmolina Rector: The Rev Canon Alex Morahan T: 085 888 6036 E: [killala@tuam.anglican.org](mailto:killala@tuam.anglican.org)

Revd Caroline Morrow (OLM) Phone: 087 2053996 E-mail: [cmorrow1963@gmail.com](mailto:cmorrow1963@gmail.com)

Revd Clive Moore (OLM) E-mail: [lclvmoore@gmail.com](mailto:lclvmoore@gmail.com) Phone: 087-6563238

**Service times:**  
**St Patrick's Cathedral, Killala:** 10.00am (2nd Sunday Holy Communion, 4th Sunday Morning Prayer)  
**St Michael's Ballina:** 11.30am (1st and 3rd Sundays. Morning Prayer, 2nd and 4th Sundays Holy Communion) 5th Sunday United Worship around the Union

**Killanley Parish Church:** 10am (1st Sunday Holy Communion, Other Sundays Morning Prayer)  
**Ballycastle (Dunfeeny):** 10.00am (1st Sunday Morning Prayer, 3rd Sunday Holy Communion)  
**St Mary's, Crossmolina:** 12 noon (1st Sunday Family Service, 3rd Sunday Morning Prayer, 2nd and 4th Sundays Holy Communion)  
**St Anne's Easkey:** 10am (2nd Sunday Morning Prayer, 4th Sunday Holy Communion)  
**Kilglass Parish Church:** 10am (1st Sunday Holy Communion, 3rd Sunday Morning Prayer)

This is the last edition of Tidings, as we know it. It has been a great magazine, and my hope is that the new Dea Scéala (Good Tidings) will bring all the parishes throughout the length and breadth of our diocese together in a whole new way.

But for now, hi everyone. Welcome to the Christmas edition of Tidings. We are as excited as everyone else about the birth of a little baby in Bethlehem and our wish is that it will be a time of peace for you and for our beautiful world. We need peace!



belmullet harvest congregation

Before we shine our light on Christmas, let me tell you about some of our activities throughout the Killala Group of Parishes. Where do I begin?

**Harvest 2024**

Our harvest thanksgiving services, throughout the

churches, were a true celebration of all that is good in life. Each service was different, somehow capturing the beauty of the people and the place in which it was celebrated. I have a warm and happy feeling as I recollect each service. I love to see the decoration of the church, the excitement and buzz of the people

as they come together. The voices raised in song and prayer as we thank God for another year of goodness and blessing.

Like any good parent, I don't have favourites! Ya, right! Well let's say some of them stood out in a different and special way for me.

Belmullet church has not had a service for over 40 years. The good people of Belmullet and surrounding areas came together and made sure that this year was different. A harvest service with no electricity, a few benches and bales of hay placed all around the church. A pot belly stove warming the church and over 60 people coming together from all around the parishes. The moment that really made it feel quite precious was the silence before the service when the bell was rung to call people to pray. We are grateful to the local community group who use the church for supporting and promoting this rare and wonderful gathering.

Killanley Church almost closed at the start of the year. It was closed for more than 7 months and we wondered if it would ever see a gathering again. Well, the harvest in Killanley was packed and once again it felt like a new lease of life. It was symbolic of the seed dying to bring forth new, like in a packed Killanley church life. Sometimes we lose something to gain something even more wonderful. That's what it felt in a packed Killanley church.

St. Michael's in Ballina was to be our final harvest. We had a special guest preacher, who turned up that morning to preach in Ballycastle, Rev. Rob Jones. However, our plans were altered with the arrival of storm Ashley. One week later, in the absence of the rector, the people of Ballina gathered, and the service was led by Nicola Padden, our reader in St. Michael's. Nicola was supported by Rev. Clive and Rev. Caroline, but I believe that this service was a beautiful one and it was greatly enjoyed and appreciated by all who attended. We are blessed to have such wonderful readers throughout our parishes, and I simply want to acknowledge their great work and support and how much we appreciate the work that they do each week. Thanks to Nicola and to each reader who does so much with a heart full of love.

We were blessed with each harvest, and you will see from our pictures how special they were. We were also very lucky to have a team of preachers who gave such uplifting and varied sermons on the whole theme of harvest. Thank you to each one of them, Rev. John Farr, Rev. Adam Norris, Rev. John Addy, Very Rev'd Diane Matchett and Rev. Carole Reynolds and Rev. Clive Moore for standing in at short notice in Ballina. Thanks also to Rev. Rob Jones from Church of Ireland Pioneer Ministry.

A special word of thanks to all the staff and students in our two schools, St. Michael's National School in

Ballina and Leaffoney National School, close to Kilglass. They provided beautiful artwork, prayers and singing as well as reading prayers and bringing life and beauty to the services in Kilglass and Ballina. We are so proud of the students and the staff and the great work they always do in school and in church.

While I have mentioned a few churches, all were beautifully set up and prepared and the numbers of people attending were super. It certainly was a festival of thanksgiving. Thank you to everyone involved!

**Baptism Congratulations**

Congratulations to baby Emily Bridget Jackson who was baptised in the Roman Catholic Church, Ballycastle on Saturday 21st September. It was a special occasion for her mum, Emma and all her family. Rev.



Baby Oliver Hicks with parents Arthur and Martina



Clive accompanied Fr. John Loftus at the ceremony, and we wish baby Emily a lifetime of goodness and a deep and love filled faith.

On Saturday 28th September we were delighted to welcome baby Oliver Hicks, son of Martina and Arthur and little brother to Harry, into the Christian family. The families gathered in great numbers and the celebrations in church and afterwards with photos and lovely conversations were heartwarming. We wish baby Oliver and all his family every happiness and blessing in the years ahead. May he always be surrounded by love.

**A time to remember**

In late October we learned of the death of a much-loved member of our community in Ballycastle and Crossmolina. Walter Robinson had been ill for some time and spoke with great affection about the people of both communities. Walter died after a relatively short illness. He was buried in St. Mary's Crossmolina after a funeral service in St. John's, Ballycastle. The large numbers at the removal, reception, funeral service and his burial, spoke greatly of the love and affection with which Walter was held.

Our love and prayers are with Walter's son, George and his partner, Laura. His sister Emily and many family and friends in Ballycastle, Crossmolina, Bermingham and further afield.

**Youth Suicide Prevention Ireland**

I am sure it was noticed that I didn't manage my parachute jump. I was disappointed but on medical grounds it was advised I keep my feet on the ground. So, we did manage just that. On Saturday 12th October a group of parishioners and friends of the



Croagh Patrick



parish climbed Croagh Patrick and joined us as we held a quiet and simple service in St Patrick's Oratory on the summit.

There was something very special about the pilgrimage and people remembered those they have known and loved who have died by suicide. So far, we have received donations just short of €3,000. Thank you to all who have supported us and encouraged us and especially to the people who made the challenging climb on a beautiful bright day. Very special thanks to Fr. John Kenny, Administrator of St Mary's in Westport for his support and encouragement for this special event.

**Events taking place before Christmas**

There are many activities happening between now and Christmas. I will put some details here but encourage you to follow us on Facebook; Killala Group of Churches. Church of Ireland All the up-to-date news will be there.

1. Sunday 24th November at 6pm. St Michael's Church of Ireland in Ballina. James Kilbane will present an evening of Country & Gospel. (with John Flatley) It is a very popular venue and James is a wonderful singer and musician. Tickets are available on Eventbrite. They can also be reserved and paid for and collected on the night. €15 ticket. Enquiries 085 888 6036

2. Handel's Messiah will be performed in St Michael's Church in Ballina on Sunday 1st December. This show starts at 7.30pm and tickets are €25 each. Proceeds will be split between Ballina Dragons, Craoibhin Centre in Ballina and St. Michael's Church. More information will be posted on Facebook.

3. St. Patrick's Cathedral in Kilala, in conjunction with Killala Bay Folk Club, proudly presents CODA at the Cathedral. Special guest, Freda Hatton (Harpist) will join them onstage. Saturday 14th December at 7.30pm. Tickets €20 each. Contact 086 354 2345

**Blue Christmas Service**

I love Christmas and know many people who get so excited as it draws closer. That is a very special feeling. However, we are always aware of those for whom Christmas time is a real struggle and perhaps a reminder of those who are not with them any longer. We think of those who have lost someone they love, through sickness, accident, old age or suicide. Their grief and pain is intense and Christmas simply reminds them of who and what they are missing.

Each year, on December 21st, the longest night of the year, we hold a gentle and simple service to celebrate the birth of Christ, the coming of light into darkness. We open our doors and our hearts to all who would like to join with us. St Michael's Church in Ballina at 8pm on Saturday 21st December.

**Carol Services**

Some of our carol services are planned and some are awaiting confirmation. Please check our Facebook page for the updated details and please do come along and join us in all or any of our services. We love to welcome people in all our churches and especially visitors or even friends and neighbours who would like to be with us.

**An focal scoir...the parting word!**

As we draw closer to Christmas, I would like to thank all who make our parishes such beautiful and special places. We are truly blessed in Killala Group of Parishes with wonderful, kind, hardworking and big-hearted people who love their church. It is a privilege and a pleasure to be among them, among you. We simply want to wish you and all your loved ones a Christmas time filled with peace and love. May the little child of Bethlehem bring peace to your homes and to our world. Míle buíochas. Rev. Clive. Rev. Caroline and Rev. Alex



**STRAID PARISH,  
FOXFORD &  
CLAREMORRIS**

Priest-in-charge: Canon Andrea Wills (NSM)  
Tel: 094 9256403; Mobile 086 261 7572  
Foxford: 10.00 a.m. every Sunday  
Claremorris: 12 noon in McWilliam  
Park Hotel – 1st Sunday of the month  
andrea.wills@gmail.com

**Service times:** Straid Foxford 10.00 a.m. each Sunday, First Sunday of the month Service in the McWilliam Park Hotel, Claremorris at 12 noon

I am so encouraged by the help I receive in Foxford Church and in Claremorris. After services in both places there are refreshments and people bring the most delicious homemade goodies. It makes for a wonderful warm welcoming atmosphere with plenty of chats.

We are restoring the clear windows in Foxford Church and a Table Quiz is organised for 22nd November in Cruisers Foxford in aid of this project.

Harvest Thanksgiving is a very special time celebrated in so many churches. It was lovely to preach at the Harvest Service in Boyle, Co. Roscommon at the kind



invitation of Canon Edward Yendall in late September. Storm Ashley put paid to Foxford Harvest taking place on 20th October. The church had been beautifully decorated in advance, so we were grateful to Fr. Joseph Gavigan for agreeing to come to preach on Tuesday 22nd instead. His profound thought-provoking sermon was worth waiting for.

We were pleased to have help from these small children and young people with the readings and



prayers. Thank you to everyone and the wider community for supporting this service.



Boyle Harvest Clergy with Diocesan Reader Richard Kennedy and Charles Wills

Dorothy Strong and her husband Seifu living in Texas, have spent time in Foxford over the years in the house her late parents Trevor and Patricia had retired to after many years as CMS missionaries in India and Nepal. Dorothy and Seifu really became part of our little parish family and we will miss their visits as they are selling but we hope they will return to see us on trips back to Ireland.



Dorothy Strong

We were delighted to host a lecture/recital by Laoise Kelly on harp during the Foxford Traditional Music Weekend held in October. We would love to see more concerts in the church.

Foxford Church proved a very suitable venue for the Safeguarding Training in this area and it was so good to catch up with old friends.




Safeguarding Training

The ecumenical service on Remembrance Sunday in the village of Straide at the War Memorial erected there in 2017 continues to be a very special occasion.

The Peace Park Committee held their annual Remembrance Day service for Co. Mayo in St. Michael's R.C. Church in Foxford on Saturday evening 9th November.

I was very sorry to learn of the death of Ivan McGee,

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Dromore West on 12th October. When I was first ordained in 2009, he gave me great encouragement. The Church of Ireland meant so much to him and he travelled to services all over the place. This picture of him was taken in 2014 at St. John's Church, Claremorris which closed for worship over 50 years ago and has been the town library for many years, where a Harvest Thanksgiving Service was held courtesy of the Country Librarian. May he rest in perfect peace.



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Remembrance Day Service



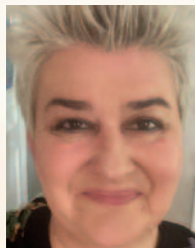


Isa Bourke

In Claremorris in early November, we wished Isa Bourke a very happy upcoming 88th birthday. Isa is a very special person and has supported the service for a long time. We thank her son Thomas for bringing her.

**Services at Christmas:**

Carol Service – Sunday 22nd December at 5.00 p.m. with the Foxford Brass Band  
 Christmas Eve – Claremorris – Holy Communion – 6 p.m.  
 Christmas Day – Foxford H.C. – 10.00 a.m.  
 Everyone most welcome at all our services.



**TUAM & OMEV GROUP**

Incumbent, The Very Revd Diane Matchett, The Deanery, Deanery Place, Cong, Co Mayo. Ph: 087 1857213 Email tuamandomev@tuam.anglican.org

**Service times:** Tuam 12 noon  
**Cong/Aasleagh:** 10am  
**Clifden/Moyard (Omev Group):** 11.30am Christ Church Clifden, Sundays 10am July & August Rest of year 10am on 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month in Moyard  
**Roundstone:** Sundays 10am June, July & August, Easter Day; Sunday after Easter & Sunday after Christmas other days announced  
**Errislannan:** As announced during July & August

**TUAM AND OMEV GROUP**

*Nothing taken for granted; everything received with gratitude; everything passed on with grace.*  
 Gilbert K. Chesterton

Sitting down to write in the Winter edition of Tidings, I was drawn to this quote above. I know little about Chesterton but aim to add him to my list of authors to explore. We have just passed through the Harvest Season and, hopefully, have had a chance to catch our breath before moving into preparing for Advent and Christmas.



**St Mary's Cathedral, Tuam**

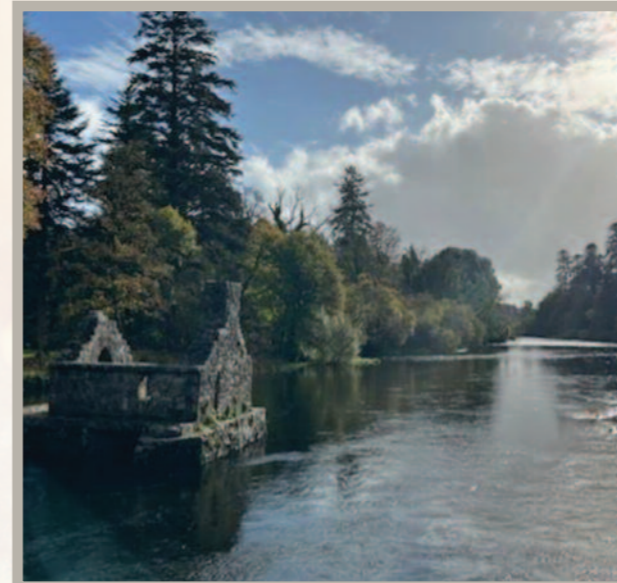
The seasons of Church life ebb and flow – times of joy and times of sadness too. To share with families in all the seasons of their lives is a privilege and, in the Cathedral, we shared with the Lynch family in a service of Thanksgiving for Cyril, a wonderful husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, brother and friend. We uphold all who are grieving the loss of a precious loved one.



To share Harvest & thanksgiving with God's People in the Churches was a very special time. So much time and energy go into decorating our lovely Churches for such festive seasons - thank you to all our Church volunteers for all the hard work.

**St Mary's, Cong**

Cong is such a busy place, and the Tidy Towns initiative & volunteers are such a fantastic group committed to



this picturesque village - with the Churches at its heart. When visiting Cong please add to your itinerary the new garden in memory of Dr Kathleen Lynn, daughter of a previous incumbent of Cong Parish - a wonderful, shared space.

St Mary's, Cong celebrated the harvest season with an evening service - the afternoon service had to be cancelled due to Storm Ashley. This photo was taken the next day – calm!!

**St Mary's, Roundstone**

It was a privilege to welcome back the former Dean, Anthony Previde, who was participating in the Service of Thanksgiving and the Burial of Ashes for Emma Tinne. Once again, our hearts go out to the family of Emma and others who are mourning the passing of a loved one at this time.

A Harvest Service was held in St. Mary's, Roundstone with a flurry of activity and was well attended.



**Christ Church, Clifden**

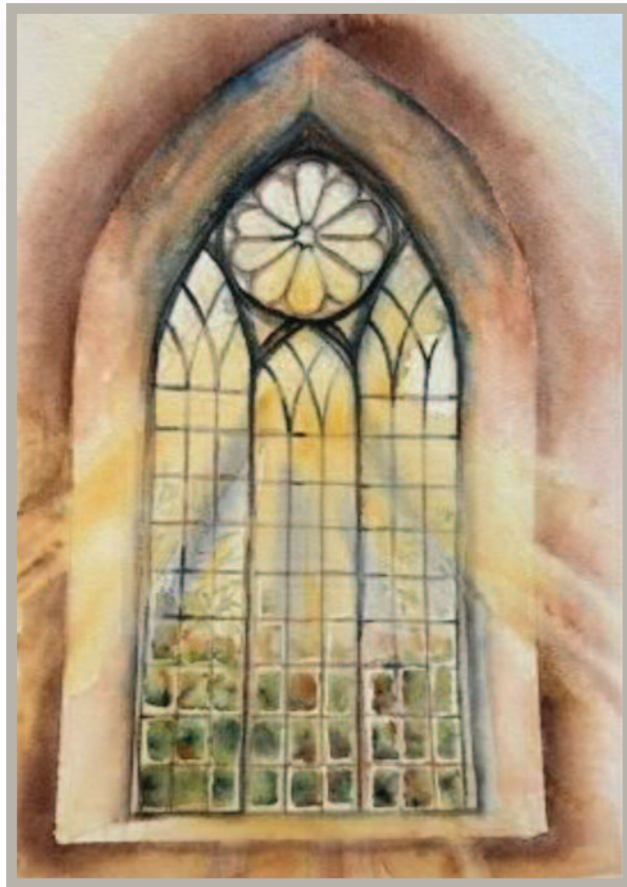
Christ Church had a very busy few weeks leading up to the Arts Festival. The Church became a leading venue for many beautiful experiences, including the artwork of Ollie Van Der Flier and Bernie Dignam whose exhibitions I had the pleasure of opening. I was delighted to receive a complimentary ticket for all of the events and enjoyed a rich experience throughout the Festival – thank you to the organisers and volunteers of this successful 10 Days in the bustling town of Clifden. See you next year!

We were also delighted to welcome our newest member into the Church family with the baptism of Emi Pearl Quinn Brow on October 13th – it was a joyful service with so many friends gathered alongside her family.

Harvest also came to Clifden and once again we commend and congratulate all who made this such a special occasion.

**St Thomas', Moyard**

I love this artwork of Moyard's East Window. It goes without saying that anyone reading our notes is welcome to attend any of our services - which can be found on our Facebook page



**Tuam & Omey Parish – Church Of Ireland.  
Holy Trinity, Errislannan**

Errislannan was host to a poetry reading and it continues to be cared for by a group of committed and dedicated people. If this is one of the churches in the Dioceses that you have not visited, then I would encourage you to come visit. Do contact me if you would like to see inside this beautiful church on the Errislannan Peninsula.

**St John the Baptist, Aasleagh Falls**

It has been quiet in Aasleagh Falls over the last few months. It is this beautiful rural Church that will begin our series of Ecumenical Carol Services beginning on Wednesday 18th December. Please check in to our Facebook page for details of all the Christmas Services.

In conclusion I leave you with these words from the stunning hymn Let All Mortal Flesh:

Let all mortal flesh keep silence and with fear and trembling stand; ponder nothing earthly-minded, for with blessing in his hand Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.



Finally, I wanted to share with you this Lord's Prayer, made from wood. This was made by a member of one of the Men's Sheds in Northern Ireland. I hope you agree it is both poignant and stunning.

With God's richest blessing this season of Advent and Christmas

Dean Diane



*One Body, One Spirit*

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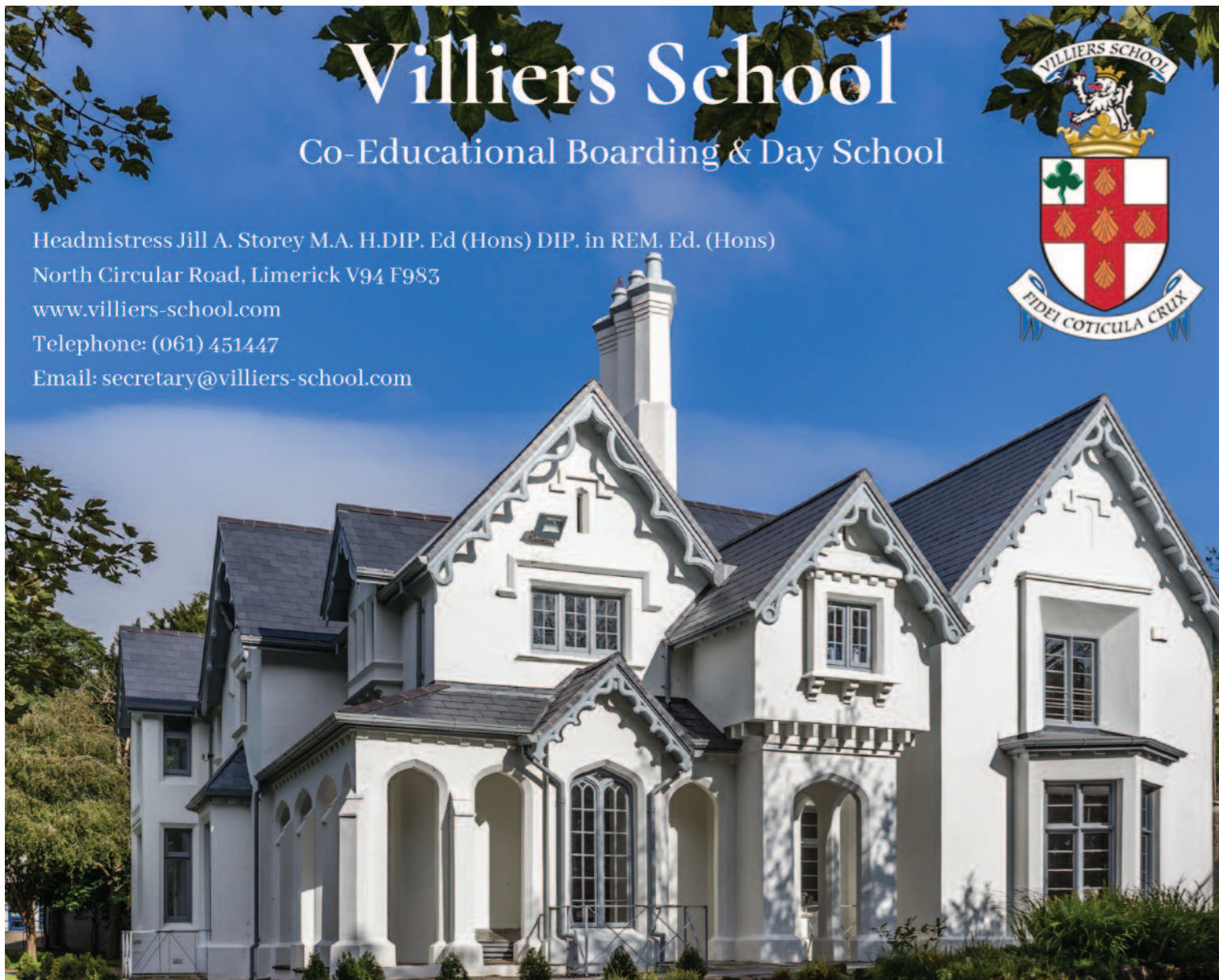
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