

An abstract painting with a textured, canvas-like appearance. The word 'Families' is written in a large, elegant, black cursive script across the upper half. Below it, a dark wooden cross is painted with visible brushstrokes. The background is a mix of yellow, green, and blue, with white and grey brushstrokes creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall mood is contemplative and artistic.

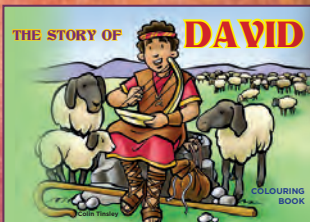
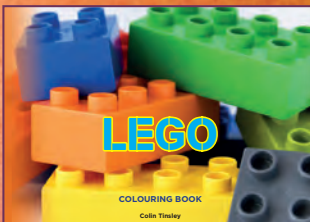
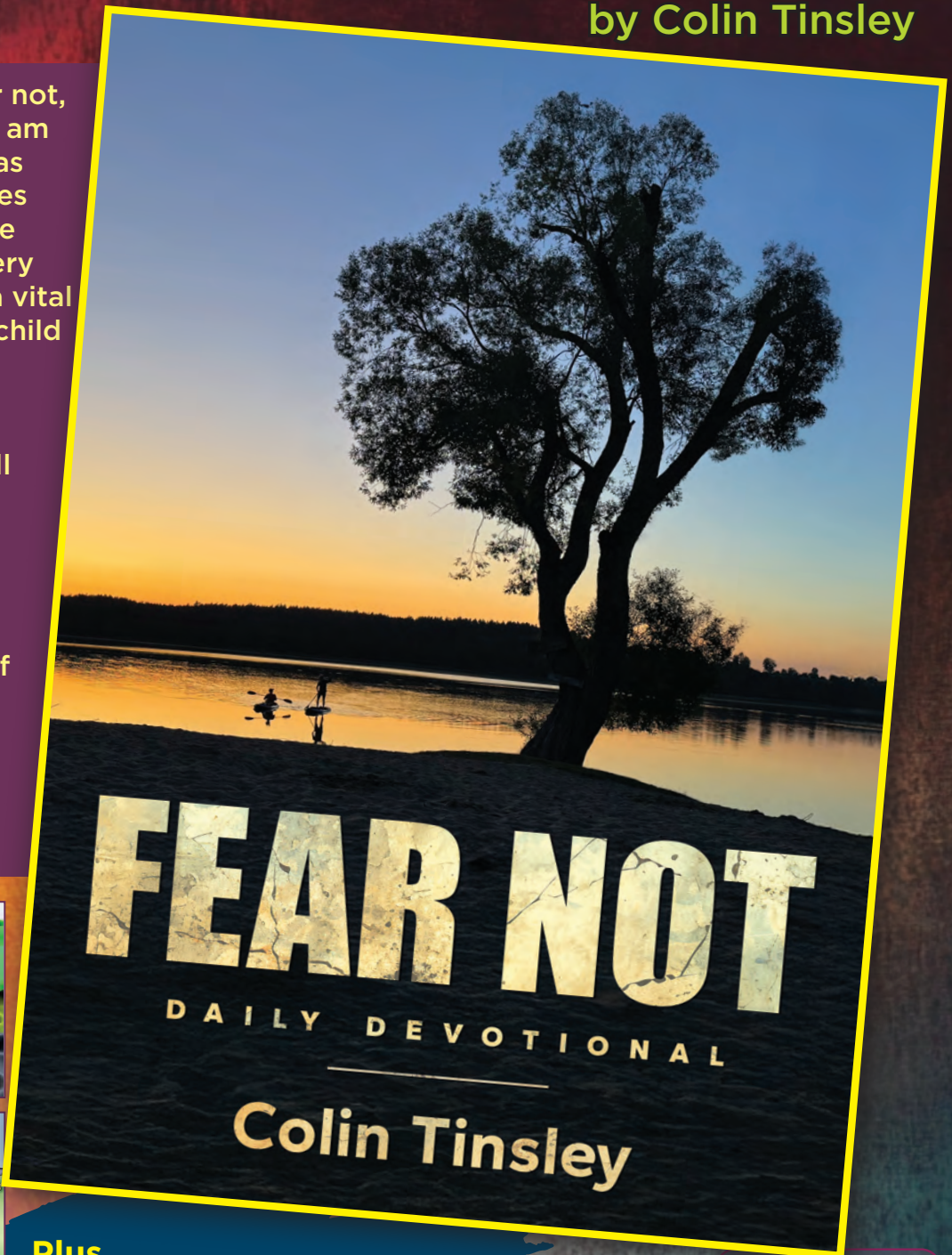
Creating an
environment
for change

A NEW DEVOTIONAL BOOK

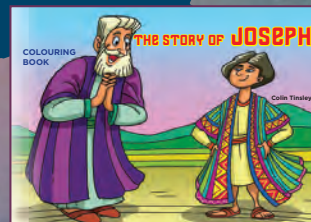
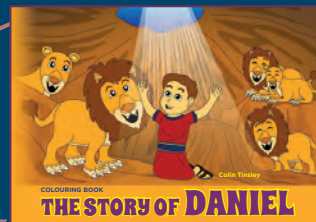
by Colin Tinsley

God tells us: "Fear not, Do not be afraid, I am with you!" Colin has found 366 instances of "Fear not" in the Bible – one for every day of the year – a vital reading for every child of God.

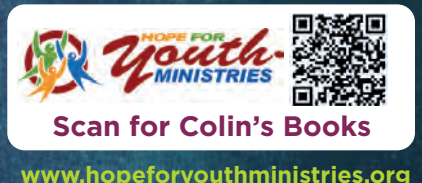
It is Colin's prayer that the reader will be encouraged and strengthened in their daily walk with God. He also hopes they will be reminded afresh of the importance of looking upwards and trusting in God...*continually fearing only Him.*



Plus New Colouring Books



These books are available in the Christian bookshops or online via the QR code.



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Cover photo: Josh Preece
Artwork by former Thompson House service user



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**FSC
LOGO**

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Our anchor



This month, we mark the season of Remembrance by featuring two PCI forces chaplains who reflect on ministering to servicemen and women, often in challenging circumstances. Reserve army chaplain Rev Edward McKenzie says that while Remembrance is an important time of the year, it is not kept solely for November, but rather is part of the yearly training rhythm. He says, "Remembrance is a powerful, emotional anchor for the entire unit."

RAF chaplain Rev Jonny Newell highlights the importance of building relationships in his work, saying, "Military chaplaincy is an incarnational ministry; we have to get to know the person we are deployed with and gain their trust so that we can talk honestly."

One organisation that cherishes the symbolism of the anchor and knows well the importance of relationships, is the Boys' Brigade (BBNI). Chief officer of BBNI, Lisa Keys and chaplain Rev Jonathan Moxen discuss BBNI's shared vision to raise generations of Christ-like men. Jonathan points to the opportunities to build relationships with boys and their families saying, "BB is not just a uniformed organisation – it is a mission field." Lisa also highlights the long-term impact that the organisation has proven to have on boys: "We know that BB has helped shape so many faith stories..."

One person who can attest to this is Roy McCullough from Kilfennan Presbyterian Church. In 'My story', he shares how he grew up through BB and now sings with its Centenary Male Voice Choir. Roy recalls many of the experiences he has enjoyed over the years, including representing the Brigade at the first Duke of Edinburgh expedition in the Mourne Mountains in 1954.

This month we also hear about the importance of building relationships when reaching out to those on the margins. Pip Florit describes how members of Saintfield Road Presbyterian are stepping out of their comfort zone to volunteer in the local prison. And Sarah Stewart explains the work of student social workers, on placement in PCI's Thompson House – a residential service aiming to bring restoration and healing to men who have served a custodial sentence.

Just as Remembrance serves as a powerful anchor for Edward McKenzie's Reserve army unit, any work undertaken for the sake of the Kingdom is powerfully anchored on the name of Jesus. We can be assured, as the Boys' Brigade hymn affirms, that no matter what comes our way, we are: "Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love."

Sarah Harding

LETTERS

Haptic humans

Dear Editor

I would like to say how much I appreciated Ruth Sanderson's article 'Haptic humans' in the September issue of the *Herald*.

Her fascination with this topic was evident. It gave her the inspiration for her article which is very interesting and thought-provoking. Thank you so much.

*Ella Becker-Stewart
Duisburg, Germany*

Herald price held

The price of *Presbyterian Herald*s distributed through congregational agents is to remain the same in 2026 – £20/€24.

Postal subscriptions are also available, although 2026 prices will reflect increases in postal charges.

The cheapest way to obtain a *Herald* is a digital subscription, which costs £16 (Euro equivalent) from Issuu – issuu.com/presbyterianireland



Topical Tweets



@DefAcUK

The Defence Academy has welcomed The Rt Revd Dr Trevor Gribben, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, alongside senior chaplaincy leaders. They visited our Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre to observe our chaplain training and toured the historic Beckett House.



@News_Letter

The organiser of the March for Jesus in Dublin last weekend says it was "politely ignored" by southern media – in sharp contrast to interest in the Belfast parade a month before.



@OpenDoorsUK

Christians in Rajasthan, #India, have suffered an increase in attacks just weeks after the state assembly passed a strict anti-conversion law. In one incident, a church was attacked and a pastor arrested after being falsely accused of forced conversions.



@PCIModerator

I was shocked to hear that animal carcasses had been dumped at St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Caledon. Along with my colleague in the village, Rev Joanne Smith, we condemn this obscene act. As part of the local community, we pray for all who have been affected.

Culture WATCH



Deborah Sloan reflects on what's been in the news recently....

'Nothing Beats a Jet2 Holiday'. That one's over. It left along with summer 2025. 'Unfortunately I Do Love' is on its way out. The 'Milkshake Dance Challenge' is still holding its own. It takes a while to learn those moves. The 'NASA Picture of the Day' is back. 'Wherever the Wind Takes Me' is gaining popularity. 'Six Seven' is continuing to annoy parents everywhere.

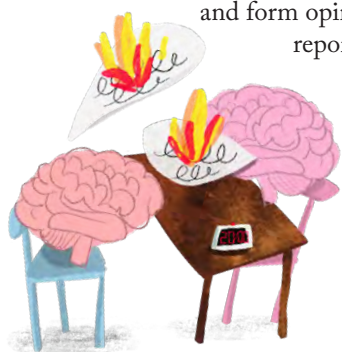
I'm talking about TikTok trends which seemingly show up from nowhere and burn out as quickly as they flare up. It's impossible to predict what they might be in November. That will be up to the content creators. They'll be responding to current events, and significant cultural moments, and the overall public mood. Who knows? Maybe 'Recreating My Autumn Outfit' will feature.

We might think TikTok trends are just that... trends. But these viral pop-ups that gather a community around them don't emerge from nowhere. They fill a gap. They're a response to a specific human need. Need to feel seen? Need to be part of something bigger? The 'Jet2 Holiday', sharing your vacation mishaps, is a reminder that, when yours feels inadequate, there's no such thing as the perfect holiday. 'Wherever the Wind Takes Me' celebrates spontaneity. 'Unfortunately I Do Love' embraces radical honesty. People can reveal their least appealing attributes, the embarrassing things they enjoy, without risk of shame. The 'NASA Picture of the Day' supports those who are grieving, enabling them to seek out an image of the universe taken on the day a loved one died.

And 'Six Seven'? Well, explaining this nonsensical expression has proven quite complicated. Parents.com had to seek the help of a tween TikToker. "I think the point is that it makes no sense," he said, "but it's provocative".

Prior to his murder, I hadn't heard of Charlie Kirk. I know his tragic death was captured on camera and that as he was killed, he was sitting under a sign that said, 'Prove Me Wrong'. I know he invited college students to challenge him on social and political topics and posted videos of his campus tour debates. I know he held particular views. I know he talked about Jesus. But I don't know enough. There's a danger I could wade in on stuff I simply don't understand, get caught up in the media maelstrom and form opinions based on posthumous

reporting or my own biases. I know Charlie Kirk was big on TikTok. I know he targeted Gen Z. I know he filled a gap there. And so, I ask my 17-year-old for advice. She shows me a clip from a



YouTube series called 'Surrounded'. Charlie is encircled by a ring of opponents who don't share his beliefs. One by one, his opponents face him across a table. There's a timer. There's fast-paced sparring. There are incendiary prompts. It's an intellectual

battle. The goal is to verbally defeat. 37.4 million people have watched two opposing sides provoke each other and reach neither consensus nor compromise. "Nobody wins on Surrounded," says *The New Yorker*.

"It's called rage bait," my daughter says. Online content designed to provoke strong negative reactions has skyrocketed. Rage baiting is good for engagement. Making people angry is profitable. In an age of uncertainty, many have turned to content creators for 'wisdom' and 'truth', and this is what they're regularly consuming. But rage doesn't stay within the confines of the internet. It spreads. How we debate matters.

Jesus wasn't afraid to debate. He didn't shy away from confronting religious leaders and those who disagreed with him, challenging their hypocrisy and correcting interpretations. But he didn't do it to win an argument. His goal was to point to God. More than debating, Jesus aimed to engage. He spoke to hearts rather than minds. He asked questions and listened to discern what mattered to individuals. He saw the depth of human need. He focused on the marginalised. He understood shame. He talked to the woman at the well. He told Zacchaeus to come down from a tree. He spent time with children. Through both words and actions, he modelled radical humility to his disciples, envisioning them with a message to take into the world. He also put a stop to unproductive arguments. And sometimes, he chose to withdraw from rather than confront his opponents.

We can't predict what's going to trend this November, but we can predict human need. Where there's a gap, can we aim to fill it with the love of Jesus?



Deborah Sloan is a member of Bloomfield Presbyterian Church. She is married to Russell and has four daughters. Having left a career in academia, she is now a freelance writer.



Combatting famine

As famine continues to unfold in Gaza, the generous donations of Christian Aid supporters have allowed the charity's partner, the Palestinian Agricultural Development Association, to support farmers to grow desperately needed food.

Since October 2023, Christian Aid's partners have reached those most in need with food, water, medical care, education and shelter. Donations have brought emergency aid to more than 800,000 people, provided food to over 1.3 million and supplied water and sanitation to more than 950,000.

To support Christian Aid's work to respond to the famine in Gaza, visit caid.ie/Harvest or call 028 9064 8133 (Belfast) or 01 496 7040 (Dublin).

Image: Imad Al-Muanni shows off some of the tomatoes he has grown in his greenhouse in Gaza, with support from Christian Aid. Credit: Christian Aid/Majdi Fathi



Bible report

Wycliffe Bible Translators' 'State of the Bible 2025' report reveals that 197 million people now have the whole Bible in their language for the first time.

Over the past year, there were 118 launches – 23 Bibles and 95 New Testaments – and the number of languages still waiting for work to begin has dropped by 44%.

James Poole, Wycliffe's executive director, said, "For centuries, billions lived without a single verse of the Bible in their language. But that story is changing – at a pace and scale not witnessed before."



Christians detained in China

More than 70 Christians have been arrested and interrogated by Chinese security forces in a major crackdown in the east of the country, according to Open Doors UK and Ireland.

Pastors and other Christians were detained during church services, with others picked up from their homes or workplaces. They were questioned by authorities about their finances and denominational affiliations.

An Open Doors analyst said, "Such crackdowns are not new but are part of a wider effort by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to control society and make them fall in line. Religions and especially Christians are seen as an important target group for such efforts."



Bibles for babies

Bible Society Northern Ireland wants to give a free storybook Bible to every baby born on their first birthday, and a children's Bible when they reach five.

It is hoped the project will encourage families to read to their young ones about the God who sees, knows and loves them unconditionally.

Once a child has been registered, they'll receive a storybook Bible on their first birthday. On their second, third, and fourth birthdays they'll receive some fun activities, and on their fifth birthday they will be given a children's Bible.

Anyone can register a 2025 newborn who is living in Northern Ireland, provided they have the parent or guardian's permission to do so. Registration opened on 1 November and runs until 31 January 2026. Find out more and register at biblesocietytni.co.uk/bfb

Leaders issue legacy statement

At their regular meeting, the Church Leaders Group (Ireland) had an initial discussion on the new Legacy Framework proposals.

In a statement, the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland Archbishops of Armagh, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and the Presidents of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Irish Council of Churches, said that they recognised that these were detailed and complex proposals.

The statement added, "Like other groups in wider society, we will examine and consider the framework in greater detail over the weeks ahead, together, and in our individual denominations. In doing so we will continue to support and pray for all victims and survivors who have waited for decades with great dignity and patience for helpful structures to be put in place."

EA launches resource

The Evangelical Alliance has launched a small-group resource to accompany the book, *Good News People*.

Written by Gavin Calver and Phil Knox, the resource unpacks some of the key themes within the book.

Mr Knox said, "This resource invites us to root ourselves in biblical truth and respond with boldness, equipping the church to engage the world with the transforming message of the gospel."



Life lessons

Peter Gamble

PCI Deputy Clerk



I was born in Belfast, the younger of two boys. My dad was a serving officer in the RUC. We moved to Ballymena when I was five, and joined Harryville Presbyterian Church. We lived in and around Ballymena until I got married. I've been married to Moyra, who was a primary school teacher, for over 34 years. We've been blessed with twins: John, and Rachel – who is married to Jack.

My upbringing was fairly typical of 1960s Northern Ireland Presbyterianism. Neither of my parents were Christians at that time (they both came to faith later in life), but my brother and I were sent to Sunday school and we went to church as a family. I trusted Jesus as my Saviour as an 18-year-old, in my final year at school. I worked as a civil servant before sensing a call to ministry. That led me to university and then Union Theological College. It is a privilege beyond words to be a minister. I have served in West Kirk on the Shankill Road, Clarkesbridge, Garmany's Grove and McKelvey's Grove on the south Armagh/Monaghan border, and The Mall, Armagh. I was clerk of Armagh Presbytery for 10 years. Dealing with all sorts of situations has been part of the Lord's preparation of me for what I'm now doing as Deputy Clerk. The role is different, but it is still a calling to be a servant of Jesus Christ in our day.

It's not hard to find challenges the church faces today. We all can look back to what we perceive as better days in the past, wishing we were there, doing the things we did then. Our challenge is to connect with an increasingly diverse and rapidly changing society. We do so whilst experiencing a decline in membership, which raises issues of financial sustainability and maintaining active congregations. The shortage of ministers is also a challenge that will be hard to



overcome in the next decade. We rest in the knowledge that God is sovereign, and will work his purposes out in our midst.

The person I admire most is Moyra, my wife. She lives out her faith in a consistent

Christ-like manner. She is unfailingly gracious and encouraging to me. The Lord has been merciful in giving her to me as my partner in life.

Every person is an idol-maker. We can make idols of anything. As a minister, it is a great temptation to make 'ministry' into an idol. Whether it is self-reliance, or simply doing what is part and parcel of Christian service, it's so easy to lose sight of our dependence on the Lord. That's why a personal devotion time is essential to rest in Jesus.



My favourite hymn is *Jerusalem, the Golden*, a 19th century translation of poetry by the 12th century cleric, Bernard of Cluny. It focuses our hearts and minds on the glories of heaven, where Christ is seated in glory. It always turns my heart to where it ought to be, in worshipping Jesus, our Saviour.

I enjoy quizzes, reading (particularly history) and watching cricket. Alas, my playing days are behind me. Walks along the north coast around Portstewart also bring me great pleasure, especially if followed by a coffee.

I love the intergenerational nature of church, the gathering of men and women, boys and girls, together praising God and sitting under his Word. I love that we come from diverse backgrounds, but we are united through what Jesus has done for us in his life, death and resurrection.

When my dad died of cancer, aged 71, it was difficult, not only in the loss of someone dear to me, but also because I had to minister to others in their times of hardship. Ministry isn't just a one-day-a-week thing. It is being with people in all their crises, and their joys. It is only by God's grace and in his strength, that I am enabled to minister to others.

Honouring the Father

Andrew Conway

"I believe in Jesus...who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary..."



Jesus Christ came into the world because he loved... How are you most inclined to finish that sentence? There are plenty of good answers available. You could, for example, rightly and helpfully finish the sentence with 'everyone', or with 'sinners', or with 'his church' or with 'people in need'. In each case the statement would be one of glorious truth. How about this way to complete it though...

Jesus Christ came into the world because he loved... his Father.

On hearing this statement, Christian people will typically see straightaway that it must be true, even if we'd never thought of it quite like that before. We might find that some portions of Scripture which indicate this truth come to mind, such as John 17:1–5. Was it the first answer that came to mind, though, when you were asked to complete the sentence 'Jesus Christ came into the world because he loved...'?

Personally, I confess completing this sentence in ways that emphasise Christ's love for people comes much more naturally to me than completing it in a way that highlights his love for his Father. I suspect I'm not the only one of whom that's true. While I wouldn't want to be harsh on myself (or on you!) about this, I can't help but wonder if our way of completing this sentence points to a tendency to be too human centred; and if this tendency to be too human centred leads to us underestimating the good news.

In this article the question before us is: 'Why does it matter that God became one of us?' My first thought was to try and explain why it matters to people in general and all sorts of people in particular. I envisaged writing about why this is significant for people who are lonely, who feel that no one understands them, who are weighed down by guilt etc. Of course, all that is enormously important, and hopefully you will have lots of opportunities in the run-up to Christmas to hear sermons or read articles that very helpfully take that sort of approach to explaining why it matters that God became one of us.

While I'm glad of any opportunity to think about why it matters to people that God became one of us, perhaps we should also look at the question from a different angle – why does it matter to God that God became one of us?

Reams could undoubtedly be written on this, but the basic answer must be that his world and his people matter

immensely to him. God the Son was not prepared to accept a situation in which his Father was dishonoured. He would not allow his Father's good plan for his creation to be thwarted by sin. In boundless love he came to honour his Father by taking on human flesh and living a life in the unblemished beauty of true holiness.

Having lived such a life, he satisfied God's righteous anger in bearing the sins of his people on the cross, rose in victory on the third day and returned to his Father in glory. As a result, any and all who truly come to him find forgiveness and are welcomed into God's family; they are enabled to live for his glory in the here and now and will one day worship him perfectly in a majestic new creation.

God the Son...would not allow his Father's good plan for his creation to be thwarted by sin.

It matters to God that God became one of us because this is how his honour is upheld, his glory revealed and his good purpose for his world accomplished. Hallelujah!

Seeing why this matters to God so much can give us a fresh grasp of why it matters to people. Paradoxical as it may be, a less human centred approach to the question can give us a deeper understanding of why it does matter to people.

This truth has almost limitless practical significance. It can help us see, for instance, that a life centred on God is the right starting point for being a blessing to others. Christ's honouring of his Father above all else found expression in love for people. The same surely is to be true of his disciples.

Even before we begin to explore practical implications, though, doesn't this truth thrill the heart? Isn't it amazing to think that we matter to God so much? Don't you want to worship him? Aren't you moved to prioritise his glory above all else?

Rev Andrew Conway is minister of Second Comber Presbyterian Church.

MY STORY...

Roy McCullough, a member of Kilfennan Presbyterian Church and chairman of the Boys' Brigade Northern Ireland Centenary Male Voice Choir, shares a lifetime of memories in the BB.

Sure and steadfast



I was born in Londonderry two months into the Second World War, but moved to Belfast with my mother at about eight months old as my father, a constable in the Royal Ulster Constabulary, was transferred to the Oldpark Station in Belfast.

Our stay was short, however, as the Germans bombed the Waterworks on the Antrim Road on 15 April 1941 in the belief it was the docks, and we moved back to Londonderry to live with my grandparents. Another six years were to elapse before we were able to join my father in Belfast. This time it was to Finaghy where we joined Lowe Memorial Presbyterian Church.

I joined the Life Boys attached to the 84th Belfast Company of the Boys' Brigade (BB). After three years, I moved up to the Company Section, and my six years there provided so many experiences, including camps to Perth in Scotland and Norway.

The year 1954 brought exceptional memories, including representing the Brigade at the first Duke of Edinburgh expedition in the Mourne Mountains, receiving my shamrocks on 17 March from Sir John Hunt, chairman of the organisation, and playing at Windsor Park. However, it wasn't for football, but as part of a trumpet-playing fanfare team during the celebrations to mark 100 years since the birth of BB founder Sir William Alexander Smith.

The latter part of the year was also special when after playing the *Last Post* and *Reveille* on Armistice Day, I was gifted a bugle by Albert Hunter, who played it during the 1914–1918 war as a member of the Royal Irish Rifles. It is one of my most precious memories and I treasure that gift. I continued to play on Remembrance Sunday in Lowe Memorial, Great James Street and Kilfennan churches for over 50 years.

On my first Sunday night attending Great James Street church in Londonderry, it happened to be the enrolment service of the Fourth Londonderry Company. I joined and served the company as an officer for 30 years, the majority of

which as captain.

As in many parts of the country, the start of the Troubles brought problems. Many Presbyterians moved out of Londonderry to the east bank of the River Foyle due to civil unrest, so PCI wanted to build a church there. Out of five Presbyterian churches in the city at the time, only Great James Street agreed to consider it, with the congregation moving in September 1982.

This proved to be the correct decision – the congregation more than tripled, the Sunday school superintendent (my late wife Florence) saw it increase from 20 to 250, and the BB from eight to 120 in all sections.

The Boys' Brigade Northern Ireland Centenary Male Voice Choir formed in

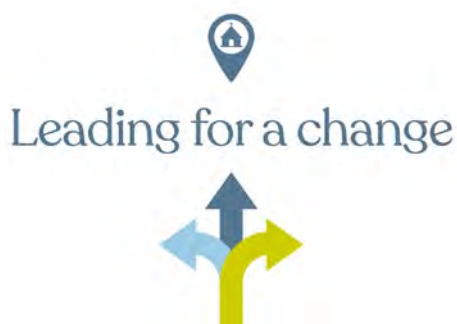
1987 to celebrate 100 years of the organisation in Northern Ireland. It was only intended to last the centenary year, but has continued. A photograph taken a few months after the formation shows a membership of 48, plus our conductor Yvette Anderson, now our accompanist. Sadly, like many male voice choirs, the membership is now half that number, but we have very dedicated members, who under our conductor Donald Blair, are grateful for the opportunity to sing for the community. Despite singing in my church choir for over 50 years, I only joined 13 years ago – in sharp contrast to our longest serving member, a strong baritone voice with 36 years in the choir.

Its aim is to bring music, both sacred and secular, to Boys' Brigade special events, church services or concerts. We also consider performing for appropriate charities.

We meet on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month, from September to May, at Whiteabbey Methodist Church hall. If you are a singer and have a connection as an old boy, officer or are supportive of the aims and motto of the BB, you will be given a warm welcome. Further information about the choir is available by phoning the secretary (another Roy McCullough) on (028) 9147 2753 or emailing bbni.centenarymalevoicechoir@gmail.com

**...we have very
dedicated members,
who... are grateful for
the opportunity to sing
for the community.**

EVENT // BOOK NOW



Leading for a change

How can change come to your church?

There is still time to book a place on the 'Leading for a change' event, which takes place at Assembly Buildings, Belfast on Tuesday 11 November.

Costing £7.50 (including lunch), the event will consider how change can come to your church.

To book, scan the QR code.



Commissioning service

Jonny and Naomi Campbell were commissioned as mission pioneers at a service in Orangefield Presbyterian Church recently. They will be involved in developing mission in Belfast's Titanic Quarter.

Grant deadline

The Presbyterian Children's Society has a small-grant scheme called 'Alongside'.

A grant of £250 is available to support projects which show the love of Christ to children, young people and families in a caring and practical way as well as support wellbeing and educational development.

For further details, visit

www.presbyterianchildrenssociety.org/alongside-grants



Building faith in our children

'Starting Strong: Building faith in our children' takes place at High Street Presbyterian Church, Holywood on Thursday 20 November, between 7.45pm and 9.45pm.

Guest speaker is author and founder of Faith in Kids, Ed Drew. The event will look at how to help children learn and live out a faith that can last.

Scan the QR code to book.



Flooding devastation in Pakistan

The 2025 monsoon season in Pakistan has been devastating, with heavier than usual rains since the end of June causing flash flooding.

There have been more than 900 deaths and tens of thousands of people have lost their homes and livelihoods. Families are now dealing with homelessness, waterborne disease and food insecurity.

Rev Reuben Qamar, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan, recently visited one of the flood-affected districts in Narowal, eastern Pakistan. He was overwhelmed by the scale of the damage as he witnessed half-submerged houses, walls washed away and roofs destroyed. Some people have



sought shelter in local church buildings.

The Presbyterian Church of Pakistan is responding to immediate needs, supporting 500 people with food, clean water, hygiene kits and medical supplies, while making plans for long-term support to repair buildings, provide seed grants for small businesses and provide vocational training. PCI has sent an emergency grant of £4000 to assist the Church in their relief efforts.

Mr Qamar has requested prayers from around the world as they begin this long journey of rebuilding after the devastation.



Church planting conference

A conference to help strengthen the roots of church planting in PCI is taking place in Drogheda Presbyterian on Saturday 7 February.

Organised by the Council for Mission in Ireland, 'From Seed to Harvest' aims to equip those involved in church plants across PCI. Rev Neil MacMillan, director of City to City Europe, will be the keynote speaker. Further information and registration can be found at www.presbyterianireland.org/events



Evangelistic resource

As we move into winter, consider using the PCI evangelistic resource called 'Seasons'.

It offers four personal video stories in which individuals unfold their experience of Christian faith in a variety of circumstances of life that relate to the four seasons of the year. Download the free video clips by scanning the QR code.

Accompanying postcard-sized cards featuring Bible prompts and discussion questions are available for just 10 pence each (minimum order of 10).

To order, email clw@presbyterianireland.org or telephone +44 (0)28 9041 7246.



DIARY DATES

November

Leading for a change
Assembly Buildings, Belfast –
Tuesday 11

Starting Strong
High Street, Hollywood –
Thursday 20

February

Church planting conference
Drogheda – Saturday 7
February

NEW MATERIAL

Worship resource

PCI's website features a worship resource hub to help those who plan or lead worship.

Found at www.presbyterianireland.org/worship, it includes links to contemporary versions of psalms, songs suitable for the various seasons of the church year as well as general resources for worship.



Home Mission support tour begins

The first of a series of events for ministers, elders and other leaders within Home Mission congregations was held in Kilkenny Presbyterian on 2 October.

This helped to outline mechanisms of support and develop a sense of connection within the Home Mission. Further such events will be held in Maynooth, Dundalk, Belfast and Donegal in the coming months.



Intensive missional module at Union

Representatives from the Council for Mission in Ireland, along with other contributors, delivered a week-long intensive module at Union Theological College in September. The 'Missional Church' module is part of the core teaching delivered to ministry students, trainee deaconesses and others.

Present resources

PCI's 'Present' initiative is now in its second year, and a number of resources are available to help ground it in congregations.

Among the resources is a postcard-sized prompt suggesting simple ways church members can be present. It can be ordered at clw@presbyterianireland.org with only the cost of postage and packaging applied.

Go to the Present webpage at www.presbyterianireland.org/present to find out more.



Present

Blaze

Children, families and leaders are encouraged to pray for global mission through PCI's 'Blaze the Bee' initiative.

This month, the Blaze prayer calendar is focusing on Egypt.



Ministerial visit for Gray's Court

Northern Ireland's Communities Minister, Gordon Lyons MLA, saw the benefit that supported accommodation provides for homeless people recovering from substance abuse, when he visited Gray's Court in north Belfast.

Since 2000, the PCI facility has helped over 300 homeless adults in early recovery from substance misuse by providing accommodation in seven fully furnished apartments. It is funded by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Supporting People programme, and is run in partnership with Woven Housing Association.

Project worker Frances Craig explained, "The overall goal is that people have this two-year space in a safe and therapeutic environment to reconnect with their family, community and faith, while maintaining a substance free life. Our work is undertaken within a Christian ethos, which underpins our service, compassion, respect and acceptance of the men and women we support, which, I hope, is a powerful social witness of the gospel."



Gordon Lyons (Minister for Communities) listening to service users at Gray's Court.



Gordon Lyons MLA (Minister for Communities) with service users and members of the staff team.

ORDER TODAY

2026 Calendar

Orders are now being taken for the 2026 PCI calendar.

As usual, the calendar will feature two months on view at a time, specially selected Scripture verses and scenes from across the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. To order, email communications@presbyterianireland.org



Let's Pray

PCI's weekly email resource is a great way of keeping up to date with the latest prayer requests.

Hitting inboxes every Thursday morning, 'Let's Pray' provides prayer topics for the coming week, and features prayers and requests concerning all aspects of the life and work of the Church.

To subscribe, go to www.presbyterianireland.org/prayer



Moderator visits RAF padres

PCI Moderator, Dr Trevor Gribben, has returned from England where he visited PCI chaplains serving in the Royal Air Force.

The two-day visit included meeting senior personnel at RAF Benson, RAF High Wycombe and the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom. He met PCI's three RAF chaplains – Rev Dr (Wing Commander) Philip Wilson, Rev (Squadron Leader) Jonathan Newell and Rev (Squadron Leader) Michael McCormick, who have a joint service record of some 23 years.

Dr Gribben praised the chaplains for their invaluable pastoral role, and said, "As a denomination, we have a long pastoral association with the UK's three services and are one of the recognised 'Sending Churches', having 'sent', or provided chaplains, or padres, to the military for over 100 years. Today, PCI has 11 full-time and part-time forces chaplains, many of whom have supported their comrades on active service overseas."

Dr Trevor Gribben (centre) talks to Rev (Squadron Leader) Michael McCormick (right).



TIDES

Devotional

'Tides' is a daily devotional created and written by contributors from across PCI.

Available every weekday morning, it is an opportunity to read God's Word, reflect on what he is saying and learn how to respond.

To subscribe, visit www.presbyterianireland.org/tides

Strengthen the roots



James Cochrane highlights PCI's upcoming church planting conference, 'From Seed to Harvest', which is aimed at strengthening the roots of our church planting ministry.

The Bible uses vivid agricultural and horticultural imagery to describe the expansion of the kingdom of God. Think, for instance, about the kingdom parables of Mark 4 (the sower, the growing seed and the mustard seed) or Paul reminding the Corinthian church that he planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God gave the growth. This imagery highlights the need for ongoing careful and skilful nurturing of what is being undertaken by faith in obedience to God's call to make disciples among all people groups. While this careful and skilful nurturing is true of all ministries, it seems particularly apt when we talk about church planting.

As PCI continues to develop and support the '10+10 in 10' vision affirmed by the General Assembly, a church planting conference is being planned for Saturday 7 February 2026 in Drogheda Presbyterian Church. The theme of the conference, 'From Seed to Harvest: Strengthening the roots of church planting ministry' picks up on this rich biblical imagery and aims to provide all-important practical help and support for those preparing to plant or those already engaged in and nurturing a church plant.



Rev Neil MacMillan

The keynote speaker for the conference, Rev Neil MacMillan, comes with over 30 years of church planting experience to draw on. Neil was Director of Church Planting for the Free Church of Scotland and founded and led Generation Church Planting which has seen over 30 new churches started, as well as leading three church plants, the most recent of which is Cornerstone Edinburgh. He is currently the director of City to City Europe, which works with local leaders to plant gospel-centred churches in the cities of Europe. Neil will be leading two sessions at the conference: 'Biblical vision for planting missional churches: Helping people to consider the balance between attractional

**...this dynamic...
conference that promises
to equip, encourage and
enthuse all those
interested in church
planting.**

and missional church planting' and 'Missional principles for reaching new people: The importance of establishing clear leadership functions and core team dynamics'.

In addition to these main sessions, a series of workshops tackling different stages in the life of a church plant will be facilitated by PCI church planters.

Conference participants will be able

to choose to attend two from the following: 'Help, I'm just getting started', 'Beginning to gather', 'Recruiting and developing leadership' and 'Maturing the plant'.

These structured sessions and workshops will be nestled between times that allow participants to connect with one another – a vital part of any conference. Although the conference is primarily tailored for those preparing to plant or those already engaged in church planting, the content will be of interest and benefit to anyone quietly praying about the possibility of church planting in the future.

So, why not plan to come along on Saturday 7 February 2026? Join us for this dynamic and inspiring conference that promises to equip, encourage and enthuse all those interested in church planting. In the interim, we would value your prayers for the conference and for all those who will take part and participate.

Rev James Cochrane is minister of Ravenhill Presbyterian Church and a member of PCI's Church Planting panel.

Conference details

From Seed to Harvest
Saturday 7 February
12pm–4.30pm
Drogheda Presbyterian Church



Please register for this free conference at
www.presbyterianireland.org/events



The art *of kindness*

Mark Smith shares the inspiring story of Alborz Nobakht, a talented artist from Iran, who is sharing his gifts with Ballywillan Presbyterian Church on the north coast.

Many Presbyterian churches across Ireland – north, south, east and west – help and support migrants and asylum seekers who come to these shores seeking a new life. Many have been affected by war and conflict, or in the case of Iranian-born Alborz Nobakht, persecution for his Christian faith. Alborz, who is a talented artist, and his son Mohammed, found support in Ballywillan Presbyterian Church – and repaid their kindness by using the gift that God had blessed Alborz with.

In his previous life, Alborz had run an art school for adults and children in the city of Lali, 450 miles to the southwest of the Iranian capital Tehran, in the west of the country. Following an upsurge in the persecution of Christians, he and his son were forced to flee, arriving in Northern Ireland in May of this year. After making a claim for asylum, they were placed in a Portrush hotel.

Supported by the North West Migrants Forum, their story first appeared in the *Derry Journal*, and focused on the help and support that they had received from Ballywillan Presbyterian Church in Portrush, as one of the elders, Christine Dunlop explained: “Our church provides a safe space for asylum seekers living locally where they can meet with social workers, counsellors, healthcare professionals and staff from the education sector as well as the local borough council and a range of charities.

“I show all the asylum seekers around our church and invite those who are from a Christian background to come

We have an amazing range of very gifted people coming to Northern Ireland...

to our activities. Alborz came to church with a number of other Christian Iranians and I discovered he was an artist when he produced the most amazing pencil sketch.”

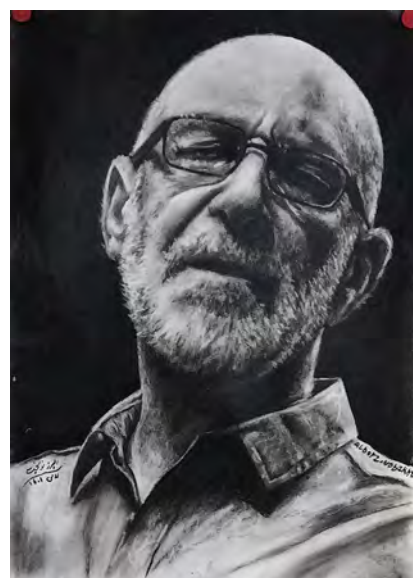
At his request and that of another artist, Mrs Dunlop purchased paints and other supplies. “Alborz completed some fabulous pieces of work. He told me he was a muralist and calligrapher by profession, showing me his work for big companies. But it was his pencil drawings that fascinated me.”

His subjects range from landscapes, to famous faces, to ordinary men and women caught up in conflict. Having heard that the children’s room needed painting and keen to repay the church’s kindness, Alborz and his friends got to work. “They designed, prepared and painted the room in a child-friendly manner,” said Mrs Dunlop.

“I spent time in the church buildings while they worked and it was wonderful to hear the camaraderie as they painted. This amazing group of people who never knew each other before coming to Northern Ireland formed extremely close friendships.” The room was completed on a Friday and was followed up with a service on Sunday.

“During the church service, our minister, Rev Gordon McCracken, publicly thanked each of our wonderful Iranian friends for their brilliant artwork. Everyone spent time looking at the room and then personally thanking our new friends. It was a difficult day for them as Israel had just bombed their home country and they were so concerned for family and friends back home.”

Alborz has been given a letter of support from the church, which they hope will assist him in his bid for refugee status. “We have an amazing range of very gifted people coming to



(All photos with permission of the North West Migrants Forum)

Northern Ireland,” Mrs Dunlop added.

“I have had [local] folks tell me they are here to take our jobs. I ask them if they are an industrial pharmacist, graphic designer, banker, dentist, muralist, interpreter or perhaps a musician. These lovely human beings will add to the diversity and complexity of our society and we will be all the better for them,” she said.

Alborz said that he is indebted to Ballywillan for the kindness shown to him. “I enjoyed the painting very much and I wish to thank everyone who helped us during our time in Portrush. The dream now is to open my own art school here in Northern Ireland and carry on the work I was doing before I had to leave Lali.”

Mark Smith is PCI's press officer.

Ballywillan elder Christine Dunlop, Alborz and the church’s minister Rev Gordon McCracken



Alborz’s painting of the railway arch in Portrush that leads to the West Strand





The anchor of Remembrance

In this season of Remembrance, **Edward McKenzie** describes what it's like to be a Reserve army chaplain.

In the British Army, the Reserve chaplain or 'padre' (as we are known) acts in a strange dual role, wearing the hat of both a civilian minister and a military officer, which offers a distinctive form of ministry. Unlike our full-time counterparts, Reserve padres embed themselves in the lives of soldiers at training nights, weekends and during annual training, building relationships that bridge the civilian and military worlds. This unique position affords us a profound privilege to understanding some of the soldiers' experiences, from the mental burden of training to the moral weight of deployment. This shared experience, in turn, allows the padre to connect with Remembrance on a deeply personal level, acting as a vital link between a unit's lived history and its solemn commemorations.

The distinctiveness of the Reserve padre's work begins with their integration into the fabric of a unit's routine. While Regular padres are present daily, Reserve chaplains invest focused, high-impact time alongside their soldiers. As they participate in the

same field exercises, the Reserve padre strives to earn the trust and respect that are the foundation of all effective pastoral care. To become a confidant, a moral guide, and a source of stability, as well as showing soldiers God's love and the wonder of what Jesus, and his work, means for their lives.

This dual-world perspective makes the Reserve padre a unique witness to the soldier's experience. In their civilian life, Reservists occupy all sorts of roles and employment and this gives them the challenge of juggling two very different lifestyles.

As a Reserve padre I can understand the stresses of transitioning between roles and the mental weight of a 'normal' life overlaid with the realities of military commitment, because I am trying to spin similar plates. This understanding allows me to address concerns that might never be raised with a Regular chaplain. I can speak

...Remembrance is a powerful, emotional anchor for the entire unit.

from a place of empathetic insight, acknowledging the sacrifices that Reservists and their families make which, in turn I hope, reinforces the bond of trust.

My usual commitment is one training night a week, a portion of a weekend a month (I try not to miss Sundays at Cregagh) and like most Reservists, 16 days of continuous training once a year. Sometimes I can do more, sometimes I have to settle for less, as I balance family and congregational commitments. I am continually grateful for the support and encouragement of both my family and the folk at Cregagh in trying to achieve this. Serving as a Reserve padre helps me, by forcing me out of the parish ministry setting and allowing me to develop and reflect upon the things of God in a totally different environment.

Recently, I was the only British chaplain deployed on an overseas exercise to Michigan in the USA. This was an international exercise where we trained alongside soldiers who were American, Latvian and from many other nations. I had the opportunity



to minister to a wide range of people from all sorts of backgrounds. My time there was often intense – some of the training environments were made as realistic as they possibly could be which was sobering as well as emotionally and spiritually draining. Working with the Americans was interesting as it helped me to reflect upon different approaches to chaplaincy work. One of the chaplains (who are known as ‘chaps’ in the US) even had a therapy dog whom he had trained to salute! It was a blessing to share in these experiences alongside the folk from my unit.

This shared, lived experience is extremely poignant during the period of Remembrance. While Remembrance season itself is of supreme importance, in my unit Remembrance is not something kept for November but is part of the yearly training rhythm. Across the year, we meet in four separate locations on four different occasions to pause, remember and learn about the rich history of those from our part of this island who fought and died. Therefore, leading an act of Remembrance is not an abstract duty but a deeply personal one. The fallen are not just names on war memorials but echoes of the potential and commitment I see in the guys and girls that turn up to a training night or weekend when they have just finished a long shift in their civilian job. The time may come when they are called to go and fight and I can say with complete confidence that they will do what is required with dedication, professionalism and skill. So,

...soldiers...are incredibly open and willing to talk about their lives and the things of God.

Remembrance is a powerful, emotional anchor for the entire unit. The words we use and the prayers we say carry the weight of both faith and familiarity, giving voice to a collective sense of the past, present and future, that feels both sacred and immediate.

While formal parades and services are important, a large part of my role is simply being around. With pouches filled with Haribo (or ‘Morale-ibo’ as the troops often call it!) and little camouflage New Testaments, it’s a blessing for me to chat and share with those who are going about their training duties, often sitting with them during their breaks or responding to the commonly uttered saying: “Do you have a minute padre?” While the work may not look like traditional evangelism, it is still very much mission. Typically, I am the only link with church these folk have, folk who often, while not always, are young men in their 20s and 30s; a group that is absent from many congregational settings. In a world where the church is being pushed away and fighting

for a place at the table, I find myself with an accepted settled role where I am part of the comings and goings of what happens. What a privilege and opportunity to get to speak of Jesus in these settings. This is enhanced further by getting to do this with full-time troops – as Reservists we often work alongside our Regular counterparts.

In the context of an increasingly secular world, the Reserve padre’s role as a moral and ethical compass is more relevant than ever. We provide a non-judgmental space, outside of the chain of command, for service personnel to grapple with moral dilemmas and find personal resilience. While soldiers can be blunt, coarse and direct, they truly do represent the best of us; they are incredibly open and willing to talk about their lives and the things of God. The enduring human need for spiritual and pastoral support is so clearly expressed by those guys and girls as I sit beside them in a hole in the ground, over a cup of tea in a classroom or

when they are all nice and shiny on a parade square. Faith and belief can thrive in those places – I have seen it, albeit a little rough around the edges sometimes.

Rev Edward McKenzie is minister of Cregagh Presbyterian Church.





Present in the community

Rev David Thompson highlights how two congregations – Clogherney and Sixmilecross – are being present as God’s witnesses in the village of Beragh.

Clogherney and Sixmilecross congregations sit either side the village of Beragh, about seven miles from Omagh, County Tyrone.

They are active churches, wanting to bring together ways of serving the needs of their local community and sharing the good news of the gospel. Both congregations have good premises, carefully maintained, and in the case of Clogherney, imaginatively renovated in recent years. Nevertheless, they recently decided to further develop a community space on the main street of the village of Beragh, in order to be present where God has placed them as his witnesses, in both old ways and new.

Minister Rev Robert McFaul takes up the story.

“The Johnston Memorial Hall was gifted to the congregation of Clogherney by the Johnston family at the end of the 19th century. Its first use was as a national school and some current members of the congregation still remember going to school there. The community eventually outgrew that

school, but the church retained the hall, using it for afternoon Sunday school, Boys’ Brigade and monthly evening worship.

“The 2020–21 lockdowns coincided with a ministerial vacancy in the two congregations and the monthly services were not able to be held. Due to the period of disuse, the building was not in great shape by 2022. The decision at that point was to either sell or keep the hall. We quickly realised that as long as we had people with the interest and willingness, this was an opportunity that God in his providence had entrusted to us. A new roof, windows and heating system were our priorities. The kitchen and toilets also needed

to be made fit for purpose. From that first decision, through to completion in 2025, both congregations got behind and supported the project, and I am very grateful for the willingness and support of both.”

Building work finished in June this year and was followed by a night in which members could come and both see the facelift of the building and pray for God’s leading, guiding and blessing in the first phase of activities planned.

The hall was the venue for a week of summer youth activities in July. It has also hosted a community breakfast. The official opening in September was then followed by a Life Explored course and a Harvest service.

It is early days, but Robert explains why it feels important for the churches to be present beyond their own buildings and their hope for what God might do.

“Our main church buildings are located one or two miles outside the village. This has its positives and certainly continues to serve the mission of both congregations well. However,

The project is a great example of two congregations moving beyond simply sharing a minister to genuinely sharing ministries...



William Heatherington, project manager, and Rev Robert McFaul

I have no doubt that partnerships are the way ahead for congregations...

Present 
WHERE GOD HAS
PLACED US TO BE
HIS WITNESSES

there is greater footfall and activity in Beragh. There are local businesses, young people standing at the bus stop opposite the hall every morning and flats which overlook one side of the hall, from which residents can see and hear worship and other activities taking place. It is the sort of place where Christian witness ought to be, and where Christians ought to be present.

“Through the Johnston Hall we take some of what we normally do and move it a step closer into the community. The number one activity is the clear expounding of God’s Word in worship. This is what we love to do in our church building and we are not ashamed to do the same in the heart of the community. Doing so establishes a Christian presence where there would not otherwise be one as the hall is the only gospel-preaching witness on the main street of the village.

Robert also shares how having a presence on the main street has provided fresh opportunities to meet people and form friendships with them. He says, “People have become familiar

with the place and more comfortable with us as a church community. Our recent community breakfast, followed by Life Explored, has helped us to do this. Looking ahead, we are preparing a programme for 2026 and hoping to set up an online presence for the hall.”

The project is a great example of two congregations moving beyond simply sharing a minister to genuinely sharing ministries across both sets of members. There has been real blessing in that.

Robert explains: “The Johnston Hall committee is made up of representatives from both congregations, giving a sense of partnership and bringing wider ideas and experience. Both churches benefit from this too. Beragh sits on the official parish boundary and people who come to the hall can choose to attend either church. I am always amazed by the unity and togetherness. I have no doubt that partnerships are the way ahead for congregations and it is always best if these arise naturally and locally.”

As the reconfiguration of congregations begins to roll out across the denomination, there is something

very important to learn from this positive attitude and approach to working in partnership, which while it seemed strange to these congregations initially, has in God’s hand, enabled the expansion of local witness.

It may not be possible for every congregation to do what Clogherney and Sixmilecross are doing. However, it is well worth thinking through how the presence of any congregation can be extended beyond its own four walls. Sometimes that is simply taking one of the congregation’s own activities off site, maybe into a community facility, sports ground, school or other local space. Perhaps there is an activity already happening in the community and the church and its members can join in, lend a hand but not have to be in charge.

So often we only think about being present where God has placed us to be his witnesses in ways which assume others will come to us on our premises, on our terms in ways which are convenient for us, but not so comfortable for them.

Raising generations of Christ-like men



Sarah Harding chats to Lisa Keys and Rev Jonathan Moxen about the Boys' Brigade's vision to inspire Christ-likeness in boys across Northern Ireland and Donegal.

A recent report from the Centre for Social Justice, 'Lost Boys: State of the Nation', highlighted the significant challenges facing boys and young men today, including struggles with education, mental health and unstable family environments. In a culture that is dominated by the influence of social media, unhealthy male role-models have risen to prominence, with figures like Andrew Tate, who promote a misogynistic and toxic masculinity, having a substantial effect on mainstream culture.

It is within this confusing world that the Boys' Brigade (BBNI) in Northern Ireland and Donegal is seeking to tell a different story. Lisa Keys (chief officer of BBNI) agrees that the landscape is challenging.

"We are raising a generation who do not know what it means to be a man. Culture is dictating a certain set of behaviours, with disturbing messages being smuggled in among glossy facades and imagery."

Despite this, she feels the potential for BBNI to speak into this in a counter-cultural way is exciting.

"We have such a tremendous opportunity with over 11,300 boys and young men to show them an alternative

view, to ensure that they are seeing positive role models and to change their narrative on what it means to be a man. Our vision is to raise generations of Christ-like men. That is a vision we can all contribute to."

BBNI began operating as an independent organisation, separate to BBUK, in 2023. Lisa explains: "The context which BBUK is operating in is different from the context in Northern Ireland. Following extensive consultation with churches and leaders in NI and Donegal and negotiations with BB UK and RoI, an agreement was reached that enabled the continuation of Boys' Brigade companies in NI and Donegal to become the responsibility of BBNI."

Lisa says the new arrangement allows for greater focus on local needs: "We tailor our programmes to meet the needs of the boys and young men who attend BB here. At the heart of BBNI is the desire to do what we can to advance Christ's kingdom in NI and

We are raising a generation who do not know what it means to be a man.

Donegal. That is our starting point and everything flows from that."

Rev Jonathan Moxen, minister of Ballyclare Presbyterian Church, is the current chaplain of BBNI. His affiliation with the organisation goes back to childhood.

"BB has always been close to my heart. I grew up through the organisation and am old enough to have been a 'Robin'. When we moved to Portrush Presbyterian, I joined the Junior Section and there I saw dedicated officers and helpers who loved the Lord Jesus. I loved going every week and going down to Rudi's chippy for a sausage bap afterwards. These experiences shaped my view of the organisation and also my knowledge of the love of God."

It is perhaps surprising in 2025 that uniformed organisations are still so popular. Lisa says, "We know from talking to boys that many enjoy the sense of belonging that comes from putting on the uniform. The sense of structure also appeals – the rhythms of a BB night become familiar. It is wonderful to watch young boys running into the church, eager to participate in activities."

Jonathan is keenly aware that companies face many challenges. He



says, “My own company had to change the night that one of our sections met because the local football youth academy started training on that night and we would have lost a large percentage of boys.”

And having enough volunteers and leaders is an ongoing struggle for many churches. Lisa adds: “People are juggling so much – family, work commitments, sport – yet it is so rewarding to volunteer. For churches with BB companies, we’d love congregations to pray for the work, to encourage and support the leaders and also to consider how they could maybe get involved. Perhaps in a small way – offering to cut up craft, to run a tuck shop or maybe to join the team and work with the boys. We know that many of our companies would love help.”

Jonathan highlights that there are so many missional opportunities available to congregations through BB.

“We have a high percentage of unchurched boys coming to BBNI right across the sections and in every company. So we can seek to connect, primarily with the boys, the message of the gospel. But we can also seek to connect with the families of the boys, as this may well be the only

We have a high percentage of unchurched boys coming to BBNI...





opportunity to see these families near the church. I know some companies are already doing this with 'lad and dad' nights. There are many ways that a congregation can support companies to do such things and to introduce the gospel message."

For those churches that don't have a BB, Jonathan is keen to encourage them to consider this.

"BBNI goes way beyond the term of being a uniformed organisation. A company that can draw in boys and young men and seek to make them Christ-like has got to be good for the church. It not only develops the lives of the boys, but also those of the leaders who get to know the boys and develop

good relationships with them."

Lisa concurs: "I would love to see more churches considering how BBNI can be part of their ministry. In striving to raise generations of Christ-like men, we are trying to play our small part in opening up an alternative dialogue with boys and young men. Opening up the opportunity for them to explore what it would mean to have Jesus in their lives."

She concludes: "I want us all to praise God for the work he has done through BB for many years. We know that BB has helped shape so many faith stories and I don't believe God has finished yet!"

BB is not just a uniformed organisation – it is a mission field.



Rev Jonathan Moxen, BBNI's chaplain (centre)

Boys' Brigade at Mountjoy Presbyterian

As chaplain to Mountjoy Boys' Brigade for the past 12 years, I count it a privilege to serve alongside our dedicated captain and the officers in the shared mission of advancing Christ's kingdom amongst the boys and young men in our community. The BB in Mountjoy has stood as a vital bridge between our church and wider community for the past 36 years.

Together, we are committed to seeing lives transformed by the message of Jesus Christ. Week by week, I have the honour of connecting with over 80 boys, building relationships, sharing the good news of the gospel and helping them grow in their faith.

I value the deep sense of teamwork with the captain and officers as we seek to lead by example, encourage one another, and reach into our local community with the love of Christ. Through the weekly Bible talks, devotions, special services, and personal interaction, I strive to be a pastoral presence that points both boys and leaders to Christ, the One who is the anchor for the soul.

Mountjoy BB is not just a uniformed organisation – it is a mission field. And I am thankful to God for the

opportunity to serve, sow seeds of the gospel, and stand together with others in proclaiming Christ and building his kingdom among the boys and young men of our community.

Rev Jonathan Cowan, minister of Mountjoy Presbyterian Church

I only appreciate now the impact that Boys' Brigade had on my life. In particular, the guidance I received as a teenager from my captain and the other leaders. The friendships I made with the other boys are friendships that have lasted.

I have such great memories of camps, competitions and parade nights and it is the reason that I've stayed involved as a leader as I want to give something back. BB really shaped me as I grew up.

I really enjoy serving in the company and it's such a joy to meet great Christian men who were once part of our BB. It's such an encouragement that the BB is doing something right and having a positive impact on young lives.

Paul Colhoun, captain, Mountjoy Boys' Brigade



More thinking is needed

Norman Hamilton considers the dangers of artificial intelligence.

I don't have any technical qualifications, but I can – and do – use my computer and smartphone quite a lot. Perhaps you do too.

But there is an emerging problem – and it is a big one. New research suggests that since artificial intelligence (AI) tools offer instant answers, they are causing us to do less thinking. This is clear from a recent study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology which produced some very troubling results.

Fifty-four people aged 18 to 39 from the Boston area were divided into three groups. They were asked to read and analyse a passage, and then produce an essay in response to a single prompt about that passage using OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's search engine, and nothing at all, respectively. Researchers measured the writers' brain activity, and found that of the three groups, ChatGPT users had the lowest brain engagement and "consistently underperformed at neural, linguistic, and behavioural levels." Over the course of several months, ChatGPT users got lazier with each subsequent essay, often resorting to copy-and-paste by the end of the study.

Recently, a new AI company called Cluely promoted itself with the slogan: "This is the end of human thought". And it uses the advertising line: "It's time to cheat... Interviews; Sales calls; Homework; Meetings; Really everything."

Those are very scary thoughts indeed! I really do find the invitation to set aside my ability to think – and hand it over to computer software – to be both degrading and terrifying at one and the same time. To enter a world where artificial machine intelligence is promoted to replace real human intelligence and good judgment, is one totally alien to what it means to be human, and to be made in the image of God. And to realise that almost inevitably I will be interacting with such software, and not be aware of it, is deeply disconcerting.

The ability to think is one of the core reasons why I am a Christian. Indeed, I am encouraged in the Bible to allow God to transform me by the renewing of my mind. For me, rational thought is entirely consistent with my having real faith. Indeed, if my mind is not linked closely to my faith, then that faith is simply so much wishful thinking.

If Cluely is diminishing the importance of thinking, artificial intelligence is increasingly claiming to do the thinking for us. For example, if you google a question on your smartphone, very often the screen will say 'Thinking' before giving you an answer to your query. Let's be

absolutely clear – it is NOT thinking. It is merely pulling together lots of material relevant to your question, and summarising it as a response to what you asked. AI is so good at this that it sounds like something a person would have written. And let's also be absolutely clear that a commitment to truth is not at the heart of that 'thinking' response.

The irony is that in recent research carried out by the Gospel Coalition, the AI programme from Communist China answered the question 'Did Jesus rise from the dead?' by stating: "Based on the historical texts and the claim of eyewitness testimony, the teaching that Jesus rose from the dead is considered fact by believers and a highly probable event by many scholars, regardless of their personal interpretation."

This is in stark contrast to the model built in America by the owners of Facebook and WhatsApp, which

gave the answer: "From a factual or historical standpoint, there's limited empirical evidence to support or refute the resurrection. Belief in the resurrection largely depends on faith and individual interpretation of religious texts."

So, as this type of technology becomes ever more prevalent, the challenge of communicating and proclaiming the truth of the gospel to a society that increasingly values non-thinking and cheating is going to become ever more difficult. That challenge highlights for me the crucial importance of 'personal witness'... telling people what Christ has done for me, and allowing them to see how my faith in the Lord shapes my attitudes, my words – indeed every aspect of my life. And that too is scary!

Artificial intelligence can certainly give us knowledge and facts quickly and easily. But my experience to date has taught me that rather than relying heavily on it, I'm far better off to still use the brain that God has given me, be grateful for the privilege of being able to think, and seek the wisdom and guidance of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, day in, day out. Frankly, that is life which is greatly enriched by the Lord, rather than greatly demeaned by ever more dependence on so-called 'thinking' computers.

Norman Hamilton

Very Rev Dr Norman Hamilton is a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.



Patient in affliction

Pip Florit

Mission support officer for PCI



Yet, amidst this darkness, the church continues to stand as a place of hope.

Myanmar, formerly called Burma, sits in southeast Asia, between India, China and Thailand. 88% of the population is Buddhist and there are 135 officially recognised ethnic groups. This huge diversity has frequently resulted in hostility and conflict. It is a country with a troubled past that has given rise to a troubled present.

Myanmar gained its independence from Britain in 1948. Following some years of fragile democracy, 1962 saw the first of a number of military coups, with the democratic government being overthrown by a military junta who ruled the country until 2015. In that year, Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won the first free elections for many years, however, another huge election win for the NLD in 2020 was followed by a coup, when the military claimed election fraud.

Since February 2021, the country has been living in the midst of conflict, ruled by the military, with resistance from groups of citizens, who are fighting back. The result has been frequent violence, economic downturn, mass displacement and significant increase in poverty: in 2017, 25% of people lived below the poverty line; in 2023, that figure had doubled – half of the population is now considered to be living in poverty.

In the midst of the situation, the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (PCM) continues to work. PCI has been privileged



TTC students

to partner with PCM for nearly 50 years. It's a partnership that's seen many difficult years, but also witnessed an incredible resilience in people and a Church who keep serving God no matter what their circumstances.

During the recent years of relative stability, prior to the 2021 coup, a number of visits were possible, both to and from Myanmar. The General Secretary, Rev Pek Muan Cuang, was able to attend the 2023 General Assembly in Belfast and returned to Belfast a few months later, where he met with a small group with a particular interest in Myanmar. PCI is also part of a group of PCM partners who meet online several times a year to hear updates from the Church and to pray.

One of PCI's key areas of involvement in Myanmar has been in theological education. PCM run Tahan Theological College (TTC), which teaches undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in theology and ministry, along with degrees in English. The college currently has over 100 students studying in person as well as over 400 students studying Theology in Regional Dialects by distance. In 2024, PCI contributed funds to support TTC in installing solar panels. These had become vital due to regular blackouts from government power being cut. The solar panels are now the main source of power for light, water pumps and office equipment.

The majority of PCM churches are found in the Chin State, in western Myanmar, one of the hot spots of conflict. Along with frequent violent events, there are also severe

TTC staff





shortages of food, medicine and electronic supplies as the authorities have restricted their entry into the region in an effort to weaken resistance forces. Forced conscription is bringing fear into citizens' lives as many young men and women have been arrested to make them join the army. Many of the students at TTC rarely leave the campus, for fear that they may be arrested.

The economic situation in Myanmar is a story of rising inflation, a lack of jobs and weakening of the local currency, the kyat. Health care and education systems have largely collapsed in the absence of a functioning government.

On top of this trouble, on 28 March 2025, an earthquake struck central Myanmar, killing over 5,000 people and damaging many buildings. Although the earthquake damaged PCM property in Mandalay, the Church has been focusing on reaching out to those who most need it, providing basic necessities, such as water and toiletries, as well as providing a place for people to shelter. In the long term, the Church plans to demolish and rebuild some unsafe buildings. Much building work has been completed, but regular aftershocks have both hampered progress and made it more critical for the work to be completed.

This only scratches the surface of both the extent of the difficulty in the country and the depth of the persistence of the Church working in the heart of it. The Church is a living demonstration of Romans 12:12: "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." A recent report from the Church that consisted of 11 pages highlighting the struggles also contained these words, "Yet, amidst this darkness, the Church continues to stand as a place of hope. PCM congregations gather for worship and prayer, holding onto faith even when outward circumstances seem hopeless."

In a recent Zoom call with PCM personnel and partners, Rev Pek said, "We have been blessed with so many challenges." In the midst of the challenges, the Church is not sitting still. It is doing what it can, with support from the international community.

"In the face of these realities, PCM has been reflecting deeply on its role as a Church. We believe that the gospel



TTC gate

calls us to be peacemakers, but we feel helpless when we see the magnitude of conflict and suffering. No Church in Myanmar has yet been able to take significant peace initiatives, but PCM recognises that this calling is crucial. We pray and long for the courage and wisdom to move forward, and we humbly ask our partners to encourage and support us as we discern how we might take steps toward peacebuilding."

Please pray:

- For peace and reconciliation in Chin State and across Myanmar.
- For protection of young people from forced conscription and trauma.
- For relief from economic hardship and the lifting of blockades.
- For children's education programmes run by the Church and community.
- For healthcare support in rural areas, which remains very challenging.
- For strength and courage for the Church to take peace initiatives, even when the task seems overwhelming.
- For God's sustaining grace for all PCM members as they continue to serve in faith and hope.

Alive and active faith

Ben Day

Kilbride Presbyterian Church



It has been a great encouragement to see young people serve the Lord at home and abroad...

One of the great joys of my job is being able to see young people's faith in Christ grow and take root in their lives. You may have seen the encouraging reports of the Bible Society earlier this year, dubbed 'The Quiet Revival', which revealed that church decline in the UK has stopped and attendance has begun to noticeably increase in younger generations. Is the tide turning?

Over the summer I had the tremendous privilege of being involved with several exciting projects among younger people, including our own holiday Bible club, a trip to Summer Madness and a mission team to Hungary. It has been a great encouragement to see young people serve the Lord at home and abroad, seeking to impact communities for the sake of the gospel. Time and time again, I have seen people (often young people) step out of their comfort zone to serve God and share the good news of Jesus.

Part of my summer was given to assist with Spark Newtownabbey, specifically the Ballyclare area team. For a week in August each year, young people come together from across Newtownabbey to serve their local communities. There are four teams to serve in: community, sports, kids and gardening.

It is a busy week as we seek to serve the Ballyclare



community through painting murals around town, cleaning up community spaces, organising tea dances, running a holiday Bible club, playing sports with young people and doing the gardening for those who need a hand.

There are countless stories of how the good news of Jesus was received in the communities where we served. There were teenagers praying with complete strangers in their gardens and heartfelt

conversations about faith on the side of a football pitch. It was an encouraging reminder that God is moving in our towns and villages. The faith of young people is alive and active. Jesus is doing what he always has done.

Paul's words to the church in Ephesus have cropped up throughout the summer and I share them as a reminder that ultimately it is not about us or our efforts. It has and always will be Christ that changes lives and is at work. He chooses to work through us. We must simply let him.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Ephesians 3:20–21).



Please pray:

- For all the young people who participated in Spark this summer. That their faith would continue to grow and deepen.
- For the work at Kilbride, that it would always be done by complete faith and dependence upon Jesus.
- For seeking hearts in the Ballyclare area, that Jesus would reveal himself to them and we, his church, will be obedient to show and tell them of him.
- For Csaba and Ilona Veres and the work they are doing in Bodaszolo, Hungary, specifically among the Roma community.



Six Road sends

Paula Burrows

Ballygrainey Presbyterian Church



*With our congregation spread across these routes,
pastoral care reaches into homes, nursing homes
and hospitals.*

At Ballygrainey, we have so much to give thanks to the Lord for. His goodness and enduring love are so evident in the life of our church and community. During our recent week of prayer, we held a prayer walk around the area surrounding our church – and I would love to take you on that wee walk now with no need to leave your seat.

Let's start at the car park and head left to the roundabout, known locally as the Six Road Ends. Our minister has renamed it 'The Six Road Sends', reminding us that God's people are sent out in all directions to live as his witnesses wherever they are placed. With our congregation spread across these routes, pastoral care reaches into homes, nursing homes and hospitals. It is such a privilege to walk alongside people in both the joys and sorrows of life.

Turning left at the roundabout, we pass an Orange Hall and several nearby businesses. We seek to be good neighbours – supporting, encouraging and praying for those who work there, asking that they flourish and come to know the love of Christ.

First turn on the left again, we pass fields reminding us of our local farming community who we want to serve and connect with. Then there is our own church field – a true blessing to our church family that hosts church family picnics, youth events and our annual fun day, providing opportunities for fellowship and outreach. Our Konnect Kids, Konnect Youth, holiday Bible club and Young Life groups have enjoyed many fun evenings there.

A right turn leads back to our halls – busy spaces filled with life throughout the week. On Sundays, our children gather for Lighthouse Club (Sunday school). During the week, many activities take place here. One of them is our toddler group, Tweenies, who recently celebrated 25 years of ministry with a lovely reunion. The hall also hosts sports like pickleball, badminton and bowls, which attract people from the wider community, helping us build relationships.

Our Konnect Kids club has welcomed several new children following the summer holiday Bible club. Young Life continues to reach young people, many with little or no church background. It has been great to see some come



to faith and join us on Sundays – praise God!

Just beyond the halls is our kitchen – a hub of hospitality. Whether after Sunday service, during a funeral tea, or following a meeting, those who serve in the kitchen do so with Christ-like hearts. Nearby, our welcome area hosts prayer evenings, ladies' meetings, our new 'Brewed at Ballygrainey' drop-in afternoons, plus many other activities, creating space for more connection and care.

Then we have our main church sanctuary – we thank God for the freedom to listen and respond to the faithful preaching of his Word, sing his praises and glorify his holy name. We are especially thankful for the many new faces joining us recently. It is our prayer that everyone who walks through our doors will feel God's love through the warmth and welcome of his people, and that together we will grow closer to him.

Please pray:

- Thank God for the church family of Ballygrainey, for the minister who faithfully preaches God's Word and for the elders and committee members who desire God's will to be done in his church in Ballygrainey.
- For Paula as she helps in the various ministries in the congregation.
- For the women's ministry as the church navigates how it can ensure that all its girls and ladies are encouraged "to live for Jesus and make disciples".

Encouragements

Rev Andrew Gill

St Andrew's, Blackrock and Bray Presbyterian Churches



...it was a wonderful opportunity to build relationships within our congregation and to help newer people feel at home.

It has been an encouraging season in the congregations of St Andrew's, Blackrock and Bray.

One of the recent highlights was the baptism of three new believers, which God has brought to our church. The service began in the meeting house before we walked together down to the Blackrock seafront. There, one individual from Bray and a married couple originally from China professed their faith in Christ and were baptised in the Irish Sea. It was a significant moment, not only for those who were baptised, but for the whole congregation, as we witnessed God's grace in transforming lives. Then afterwards, we had another picture of the newness in Christ, as we gathered back at the church for tea and cake in our newly renovated kitchen.

Another highlight in our church life together was our family sports day during the summer. It was great to see so many people of all ages from our church come together outside of our Sunday gatherings, including some people there for the first time. We had all the traditional sports day events, like sack races, relays, and egg-and-spoon contests, and there was croquet on hand for those who preferred something more relaxed. We ended with a barbecue and plenty of shared food. Beyond the games and food, it was a wonderful opportunity to build relationships within our congregation and to help newer people feel at home.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the possibility



of appointing a community outreach worker in Bray. Our vision is that this role will enable us to build deeper connections with people in Bray, especially families and individuals who are not yet part of church life. The hope is that an outreach worker will help us develop new initiatives, grow our links with the local school, and establish an additional gathering alongside our Sunday service.

Recruitment is now underway, and we are praying that God will provide the right person for this exciting and vital role. As a small and ageing congregation, we know that filling this role is crucial if we are to reach our potential and ensure the gospel continues to be shared in Bray for generations to come.



Please pray:

- Give thanks to God for the way he is using the church to build his kingdom.
- For the elders of both congregations as they develop a mission strategy over the next few months.
- For the recruitment of a community outreach worker for Bray, that God would call the right person to this work, and that through their ministry, new life and lasting fruit would be seen in the congregation and community.

Being present

Rev Jonny Newell
RAF chaplain



*Military personnel often seek out a chaplain
in the face of extreme crisis, emergency
or relational instability.*

Many parallels exist between the responsibilities of military chaplains and civilian clergy. However, the challenges and opportunities of military life result in distinct differences within a chaplain's ministry. The British military has a very long-established tradition of providing chaplaincy services to those deployed on operations and, as part of that tradition, I was recently deployed on OP KIPION, based at Al Udeid (a US Air Force base in Qatar) but supporting the broader Middle East.



All three British armed forces have a chaplaincy profession that encompasses members from the various Christian denominations as well as the other faiths. The role of British military chaplains has long been twofold, firstly to minister to the spiritual needs of those who seek it, but just as importantly, to offer wider welfare support to all. When deployed on operations, both of these functions contribute significantly to the operational effectiveness of the military personnel conducting the operation.

As military chaplains, we are mandated to work with service personnel to support the moral component of air power and to encourage what is known as 'spiritual resilience'. Our ability to reflect on the nature and purpose of our lives is therefore part of a process by which we can develop the ability to withstand, recover and grow when facing adversity. To help people achieve this we need to develop that relationship face to face. Military chaplaincy is an incarnational ministry; we have to get to know the person we are deployed with and gain their trust so that we can talk honestly. We can only do this effectively by visiting the deployed personnel, being present and sharing their lived experiences.

In times of combat, chaplains must retain the mental fortitude to be a non-anxious presence in the face of fear among the ranks. Military personnel often seek out a chaplain in the face of extreme crisis, emergency or relational instability. Most importantly, chaplains must

practise confidentiality in their counselling. This long-standing policy provides service members with a safe and trusted space to work through any concern. Our role, therefore, allows us to act as an advocate for deployed personnel.

We should always be able to clearly articulate the commander's intent and how we as chaplains contribute to 'the mission'. As a deployed chaplain, we often offer a unique perspective on operations – that sense of belonging to

something larger than one's self. This can be religious, but not necessarily so. The demands of life on deployment are very different. Whilst recognising the importance of the individual, everyone is part of the same team and, as such, a greater emphasis is placed on living and working with others. Personal resilience within the wider spectrum of deployed operations calls for a well-founded worldview, if moral and spiritual scars are to be avoided. Relationship dynamics on deployments can be both intense and emotionally charged, owing to both the operational tempo and the proximity of service personnel to one another. The chaplain is often, unwittingly, and with little notice, drawn into complex human situations. Called upon to support the most senior commanders – to speak truth to power, whilst also walking alongside the most junior serviceperson into their fear of the unknown on their first deployment.

We require our personnel to operate on a sliding scale of sacrifice, which may involve anything from a minor inconvenience to giving one's life for king and country. Often it is the deployed chaplain who carries that weight and helps lessen the burden.

Please pray:

- For those on operations, including chaplains, both at home and overseas.
- For families left at home as loved ones are deployed for four to six months at a time.

Experiencing the *warm heart of Africa*



Moderator, **Dr Trevor Gribben**, reports on his recent moderatorial visit to Malawi.

Most years, PCI's Moderators have the privilege of travelling to represent PCI on a visit to one of our overseas partner Churches. Earlier this year, I was especially delighted to find out that I had been invited to visit the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in Malawi. The reason for my particular delight was that I had been to Malawi before, when my former congregation in Whiteabbey entered into a missional partnership with Mulanje Mission in the southern Blantyre Synod.

That first visit in 2004 to the 'warm heart of Africa' made a lasting impact on me, both on my understanding of global mission and on me personally. Malawi is a special place, warm not just because of the southern hemisphere sun but even more so because of the warmth of the Malawian people.

I was accompanied on this year's visit by Rev David McCullagh, minister of Annalong Presbyterian Church and convener of PCI's Global Mission Partnership panel.

We arrived in the capital Lilongwe on 14 August and received an amazing welcome from some senior representatives of the Lilongwe Presbytery, accompanied by a choir made up of congregation members of the Women's Guild – the Umanyano Choir – who sang joyful songs of welcome.

At the 150th anniversary...people of all tribes and political parties were sharing together in the joyful celebration.

The invitation to visit Malawi had come from the Livingstonia Synod of CCAP in the north of Malawi, a part of the country I had been to before, and was to join with our partners in celebrating the 150th anniversary of the synod. So, we travelled the 220 miles north to Mzuzu, where the two days of celebration were to take place. While my visit was planned over a period of time, I only found out a few weeks before leaving to travel to Malawi that the Synod of Livingstonia had decided to do our Church the great honour of inviting me, as Moderator, to preach at the opening of the celebration. That was a real privilege and on behalf of PCI, I was very thankful for the opportunity to share God's Word with so many brothers and sisters in Christ at what was a special time of celebration for the synod and CCAP.



**It was very humbling to witness
how highly CCAP values its
partnership with PCI...**

And what a day of celebration it was! We started off at the synod offices just after 7am on that warm Saturday morning and paraded behind the Malawi Prison Officers Band through the streets of Mzuzu, with more and more people joining us during the procession, which lasted one hour and 20 minutes. When we arrived at the Mzuzu Football Stadium, the venue for the two-day celebration, there were thousands of people streaming behind us in this very spectacular march of witness.

The theme of the two days of 150th anniversary celebration was 'Tell the people to move forward', taken from the book of Exodus. On that first day, I preached on a passage from Joshua about moving forward with the Lord in the journey of faith, as we travel together with our brothers and sisters in the Synod of Livingstonia.

The service lasted almost six hours, with over 10 choirs taking part, along with groups of Boys' and Girls' Brigade members.

On the Sunday, the service was even bigger and longer, with many senior politicians speaking and more joyful singing and celebration. That day I was able to bring greetings on behalf of PCI. It was particularly special to meet up at the celebrations with Rev Jim and Ruth Campbell, and Una Brownlee, all former global mission workers of our Church in Malawi. It was also humbling to hear from many Malawians of the amazing service given to the Lord and his Church in Malawi by Jim and Ruth and by Una and her late husband Donald. For them, and the 90+ PCI personnel who have served in the Livingstonia Synod, the phrase 'well done good and faithful servants' is apt.

The growth in the church in Malawi has been amazing. When the explorer David Livingstone came to the shores of Lake Nyasa in the mid-19th century, there was not one Christian to be found. Instead, all he found were

warring tribes and a very active slave trade. At the 150th anniversary of the Livingstonia Synod, people of all tribes and political parties were sharing together in the joyful celebration. They were just a small fraction of the millions of Christians now in Malawi. Here was living proof of the power of God to transform a nation through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the growth of the Church continuing apace, especially among the younger generation.

While in Mzuzu, I had opportunity to spend some extended time with the leadership of the Livingstonia Synod, and it was especially good to meet again with the General Secretary, Rev William Tempo, who had been with us in Belfast at our General Assembly this year. I was also able to visit with the Health and Sunday School departments at the synod offices.

Dr Gribben preaching at the CCAP 150th anniversary celebrations



Visiting Ekwendeni Mission Hospital



Two of the most encouraging and moving visits I was able to do while in the north of the country, was a visit to the rural congregation of Msongwe and to Ekwendeni Mission Hospital, both just outside Mzuzu.

Msongwe is a growing and thriving congregation, full of young people and young adults. It has been supported over the years by Trinity congregation, Ballymoney and it was encouraging to see the fruit of that congregation-to-congregation partnership. It was also wonderful to see the pulpit, Communion table and baptism font of our former Oldpark congregation continuing to be used to declare the means of grace, the same way they had been used down the decades in north Belfast.

Ekwendeni Mission Hospital is part of CCAP's Ekwendeni Mission, which involves a church school, and a new university campus. It was humbling to tour the hospital with the medical director and other senior staff and see the amazing work going on in serving a population of over 150,000 people with very limited and often ageing equipment and facilities. What moved me deeply was the positive attitude and the strong Christian servant hearts of the staff I met with. The young medical director qualified from one of the best medical schools in the country and has come back to his community to serve the people and his Lord – he is only 28 years old.

...it truly was a home from home – a place where I had the joy to be with family in the warm heart of Africa.



Mzuzu procession



During my year as Moderator, I will be requesting that any offerings at special services or other donations will go to support Ekwendeni Mission Hospital.

During the remainder of my stay in Malawi, I was able to spend time with several of PCI's partners in mission – visiting with the staff of Scripture Union, the Bible Society and the Student Christian Organisation. I also met up briefly, 'literally on the road', with Revs Ian and Stephen McNie and four young people from Muckamore congregation on their way to work for a couple of weeks at Msongwe congregation, where I had previously visited. As well as that, I had an opportunity to spend some time with the Moderator and General Secretary of the CCAP General Assembly in Lilongwe and, on a final day in Blantyre, to visit the leadership of the Blantyre Synod and spend a very pleasant final evening with Volker and JinHyeog Glissmann, PCI's global mission workers in Malawi.

All in all, it was a fairly packed couple of weeks, but an amazingly privileged experience. It was very humbling to witness how highly CCAP values its partnership with PCI, both in past days and also today. However, it was even more humbling to witness the joyful and vibrant faith of so many brothers and sisters in Christ who I had the privilege to meet with all too briefly. Malawi might not have all the creature comforts we have gotten used to in Ireland, but for me, it truly was a home from home – a place where I had the joy to be with family in the warm heart of Africa.



Volker and JinHyeog Glissmann

Volker is involved in a special form of theological education called Theological Education by Extension (TEE), which brings theological, biblical and practical leadership training to people right where they live and worship.

His main role is in the Theological Education by Extension College (TEEC), where he is working to develop new Bachelor in Theology programmes as well as updating some older courses. He also provides consultancy to Theological Education by Extension in Malawi (TEEM), where he was formerly director, and to TEE throughout southern Africa.

JinHyeog works as a full-time music teacher at a primary school in Blantyre.



united
appeal
FOR
mission

I was in prison & you visited me

Pip Florit shares how members of Saintfield Road Presbyterian Church are stepping out of their comfort zones to volunteer in the local prison.

The early church was known for its care of prisoners, with the first Christians living out the biblical mandate to remember and visit those in prison. First century prisons in the Roman Empire were usually dark and dirty and prisoners would have to rely on family or well-wishers for basic needs, including food. Christians sometimes bribed the guards to be allowed in with food, as well as advocating for humane treatment, which was often lacking.

Across the island of Ireland, around 7,600 people are incarcerated, some for a few months, some for many years. While prisons in Ireland may be far removed from those in biblical times, they remain places where the church has the opportunity to bring “release from darkness for the prisoners” (Isaiah 61:1).

Prisons are designed to be hidden away from society and while most of us are unlikely to ever set foot in one, members of one south Belfast church have intentionally sought to go behind the walls. Saintfield Road Presbyterian Church (SRPC) is a five-minute drive away from Hydebank Wood Secure College and Women’s Prison. Since 2022, visiting the prison has grown into a key part of SRPC’s outreach.

Hydebank Wood is Northern Ireland’s only women’s prison and young offenders’ centre. It is mandated to house every female, and any male aged between 18 and 21 in Northern Ireland who is remanded in custody. It has a current population of around 170, with the capacity for 300, and runs on an ethos of changing minds and changing lives, partnering with Belfast Met to provide its residents with learning opportunities that prepare

them for a different life when they are released. This may include anything from basic literacy to qualifications in barbering, mechanics and catering. It is the first prison in Northern Ireland to receive top marks in inspection reports and it has a state-of-the-art gym, runs regular fundraising efforts for nominated charities and is even a farm with award winning sheep!

SRPC’s link with Hydebank Wood started when the governor was invited to take part in a church service, to share what happens at Hydebank. He invited church members to join the prison’s choir for a Christmas concert. Since then, the partnership has grown, with a number of church members helping with learning support, running craft sessions and befriending women who are living in an open prison setting, close to release. Church members have even been clients for student barbers!

One day a week, two men from SRPC go in, one to talk to the young men, the other to assist some of the women. They spend time helping them with mathematics or English, preparing them for driving theory tests or simply chatting to them about their lives – what it’s like to be in prison or their hopes for when they are released. There is often a waiting list of individuals who want to engage with the volunteers.

There is also a group of around seven women who spend one evening a week in prison with some of the women, chatting and doing crafts. One of these

volunteers describes it as emotionally draining and far out of her comfort zone, but also the highlight of her week. Bonds of friendship have formed over time, and SRPC volunteers are in the privileged position of having women regularly sharing about their lives – before and during their time in custody – including the pain of having been separated from family. Yet there are also many shared moments of joy and laughter.

One of the volunteers talked about his motivation, saying, “The Bible talks a lot about social justice and about people living on the margins. I belong to a well-off suburban church and had little contact with people who weren’t like me. When the opportunity came to volunteer, I felt that it was a chance to challenge my own perceptions. I hoped that by spending a few hours a week with these young lads that I could bring a little bit of the presence of Jesus to that place.”

For this volunteer, it has opened his eyes to a world of which he knew very little. “It has been hard at times to listen to the boys’ stories. One of the things I find most upsetting is when they tell me about their children. Often, they are only 20 years old but have two or more children who only see their dad on occasional prison visits. It is also difficult when, often even just a few months after release, they find themselves back in prison. It is a huge challenge to know how to break this cycle of reoffending.”

The women and young men in Hydebank have committed crimes, some of which are serious. Yet most have also experienced significant trauma, with 75% of the women in

Across the island of Ireland, around 7,600 people are incarcerated...

Hydebank having reported being victims of domestic abuse (Criminal Justice Inspection NI, 2019). In many cases, the abuse leads to an offence. Time in custody can be a relief and a release – from abuse, homelessness and drug addiction. SRPC volunteers often find residents who are preparing for release are fearful about returning to abusive relationships and/or living on the streets. And with inadequate support services available, these fears are sadly frequently realised, and often lead to patterns of reoffending.

When Psalm 146:7 says “The Lord sets the prisoners free”, maybe this doesn’t only mean physical freedom, but freedom from this cycle. God is using volunteers, like those from SRPC, to open doors to new opportunities. Perhaps he is using them to break the chains of poverty, poor mental health and hopelessness, through education and empowerment.

Richard Taylor OBE, the prison governor, is a key link in the relationship. He has participated in services at SRPC and says, “Our partnership with Saintfield Road Presbyterian Church has had a significant impact on those who live and work at Hydebank Wood. Young men and women, many of whom are marginalised within our communities, have been able to take part in the initiatives that have taken place and, in many instances, have felt for the first time that their input has been valued. I, along with members of our senior team, have been welcomed into the church and we have attended services along with some of our prisoners and been welcomed by the congregation. The church has, through its congregation, mentored a number of young men and women through education programmes, and this plays an important role in establishing educational qualifications in essential skills. I look forward to building on this in the months and years to come.”

You may not be able to volunteer in a prison, but your prayers are valued – for volunteers, residents and staff alike. “Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners” (Hebrews 13:3).

Pip Florit is PCI’s mission support officer.



Visits Hall



Typical dining area



The communal area in the Learning and Skills Centre and careers board

...most have also experienced significant trauma, with 75% of the women...having reported being victims of domestic abuse...

Get involved

PCI supports several chaplains working in prisons. If you or your congregation would have an interest in finding out more about how to get involved in assisting in a local prison or supporting the ministry of one of the chaplains, please get in touch with the Mission Department via: mission@presbyterianireland.org



Lament & eco-fatalism

Colin Neill reports on the recent PCI conference 'God's World: Our responsibility?'

On the last Saturday of September 2025, around 200 Irish Presbyterians gathered at Assembly Buildings for a conference on creation, the event being subtly titled: 'God's World: Our responsibility?'

Close readers will notice where the nuance resides in the title: it's in the question mark. Is creation responsibility something that all followers of Jesus need to take personal ownership of? Or should we regard it as a secondary issue, as a kind of bolt-on that only exercises those who get particularly exercised by all things bright and beautiful and – as a consequence – by all things environmental and ecological?

For me, creation is a matter that has gotten lost in the competition of issues to engage with. I'm convinced I see the weather changing: I've been a regular runner for over 30 years, and there are very few days each winter now, when ice and frost prevent me from heading out, yet runs in torrential rain and strong wind seem ever more common

through the year. New A to Zs of storms with names roll around with increasing frequency.

And yet, there are so many other things to be concerned about. The conflicts in both Gaza and Ukraine, as well as the under-reported suffering in Sudan. The furious anger of the culture wars that makes even a news junkie like me, at times, want to do the current affairs equivalent of pulling a duvet over my head. Then there is the burden I have to pray regularly for the persecuted church. Amidst all this, I'm not sure I have the mental capacity for anything else.

From a lifestyle perspective, I can claim no major shifts in lifestyle. I recycle diligently, but have very few meat-free days, eat copious amounts of dairy products, and have neither heat

pumps in the ground, solar panels on my roof nor an EV in my driveway. I can argue – to a point – that the affordability and early-stage nature of some innovations informs my choices, but apathy is also a factor.

If I'm honest, part of this may be down to a level of eco-defeatism. I'm engaged up to a point, but I also realise I'm one of over 8.1 billion people on this planet, and doubt I can make a difference. Whilst I squish up a plastic milk container and put it in my green bin, another coal-fired power station opens in India, or another airport in China. Can I really shift this dial?

And, in a world where church numbers are dwindling, and the size of the task – missionally – is so large before God's people, is this something that should be among my foremost concerns? Does my discipleship have the bandwidth, within the relationships I need to invest in, and the prayers I need to pray, to be concerned with the planet as well? And is this something that stirs God? Isn't he more exercised with my readiness to share my faith

I was personally left with no doubt that creation matters deeply to God and ought to matter to me.



GOD'S WORLD: *Our responsibility?*

to colleagues, with matters of personal morality and my readiness to forgive?

Those were among the questions in my mind as I went to the creation conference, an event that provided an opportunity to, as the Moderator, Dr Trevor Gribben, observed in his welcoming remarks, to be anchored in the truth of what Scripture has to say about this subject.

And by the end of the day, I was personally left with no doubt that creation matters deeply to God and ought to matter to me. That response on my part wasn't due to any 'guilt trip' that was laid upon attendees, or of any 'politically slanted' teaching on climate change, but rather was the result of the clear unpacking of God's Word.

The keynote speaker for the day was Belfast-born and Presbyterian-raised Chris Wright, an internationally renowned Old Testament scholar, author and missiologist. In a way that was both accessible and logical, Dr Wright taught on the goodness, the glory, the gift, and the goal of creation. The teaching reached not just my head

I...must acknowledge my eco-fatalism.

but also my heart and conscience as well. As I left the event, three things had struck me in particular.

The first was a seminar for those experiencing 'eco-anxiety', enabling them to sit with God in their despair, through a biblical framework of lament. I can't claim eco-anxiety as a real feeling, but must acknowledge my eco-fatalism. Writing my own psalm of lament about the ongoing destruction of our planet, forced me to acknowledge the extent of my passion about this subject. I could lament to a point, but I want to lament more, and hope God seeds deeper concern for our planet within me.

The second thing is that the day ended with the conference being led in both a song of lament for the damage humanity has done to creation, and a collective prayer of confession for the impact of our consumption and actions on God's good gift to us. In the matter

of emissions, extraction and pollution, none of us are guiltless. Jesus' question 'Who is your neighbour?', with this in mind, forces me to acknowledge that my neighbour is – for example – the farmer in Africa I'll never meet or know, who suffers drought and ever diminishing crops as a result of my 'first world' lifestyle. This is a matter of grave injustice, and I must see it as such.

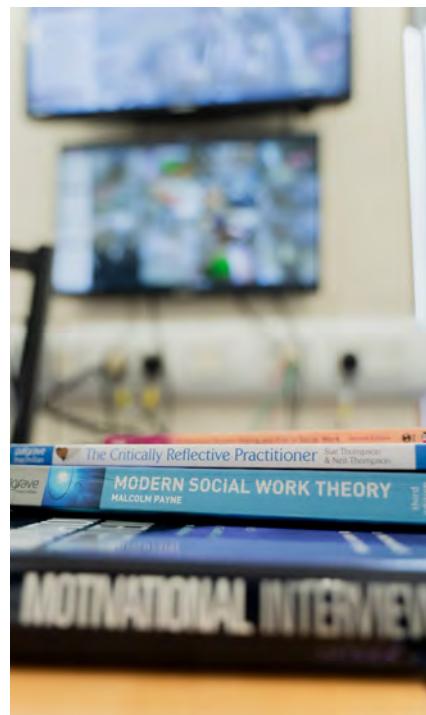
And the final thing that struck me afresh, is the matter of materialism. Why – when I verbalise a living hope in Jesus Christ, and call him Saviour and King – is my life not so much simpler, even austere in ways? And those words, typed on a 2025 MacBook, with who knows what injustice lying in its supply chain...

God's world, I am challenged to admit afresh, is a gift given to all of us, with myriad dimensions to my call to live responsibly within it.

Colin Neill is a PCI accredited preacher and a member of Craigavon Presbyterian Church.



Sarah Stewart and Ashlene Wallace



Photos: Josh Preece

Restoration & hope



Sarah Stewart highlights student social work placements in PCI's Thompson House, a residential service aiming to bring restoration and healing to men who have served a custodial sentence.

Social work is a practice-based profession and as part of the delivery of the degree in Social Work in Northern Ireland, students undertake two periods of practice learning, also known as 'placement'. Thompson House is recognised as a practice learning provider and as such we offer practice learning opportunities for social work students.

Qualified social work staff who have undertaken a specific qualification in social work education and training are known as practice teachers. PCI's Council for Social Witness has a number of practice teachers who are responsible for the management of student placements here in Thompson House. As practice teachers we not only supervise and assess a student against specific learning requirements but we also support students to

connect theory to practice and nurture professional curiosity.

Jesus' teaching ministry exemplifies core principles of educational learning still respected today: connecting new knowledge to a learners' prior experience and engaging learners actively through questions and dialogue. Jesus' pedagogical approach aligns deeply with modern educational theories such as constructivism, experiential learning and self-determination, modelling dynamic character development.

A social work placement within Thompson House is a powerful and

Social work students within Thompson House face difficult but meaningful challenges.

catalytic experience. Students typically work alongside men who have served a custodial sentence, continue to be supervised on licence and have been placed in approved accommodation for risk management purposes. Working together with safeguarding, addictions and mental health services, the goal of Thompson House is to support rehabilitation, reduce reoffending and promote social inclusion. We are committed to restorative practice, aiming for accountability and healing. We recognise justice as not only accountable and fair but also compassionate. We acknowledge that many people who offend have themselves been victims of trauma, and that healing those wounds can be key to breaking cycles of harm. Students are often working at the edges of society, helping people take a step back from harmful behaviours.

Jesus predominantly used storytelling as a key educational method to convey spiritual truths in an emotionally engaging way. Through simple, relatable stories drawn from everyday life, Jesus captured attention and provoked reflection, often building on prior knowledge and experience. This scaffolding still remains fundamental to effective learning. As one student affirms: “Thompson House provided me with the opportunity to incorporate my learning in a practical way, that highlighted to me what a privilege it is to work within the complexities of others’ lives.”

We support emerging social work practice that is leading efforts to implement trauma-informed practices that recognise the deep-rooted causes of offending. Trauma (especially early and/or repeated trauma) can shape a person’s behaviour, relationships and ability to cope. Social work and criminal justice can be a powerful intersection for shaping change. Our student social workers are engaging with stories involving ethical dilemmas, systemic bias, and/or rehabilitative challenges. We avoid re-traumatising the users of our service by being sensitive to their experiences and triggers. We depend on core principles, such as choice, collaboration, resilience and empowerment. We ask our students to form assessments using both a social work lens and a criminal justice position. This fosters empathy, problem solving and critical thinking. One student commented: “This allowed me to tease out my value base and practise in a person-centred way with the service user at the forefront of every decision I made.”

Social work students in Thompson House will learn to assess and manage risk – risks posed to the wider public or the individual themselves. This demands accountability and confidence. It is anticipated that our students will develop strong communication and advocacy skills; gaining insight into how social work intersects with law and public protection. There is also a strong emphasis on working across sectors (mental health, housing, education and employment) to address the multifaceted needs of justice-involved individuals holistically.

Jesus allowed his disciples to wrestle with doubts, collaborate and hypothesize. Our students research and debate complex issues. This develops their ability to articulate arguments, consider different viewpoints, and stay grounded in ethics. Engagement through dialogue and questioning is not a new consideration. Jesus often employed questions that promoted critical thinking: “Who do people say that I am?” (Mark 8:27). This Socratic technique still encourages learners to actively process information, evaluate perspectives, and articulate understanding. Reflective practice enables students to examine their own biases, values and emotional responses to difficult themes.

Social work students within Thompson House face difficult but meaningful challenges. Students are

expected to support and advocate for our service users while also monitoring and applying court directives. Balancing care with control is about promoting autonomy while also encouraging compliance with restrictive processes. This can be difficult to navigate and is both ethically and emotionally complex. Some service users may distrust authority or be reluctant to engage, especially if they’ve had negative experiences with professional bodies before. Working with resistance while building relationship takes patience and perseverance.

Many, if not all, of our service users deal with complex needs and intersecting issues (mental health issues, substance misuse, addiction, trauma, housing instability). Redefining resilience can often feel like fighting an uphill battle. There can also be stigma and biases both within the system and the wider public about people who have offended. Advocating for someone’s ability to change can meet resistance.

Despite these challenges, many social work students find the experience deeply profound. The Emmaus Road encounter (Luke 24:13–43) is a thoughtful example emphasising learning as a communal process and continues to offer enduring insights to us as educators; inspiring growth, fostering critical thinking, and nurturing moral integrity.

Sarah Stewart has worked as a social worker in Thompson House for the past 16 years and has been involved in student learning for eight years.

We are committed to restorative practice, aiming for accountability and healing.



Becoming a practice teacher

Over the past year I have been undertaking training to become a qualified practice teacher. This was a natural career progression, having spent the previous five years as an onsite supervisor, providing daily support to students on placement in Thompson House.

As I begin this new chapter as a practice teacher, I look forward to shaping the future generation of social workers, ensuring their practice meets professional standards, underpinned by the values and ethical principles required for safe, accountable and compassionate social work.

Ashlene Wallace, practice teacher



The Speak Life Podcast

Speak Life
PODCAST



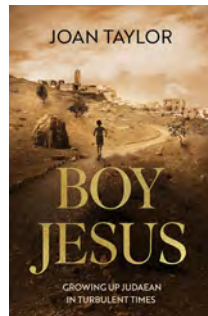
You may already know that Glen Scrivener is worth your attention. Perhaps because of his wonderful devotional resources like 'Reading Between the Lines', or his celebrated book *The Air We Breathe*, highlighting how Christianity underpins today's core cultural values. Or even because he discerningly chose to marry an Ulsterwoman, popular Christian author Emma.

Scrivener is an Australian who became a Church of England minister and evangelist, directing the ministry Speak Life. His deep insight and gospel focus infuses the Speak Life Podcast which, with Nate Morgan Locke and a rich array of guests, seeks to bring a Christ-centred response to contemporary issues, "seeing all things through the lens of Jesus".

Scrivener has a sharp ability to respond quickly and insightfully to current issues, earthing the conversation in the gospel. Recent episodes have examined free speech, the murder of Charlie Kirk and the response of many agnostics and atheists to that terrible event by turning to the Bible and church. Other topics this year included the Netflix series *Adolescence*, the conversion of prominent atheists and 'Six lies we're being fed right now'.

For a Christian seeking apologetic tools to respond to today's cultural issues in a Christ-centred way, or for a thoughtful seeker who may be drawn to the '321' course, this podcast highlights the power of words, and uses them to... Speak Life.

GT



Boy Jesus: Growing up Judean in turbulent times

Joan Taylor

SPCK PUBLISHING

£24.99



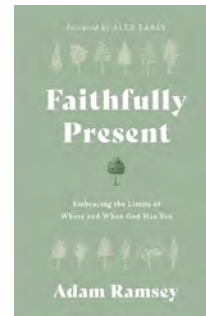
Firstly, let me reassure readers that you do not need to be a fan of historical investigative narratives to enjoy this book.

From the outset, you are taken on a journey of discovery that brings the story of Jesus' childhood to life as we are encouraged to start thinking about the ways by which Jesus' childhood experiences will have influenced his attitudes as an adult.

In an interview about her approach and research journey for the book, Taylor discusses how she became aware very early in life about some of the traumatic experiences and terrible things that had occurred to her mother, who grew up during Nazi occupation of Denmark. As a result, some of the focus of this book is what Jesus would have had to deal with, and the decisions he had to make as an adult, in the difficult and dangerous times he was born into, which, I must confess, I hadn't realised the extent of.

However, Taylor also gives an insightful proposition that Jesus' family will have played a bigger role in his ministry than what we would imagine reading the gospels. Jesus learnt what it was to be a brother, a son and in relationships based on his own earthly family relationships. These patterns of relating are crucial for us as we begin to form an idea of who we are and how we relate to others as we grow into adulthood. This offered a beautiful insight into how Jesus transferred his familial relationships as he encouraged and came alongside others. A worthwhile read.

CS



Faithfully Present

Adam Ramsey

THE GOOD BOOK COMPANY

£9.99



In 12 short thought-provoking chapters, Adam Ramsey provides an antidote to the hurry culture and the tyranny of the urgent that threatens to rob us of the very thing Jesus promised us: "Life in all its fullness" (John 10:10).

Focusing on two powerful realities – time and space – the author explores how the Scriptures speak to these and argues that: "The more our lives are orientated by the faithful presence of God to us, we too will become attentive and present to one another."

In part one, Ramsey examines how the biblical narrative informs and enables us to live faithfully when life moves slowly, suddenly changes, speeds up or is coming to an end. The second part of the book concentrates on the different spaces we can find ourselves in and is driven by one key thought – being present requires us to accept our limits as creatures while trusting in the sovereignty and awesomeness of God and his eternal promise.

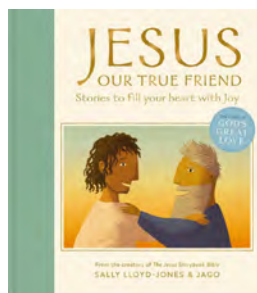
In light of the 'Present' initiative launched by PCI in 2024, which seeks to encourage members and congregations to embrace the call to be present to God as his people; to one another as God's family and as witnesses where he has placed us, this book offers insight, direction and inspiration. There is nothing new about the message in this book, but it serves as a powerful reminder that: "It is when we embrace our God-given limitations, being faithfully present to what God desires to do in us and through us, that we become most truly alive."

AR

REVIEWERS

CS – Clare Smith worships at St Andrew's, Bangor
AR – Rev Albin Rankin is minister of Stormont Presbyterian

RB – Ruth Bromley is PCI's children's development officer
SH – Suzanne Hamilton is an administrative assistant for the *Herald*
RD – Ruth Dalzell belongs to Second Comber Presbyterian Church
GT – Graeme Thompson is PCI's youth development officer



Jesus, Our True Friend

Sally Lloyd-Jones

ZONDERKIDZ

£14.99



Anyone who knows me knows that I love *The Jesus Storybook Bible* – both for children and adults. I have on occasion said though, that there are some stories I am surprised Sally Lloyd-Jones left out.

I understand that not every story can be included, but there were some big ones in the life of Jesus that were excluded from the original. These included stories like the Good Samaritan, Mary and Martha, and the breakfast on the beach after the resurrection.

Then I heard the news that another book was being written, a book to go alongside *The Jesus Storybook Bible* in any child's or family's library. This book contains some of the stories of the life of Jesus that were not in the original.

Jesus, Our True Friend contains seven stories written in Lloyd-Jones' unique style with the same amazing illustrations by Jago. The stories – the wedding in Cana, the Good Samaritan, Mary and Martha, the woman caught sinning, Jesus walking on water, the Prodigal Son and the breakfast on the beach – with an introduction based on John 1, do not disappoint as a follow-up to the original.

This is a beautiful book, in a slightly bigger size, which would be a great addition to a family's devotional collection, a children's ministry resource shelf or to be used to tell stories of Jesus in an all-age service. If I could, I would give it six stars. A definite recommendation!

RB



The King is Still the King

Chris Tomlin

AVAILABLE VIA STREAMING SERVICES



Chris Tomlin has just released his 18th studio album, *The King is Still the King*, which aims to remind us of the biblical truth that God is on his throne. If we believe this, it affects everything else.

When this album was released, Tomlin wrote, "Since I was a kid, I've said it many times – my mission in life is to help give people a voice to worship God."

I love lots of the songs on this album. *Rivers of Joy* is an upbeat song which uses themes of Psalm 46 and other images of water in the Bible to remind us of God's goodness.

Still the King talks about Jesus, the Lamb of God slain for us, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Although this album was only released in September 2025, I know this will be one that I come back to again and again. If you are struggling with things that are happening around you, listen to this album and allow the music to guide you in worship of King Jesus, the Lamb upon the throne.

RD



The Art of Fasting: Becoming a more prayerful person

Matthew Porter

AUTHENTIC

£10.99



In this third book of this series about discipleship habits, following on from *The Art of Giving* and *The Art of Journalling*, Matthew Porter explores the practice of fasting.

A practical and accessible guide, *The Art of Fasting* draws on Porter's own experience, biblical teaching and church history to explore how to draw closer to God through intentional fasting.

He uses five parts of the body – the mouth, heart, hands, knees and feet

– to illustrate its different aspects. It is about learning to master our mouths by restricting intake and welcoming the Holy Spirit to change our hearts. The chapter on hands offers practical ways in how to fast, and is a useful guide for those who are new to the practice.

Porter stresses the importance of having prayer goals when fasting, and says bowing the knee in prayer expresses humility. Turning to feet, Porter says fasting is not just to make us more holy, it is meant to change the world. Pointing out that fasting and missionary impact often go together, he says, "It seems that every time fasting is mentioned positively in the New Testament, it has some kind of missionary consequence."

This book provides food for thought – excuse the pun – for anyone wanting to follow Jesus more closely and develop an attitude of faithful prayer that will bless others, through fasting. As Porter writes: "Fasting energises action, empowers prayers and equips disciples for missionary service... if we can learn once more to be a people who practise *The Art of Fasting*, then the future is gloriously hopeful."

SH



New elders in Ballyholme

Three new elders were recently ordained and installed in Ballyholme Presbyterian Church by Ards Presbytery. The new elders – Sandra Anderson, Howard Bingham and Eileen Pollock – are pictured with Rev Peter Lyle (minister of the County Down church).



Dedication in Tempo

A memorial headstone was recently dedicated at Tempo Presbyterian Church to Sergeant RWF (Roy) Thompson BEM and BAR. Sgt Thompson RUC GC had served in Tempo for 32 years (1955–1987), during which time he had been a long-serving elder and clerk of session of the County Fermanagh church. Pictured are: Norman Armstrong, Jack Dunlop MBE, Ian Young and Thomas Armstrong.



New communicants in First Saintfield

Twenty-five communicants have been welcomed to the Lord's table in First Saintfield. They are pictured with the minister of the County Down congregation, Rev Sam Bostock.



New minister in Portrush

The Presbytery of Coleraine and Limavady has installed Rev David Leach as the new minister of the congregation of Portrush. Rev Mark Donald preached a sermon on the nature of the church and Dr John Coulter preached the charge to the new minister and congregation. Mr Leach was previously professor of Ministry and director of the Institute for Ministry at Union Theological College. He, his wife Julie and their three children, Amy, Andrew and Rosie, received a warm welcome from the congregation in the speeches given at the close of the service. Mr Leach is pictured with the elders of Portrush.



Big Band in Cairncastle

The County Antrim church of Cairncastle Presbyterian recently held a 'Big Band Sunday', when praise was led by some members of Limavady Big Band. Rev A. Watson was on guitar.



Special birthday in Ballycairn

The Session of Ballycairn Presbyterian Church recently helped esteemed member Betty Buchanan celebrate her 107th birthday. Mrs Buchanan, who is full of humour, knowledge and wisdom, sang in the choir for many years and is a true pillar of the Belfast church, attending Sunday worship every week.



100th birthday in Broughshane

James McBurney, who faithfully served the Lord for many years as elder and clerk of session of Second Broughshane, celebrated his 100th birthday recently. The Moderator of the General Assembly, Dr Trevor Gribben brought greetings and congratulations on behalf of the wider Church. Also pictured are the minister emeritus and minister of the County Antrim church, Rev Alistair Beattie and Rev Jeffrey Blue.



Birthday milestone in First Antrim

Dora Hughes, a member of First Antrim, celebrated her 100th birthday recently. She is pictured with Rev Stephen Lockington, minister of the County Antrim church, and PCI Moderator Dr Trevor Gribben.



Anniversary marked in Ballyblack

Ballyblack PW group held an afternoon tea party recently, to celebrate 85 years of women's ministry in the County Down congregation. Pictured are: Elizabeth Warden (outgoing leader), Hester Muckle (Ards Link representative), Councillor Victoria Moore (deputy mayor of Ards and North Down Borough Council), Ellen Hillen (PW panel convener), Grace Weir, Rev Andras Gilicze, Ruby Tennis, Stephanie Lavery (Time Steps Living History) and Sheila Rankin (former leader). Missing from the photo is Yvonne Millar (incoming leader).



Hard work in Douglas

With the new church year now well underway, Douglas Presbyterian Sunday school recently reflected on a busy 2024–2025. It began with a special service, which, with the help of Beth Montgomery from Asia Link, told the County Tyrone congregation of Christian work being undertaken in Mongolia. The boys and girls, with the support of the congregation, raised over £700 for the winter kit appeal for the young people of Mongolia. The year wrapped up with a children's service on Father's Day, focusing on the 23rd Psalm. Prizes were distributed and some members of the Sunday school gave out small tokens to the male members of the church, to acknowledge the important role fathers, grandfathers, uncles and brothers play in shaping the next generation. All enjoyed light refreshments afterwards.



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Belfast BT4 3HH

office@stormontchurch.org

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CROSSWORD

Puzzle no 303

solution on page 50



compiled by Harry Douglas

ACROSS

- 1 Rescue vessel (8)
- 5 Free from harm (4)
- 9 Sightless language (7)
- 10 Early OT book (7)
- 11 Warm again (6)
- 13 Fear (5)
- 16 Gyration (8)
- 17 Breakdown company – initials (2)
- 18 Monsters (5)
- 20 Without scruples (11)
- 23 Precious stone (3)
- 25 Inquisitive person (5,6)
- 28 Roman city of York (4)
- 29 Enclosed space eg garden (6)
- 30 Ancient biblical city (4)

DOWN

- 1 Release (8)
- 2 Torches (11)
- 3 Home of Union College (7)
- 4 End prayer (4)
- 6 Competent (4)
- 7 Rubbed out (6)
- 8 Domesticated (5)
- 12 Not in focus (7)
- 14 Tattered garments (4)
- 15 Breakfast beverage (4,4)
- 18 Japanese city (5)
- 19 Top of a needle (3)
- 21 Possibly (5)
- 22 Cold and white (4)
- 24 Christ plucked us from this (4)
- 26 Slippery creature (3)
- 27 Veggie shell (3)

Drosophila melanogaster

Ruth Sanderson



Fruit flies have been the bane of my life this year. Throughout August and September, they amassed in our kitchen, no matter how often we wiped surfaces, covered the fruit bowl and made sure that the bin was nailed shut; they just kept coming.

Don't get me started on the carnage that was the compost bin – they silently swarmed around like wasps to a jam sandwich, or, in fact, fruit flies to a jam sandwich. Trying to swat them was pointless, the legions just kept appearing.

I'm sure some of you reading this have also had an equally fruit fly filled time. Of course, the fruit fly, or *Drosophila melanogaster*, to give it its proper name, is a teeny tiny creature. Yet while they are common pests in our homes and a huge frustration to those poor humans like myself, they are actually unbelievably important.

Did you know that they are one of the most significant components of modern science? *Drosophila* have been widely used by scientists since 1901. They are key in genetic research because they only have four pairs of chromosomes, yet they share 75% of the same gene mutated diseases as humans, which makes them perfect specimens to understand genetic mechanics.

They were also the first organism sent into space in 1946. If you go to their Wikipedia page, you can even hear the heartbeat of the male fruit fly.

I caught up with a guy this week who studies them. He and his neuroscience partner use microscope technology in their university lab to understand how fruit flies move. They peer through the lens into a hidden world, too small for us to see with the human eye.

He lit up when he talked about them – his perspective is that these teensy beasts are super creatures. In the world of the fruit fly, traversing complex terrains (rotting fruit), acids, sugars, various climatic conditions, predators, chemicals, whilst still thriving, makes them amazing. (It made me think of the film *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*, where a group of children are transformed into the size of insects and have to overcome the dangerous, wild and terrifying land of their back garden.)

The purpose of this lab is to look at the neural pathways in the brain of micro insects, to understand the mechanisms which make their limbs work and their movements so

effective in navigating the world so successfully. They literally look neuron by neuron in the smallest brains imaginable.

I had heard about these guys a while ago and thought – what a waste of time! I couldn't see why all this time and effort was so important. Then they got in touch about a research paper they had been working on, all about a tiny beetle called *Tribolium castaneum*. They had managed to 'read' its neural pathways to understand why its tail was able to move in a particular way which made it so effective at wiggling its way through grain and flour.

What's crucial is that *Tribolium castaneum* is also called the red flour beetle – each year it infests and destroys an estimated 20% of flour and grain stores globally. Let that sink in. One minute beetle can have a mighty consequence.

By understanding what was happening in that little beetle's brain, they could figure out ways to turn neural transmitters off, so it wasn't able to burrow into, and destroy, flour. This will hopefully lead to a whole new range of preventative insecticides which target that one minute piece of their brain machinery, and can literally save untold tonnes of food every year in places around the globe where resources are scarce.

It made me think of the tiny things which the world barely notices, but which God uses in his bigger picture. If fruit flies and beetles seem tiny to us, imagine then how miniscule we humans must seem in the context of the whole universe. How fragile and flimsy we are. And yet... look at what we are capable of, look at how God uses us, even though we are merely specks.

Throughout the Bible, God often uses the littlest of things to create the biggest waves. The mustard seed, the widow's offering, David's pebbles for his sling. Nails and a cross.

Don't mistake tiny for inconsequential. And next time you try to swat a fruit fly, remember the wonder contained in the smallest of things.

How fragile and flimsy we are. And yet...look at how God uses us...

IN THIS MONTH... *November 1992*

Dipping into the archives to take a look back at what was making Presbyterian headlines and news in history.

Towards 2000 AD

By Sam Hutchinson

Predicting the future is a risky business. When the late Harry Ferguson asked for a loan to develop some inventions, the bank refused on the grounds that "the motor car is just a passing fancy"...

However, 2000 AD is not far away; the young ministers who will seek their first charge in that year are already at university. What kind of Church awaits those intending to minister in the next millennium?...

Present trends within Irish Presbyterianism will provide some clues about our future.

Our membership statistics reveal a decline of about 1% per annum... Its causes include such factors as emigration...an ageing population, secularisation...and a weakening of denominational loyalty...

Is it impossible to turn a loss of 1% per annum into a similar gain? The resources are available. The United Appeal's annual budget for mission and service has now reached the £2,000,000 mark; the bill for Church House renovation has still to be paid but our main financial base is sound, thanks to generous giving and prudent management.

The Presbyterian Church of AD 2000 will also be well-staffed...We need 14 students a year to maintain our ministerial strength, but on current projections 21 will be assigned to assistantships in 1994, and 20 in 1995...

One of our Assembly Boards has been renamed 'the Board of Communications', indicating the Church is concerned to get her message across... In future, the Church is unlikely to be reported in the mass media simply because she speaks. She will have to earn the right to be heard.

... Whatever controversial topics are raised...in the next millennium, I hope that both the insight and the graciousness of recent debates will continue...

The Presbyterian Church has been described as "Ulster's most typical institution". I would not quarrel with that, but I hope for more...



Birthday celebration

The 'Drop-In Centre' of the Shankill Road Mission recently celebrated its 10th birthday. Eric Lennon, former mission executive with the Mission, is seen here cutting the anniversary cake. Also in the photograph are: Rev William Campbell, superintendent and minister of Shankill Road Mission; Caroline Kerr, Drop-In Centre coordinator; Orville Webb, ACE manager; and Roberta Clements.



Problems in Brazil

From time to time, Indian Christians within Brazil find themselves under pressure from a variety of sources...

A resolution was passed in the Caiua reservation...that God is not to be mentioned in any school attended by Indians, and all churches are to be closed down by the end of the year. Christian families and teachers in the Caiua villages are now under pressure to leave the area...

Rehabilitation centre opened

Monday 26 October saw the opening of the latest project of the Board of Social Witness of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland – Carlisle House...

It is an 18-bed residential rehabilitation centre for men with alcohol addiction problems...

Also from
Nov '92



Bill Clinton is elected
as US President



Windsor Castle
catches fire



The Dáil is dissolved
following a vote of no
confidence

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CHURCH RECORD

VACANT CONGREGATIONS, MODERATORS AND CLERKS OF KIRK SESSIONS

(Information supplied by clerks of presbyteries, conveners of Assembly commissions and councils.)

1. LEAVE TO CALL GRANTED

Application forms are available on request from the Clerk's Office or may be downloaded from the PCI website.

BALLINA SPECIAL MINISTRY

MR RICK HILL: c/o Mission Department, Assembly Buildings, 2–10 Fisherwick Place, Belfast, BT1 6DW.

BALLEE and BALLYKEEL:

REV R.A. MORRISON: (Ballee) Mr John Quigley, 81 Queen's Avenue, Magherafelt, BT45 6DB. (Ballykeel) Mr T. Simpson, 163 Crebilly Road, Ballymena, BT42 4DP.

BANBRIDGE ROAD, DROMORE:

REV R.A. LIDDLE: Mr Alan Robinson, 25 Beresford Green, Dromore, BT25 1HF.

BLOOMFIELD:

REV GRAEME KENNEDY: Mr Andrew Shott, 7 The Walled Garden, Belfast, BT4 2WG.

DONEGAL TOWN and STRANORLAR: (Reviewable Tenure – 7 years)

REV ROBERT ORR: (Donegal Town) Mr Oswald Perry, Drumenagh, Donegal Town, F94 N7P8. (Stranorlar) Mrs Audrey Chambers, Magheracorran, Convoys, Co Donegal.

DUNMURRY and KILMAKEE: (Reviewable Tenure – 7 years)

REV S. STOCKMAN: (Dunmurry) Rev Gilbert Young, 39 Saintfield Road, Lisburn, BT27 5BH. (Kilmakee) Mr Alastair White, 94 Greenburn Way, Lambeg, Lisburn, BT27 4LU.

FINTONA and DROMORE:

REV JONATHAN COWAN: (Fintona) Mr Keith Boland, 119 Blackhill Road, Fintona, Omagh, BT78 2LN. (Dromore) Mr Lynden Keys, 25 New Park Road, Dromore, Omagh, BT78 3JU.

LOUGHBRICKLAND and SCARVA: (Reviewable Tenure – 5 years)

REV DR MARK GRAY: (Loughbrickland) Mr Fred Cairns, 20 Scarva Street, Loughbrickland, Co Down. (Scarva) Mr Robert Jordan, 3 Station Rd, Scarva, Co Armagh, BT63 6JY.

OMAGH, TRINITY and GILLYGOOLEY: (Reviewable Tenure – 7 years)

REV JANE NELSON: (Trinity) Mrs Claire McElhinney, 112 Clanabogan Road, Omagh, BT78 1SN. (Gillygooley) Mr Raymond Smyth, 82 Gillygooley Road, Omagh, BT78 5PX.

RALOO and MAGHERAMORNE: (Reviewable Tenure – 7 years)

REV ANDREW WATSON: (Raloo) Mr Geoff McBride, 72 Raloo Road, Larne, BT40 3DU. (Magheramorne) Mr Morris Gardner, 89 Ballypollard Road, Magheramorne, Larne, BT40 3JG.

SECOND CASTLEDERG and DRUMQUIN:

REV ROBERT McFAUL: (Second Castlederg) Mr Bert Huey, Tossa, 8 Listymore Road, Castlederg, BT81 7JG. (Drumquin) Dr Paul Booth, 54 Bradan Road, Drumquin, Omagh, BT78 4QQ.

STRABANE and SION MILLS: (Reviewable Tenure – 7 years)

REV P.B. HOUSTON: (Strabane) Mr William Watson, 44 Orchard Road, Strabane, BT82 9QS. (Sion Mills) Mr Colin Campbell, 26 Albert Place, Sion Mills, Strabane, BT82 9HN.

2. LEAVE TO CALL DEFERRED

BALLYRONEY and DRUMLEE:

REV LIAM RUTHERFORD: (Ballyronney) Mr David Peters, 30 Seafin Road, Ballyronney, Banbridge, BT32 5ER. (Drumlee) Mr Graham Truesdale, 128 Lackan Road, Ballyward, Castlewellan, BT31 9RX.

GORTNESSY:

REV DR SETH WRIGHT: Mr Ross Hyndman, 32 Temple Road, Strathfoyle, Londonderry, BT47 6UB.

HILLTOWN and CLONDUFF:

REV KENNETH NELSON: (Hilltown) Mr John Ervine, 51 Rostrevor Road, Hilltown, Newry, BT34 5TZ. (Clonduff) Mr Cecil Brown, 39 Bannfield Road, Rathfriland, Newry, BT34 5HG.

RICHVIEW:

REV N.S. HARRISON: Mr Victor Garland, 25 Abingdon Drive, Belfast, BT12 5PX.

SETTLED STATED SUPPLY APPOINTED

BALLINA and KILLALA: (Home Mission)

REV JOHN BROGAN.

BALLINDERRY:

VERY REV DR W.J. HENRY, Minister of Maze.

BOVEEDY:

REV DR T.J. McCORMICK, Minister of First Kilrea.

CAHIR: (Home Mission)

REV WILLIAM MONTGOMERY, Minister of Fermoy.

KATESBRIDGE:

REV N.J. KANE, Minister of Magherally.

TYRONE'S DITCHES:

REV J.K.A. MCINTYRE, Minister of Bessbrook.

3. DECLARED VACANT

ANAGHLONE and GARVAGHY:

REV D. CONKEY: (Anaghlone) Mr John Logan, 4 Bluehill Road, Katesbridge, Banbridge, BT32 5LU. (Garvaghy) Mr James Smyth, 35 Tullyglush Road, Banbridge, BT32 3TN.

BADONEY, CORRICK and GLENELLY:

REV ROGER McELNEA: (Badoney & Corrick) Mr Edmund Allison, 31a Strahulter Road, Newtownstewart, BT78 4ED. (Glenelly) Mr Ivan McKelvey, 37 Main Street, Plumbridge, BT79 8AA.

BAILIEBOROUGH FIRST, BAILIEBOROUGH TRINITY, CORRANEARY and ERVEY:

REV JONATHAN PORTER: (Bailieborough, First) Mr Fred Gilmore, Lisgar, Bailieborough, Co Cavan, A82 YW66. (Bailieborough, Trinity) Mr Leslie McKeague, Urcher, Bailieborough, Co Cavan, A82 EY72. (Corraneary) Dr Alan Hunter, 9 Rockfield Rise, Cootehill, Co Cavan, H16 PX00. (Ervey) Miss Jean Archibald, Largy, Drumconrath, Navan, Co Meath, C15 PH99.

BALLYCAIRN:

REV MORRIS GAULT: Mrs Lucy Mulholland, 32 Blenheim Park, Carryduff, BT8 8NN.

BALLYCASTLE: (Home Mission)

REV G.W.M. GLASGOW: Pat Shirley, 22 Dunamallaght Rd, Ballycastle, BT54 6PB.

BALLYGOWAN:

REV ALAN JOHNSTON: Mr David McKee, 83 Tullyhubbert Road, Ballygowan, BT23 6LY.

BALLYNAHATTY and CREEVAN:

REV JONATHAN COWAN: (Ballynahatty & Creevan) Mr John Nevin, 116A Clanabogan Road, Omagh, BT78 1SN.

BALLYNAHINCH, FIRST:

REV ANDREW CONWAY: Mr Brian McKee, 25 Mourne View, Ballynahinch, BT24 8EL.

BANAGHER:

REV DR MARK GOUDY: Mr Ivan J. Montgomery, 66 Teenaght Road, Claudy, BT47 4DD.

BELLAGHY and KNOCKLOUGHRIM:

REV TREVOR BOYD: (Bellaghy) Mr Harry Ferson, 12 Railway Terrace, Castledawson, Magherafelt, BT45 8AY.

BELVOIR:

REV B.J. WALKER: Mr Brian Dunwoody, 19 Drumart Drive, Belfast, BT8 7ET.

BENBURB:

REV BOB ALLELY: Miss Janice Allen, 5 Langs Crescent, Armagh, BT60 1DB.

Editor's Note: Information for this page is supplied by the General Secretary's Department.
Vacancies for conveners of commissions, councils and committees of the General Assembly are online at www.presbyterianireland.org/convenerships

Clerks of presbytery please note:
Only material received by the General Secretary's Department by noon on the first Friday of the month can be included in the Church Record.

BOARDMILLS, TRINITY:

REV GRANT CONNOR: Mr Adrian Patterson, 41 Cabra Road, Legacurry, BT26 6NB.

CARLISLE RD and CROSSROADS:

REV JOHN HANNA: (Carlisle Road) Mr Trevor Galbraith, 45 Hazelbank Road, Drumahoe, BT37 3NX. (Crossroads) Mr Richard Russell, 31 Creevagh Road, Londonderry, BT48 9XB.

CASTLEDAWSON and CURRAN:

REV STEWART GLENDINNING: (Castledawson) Mr Grainger Stewart, 46 Killynease Road, Castledawson, BT45 8DS. (Curran) Mr Robin Boyce, 48 Lurganagooose Road, Knockloughrim, BT45 8QY.

CAVANALECK and AUGHENTAIN:

REV RODNEY BEACOM: (Cavanaleck) Dr Charles McKibbin, 9 Tattenabuddagh Lane, Fivemiletown, BT75 0NW. (Aughtentine) Mr John McCrory, Screeby Road, Fivemiletown, BT75 0TP.

CRUMLIN:

REV STEPHEN McNIE: Mr James Livingstone, "Edin", 56 Largy Road, Crumlin, BT29 4RW.

CUMBER and UPPER CUMBER:

REV DR ROBERT BUICK: (Cumber) Mr Cecil Pollock, 248 Tamnaheer Road, Londonderry, BT47 3LY. (Upper Cumber) Mr Jack McFarland, 12 Cregg Road, Claudy, Londonderry, BT47 4HX.

DONEGORE, SECOND:

REV E. McDOWELL: Mr Samuel Gawn, 120 Parkgate Road, Kells.

DROMARA, FIRST:

REV M. DAVIDSON: Mr I. McCullagh, 10 Mullaghdrin Road, Dromara, BT25 2AF.

DROMARA, SECOND:

REV DR A. SLEITH: Mr Richard Kernaghan, 89 Rathfriland Road, Dromara, BT25 2EB.

DRUMBANAGHER, FIRST & JERRETTSPASS and KINGSMILLS:

REV B.D. COLVIN: (First Drumbanagher & Jerrettspass) Mr George Moffett, 16 Glen Road, Drummiller, Newry, BT34 1EP. (Kingsmills) Mr Raymond McCormick, 119 Kingsmills Road, Bessbrook, Newry, BT35 7BP.

DRUMGOOLAND and KILKINAMURRY:

REV ANDY DOWNEY: (Drumgooland) Dr Alastair Chestnutt, 22 Fruitvalley Road, Ballyward, Castlewellan, Co Down, BT31 9RE. (Kilkinamurry) Mr Mervyn Copes, 43 Carnpark Road, Dromara, Dromore, Co Down, BT25 2HD.

DUNLUCE:

REV P.L. McKELVEY: Mrs Jean Sharpe, 8 Oldtown Road, Ballymoney, BT53 6PH.

DUNDROD:

REV R.C. KERR: Mrs Alison McClure, 20 Thorndale Road, Dundrod, BT29 4UD.

DUNGANNON:

REV JAMES O'NEILL: Mr David Miller, 1 Bushvale, Dungannon, BT71 6QA.

ESKYLANE:

REV R.S. AGNEW: Mr S. McKee, 14 Eskylane Road, Antrim, BT41 2LL.

FAHAN: (Home Mission)

REV PHILIP POOTS: Mr James Lamberton, 1 Deanfield, Limavady Road, Londonderry, BT47 6HY.

FAUGHANVALE:

REV P. LINKENS: Mr Donald Montgomery, 25 Carnmoney Road, Eglinton, BT47 3JJ.

FIRST PORTADOWN:

REV R.I. ABRAHAM: Mr Robert Downey, 3 Lynden Gate Park, Portadown, BT63 5YJ.

GARRYDUFF:

REV NOEL McCLEAN: Mr Stanley Lee, 12 Cambourne Park, Ballymoney, BT53 7PG.

GILNAHIRK:

REV STUART McCREA: Mrs Heather Taylor, 163 Gilnahirk Road, Belfast, BT5 7QP.

GLASCAR and DONAGHMORE:

REV R.M. MOODY: (Glascar) Mr Alan Little, 38 Loughbrickland Road, Rathfriland, Newry, BT34 5HF. (Donaghmore) Mr David Shilliday, 21 Cargabane Road, Donaghmore, Newry, BT34 1SB.

GREYABBEY, TRINITY:

REV DR DONALD WATTS: Mr George Angus, 2 The Farm, Mountstewart Estate, Greyabbey, BT22 2AD.

HELEN'S BAY:

REV PETER LYLE: Mr David McAuley, 23 Beverley Hills, Bangor, BT20 4NA.

HIGH KIRK, BALLYMENA:

REV D.B. MCCORRISTON: Mr G. McQuoid, 196 Ballymoney Road, Ballymena, BT43 5HG.

HYDEPARK and LYLEHILL:

REV ALAN MOORE: (Hydepark) Mrs Lynas Alexander, 22 Broadacres, Templepatrick, BT39 0AY.

KEADY, SECOND and DRUMHILLERY:

REV W.J.I. THOMPSON: (Second Keady) Mr David Coulter, 14 Woodford Heights, Armagh, BT60 2DY. (Drumhillery) Mr Ivan Orr, 79 Cormeen Road, Killylea, BT60 4NA.

KELLS: (Home Mission)

REV ALAN McQUADE: Miss Ruth McCartney, Shancarnan, Moynalty, Kells, Co Meath, A82 PF60.

KILREA, SECOND:

REV BRIAN SMYTH: Mr John McIlrath, 9 Moyagoney Road, Kilrea, BT51 5SX.

LURGAN, FIRST:

REV L.W. WEBSTER: Mr Norman McCleery, 12 McCormack Gardens, Lurgan, BT66 8LE.

MAGHERA:

REV ASHLEY GRAHAM:

NEWMILLS:

REV SEAMUS BURKE: Dr Stephen Sharpe, 61D Moss Bank Road, Portadown, BT63 5SL.

NEWTOWNARDS, REGENT STREET:

REV MAIRISINE STANFIELD:

NEWTOWNARDS, SECOND:

REV C.W. JACKSON: Mr Ivan Patterson, 11 Heron Crescent, Newtownards, BT23 8WH.

NEWTOWNSTEWART and GORTIN:

REV JONATHAN BOYD: (Newtownstewart) Mr David Dunbar, 32 Main Street, Newtownstewart, BT78 4AA. (Gortin) Mr Adrian Adams, 32 Lisnaharney Road, Lislap, Omagh, BT79 7UE.

ORRITOR and CLAGGAN:

REV M.J.O. CURRIE: (Orritor) Mr Maurice Freeburn, 7a Killycurragh Road, Cookstown, Co Tyrone BT80 9LB. (Claggan) Mr Thomas James Bell, 100 Lough Fea Road, Cookstown, Co Tyrone, BT80 9SS.

PORTAVOGIE:

REV G.J. SIMPSON:

RANDALSTOWN, O.C.:

REV CHRIS WILSON: Mr Alun Coulter, 48 Portglenone Road, Randalstown, BT41 3DB.

RAPHOE and BALLINDRAIT:

REV R. EDGAR: Mrs Sylvia Cole, The Common, Raphoe, Donegal.

RATHCOOLE: (Urban Mission)

REV A. CARSON: Mr Norman Creaney, 7 Coolshannagh Park, Newtownabbey, BT37 9LA.

RAY and NEWTOWNCUNNINGHAM:

REV GRAHAM ORR: Mr Derek Roulston, Moyle Hill, Newtowncunningham, Co Donegal.

ROSTREVOR and WARRENPOINT:

REV R.J.A. McCURE: (Warrenpoint) Mrs Heather Gray, 25 Donaghaguy Road, Warrenpoint, BT34 3RZ. (Rostrevor) Mrs Doreen Henderson, 14 Greenpark Road, Rostrevor, BT34 3EY.

SLIGO: (Home Mission)

REV DANIEL REYES-MARTIN: Mr Albert Higgins, Carraroe, Sligo.

continued on page 50

CHURCH RECORD

continued from page 49

THE MALL, ARMAGH:

REV A.W.T. MARTIN: Mr Colin Berry, 26 Killuney Park Road, Armagh, BT61 9HG.

TOWNHILL:

REV J.D. McGAUGHEY: Mr R. Dickey, 23 Grange Cottages, Toomebridge, BT41 3GR.

TULLYCARNET:

REV R.S.J. McILHATTON:

URNEY:

REV ROBERT McFAUL: Mr Norman McMullan, 80 Orchard Road, Strabane, BT82 9QT.

WATERSIDE:

REV COLIN JONES: Mr William McIlwaine, 19 Glenaden Hill, Altnagelvin Park, Londonderry, BT47 2LJ.

WEST CHURCH, BANGOR:

REV ALVIN LITTLE: Dr Maureen Bennett, 27 Barn Hill, Donaghadee, BT21 0QA.

WOODBURN and LOUGHMORNE:

REV JOHN STANBRIDGE: (Woodburn) Mr Robert Logan, 555B Doagh Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 5BT. (Loughmorne) Mr Lionel Brehaut, 21 Cairn Road, Carrickfergus, BT38 9AP.

TEMPORARY STATED SUPPLY ARRANGEMENT

ARMAGH ROAD, PORTADOWN:

REV P. McCLELLAND: Dr David Lowry, 5 Ridgeway Park South, Portadown, BT62 3DG.

BELLVILLE:

REV J.T. GRAHAM: Mr Mervyn King, 29 Ardmore Road, Derryadd, Lurgan, BT66 6QP.

SPA and MAGHERAHAMLET:

REV DAVID BINGHAM: (Spa) Mr Stephen McBride, 28 Ballynahinch Road, Castlewellan, BT31 9PA. (Magherahamlet) Mr David Whan, 74 Castlewellan Road, Dromara, BT25 2JN.

WHITEHEAD:

REV P. BOVILL: Mr Warren Heggan, 44 Middle Road, Islandmagee, Larne, BT40 3SL.

CLASSIFIEDS

PLEASE NOTE: Adverts must be received in writing (email or post) by the first of the month preceding publication to guarantee inclusion. Adverts received after that date will be published if space permits. Advertising rates can be found on the website – www.presbyterianireland.org/herald – or telephone the Herald office on +44 (0)28 9032 2284 for more information.

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THE MINISTRY

Licensed:

Matthew Kirk, licensed by the Templepatrick Presbytery, 7 September 2025

Ordained and Installed:

Rev Andrew Frazer, ordained and installed as Minister of Trinity, Ahoghill and Grange with Craigmore, 10 September 2025

Installed:

Rev James Porter, as Minister of Rasharkin and Dunloy, 19 September 2025
Rev Cheryl Meban, as Minister of Christ Church, Rathgar, 21 September 2025

Resigned:

Rev James Porter, as Minister of Claggan and Orritor, 18 September 2025
Rev Gareth Stewart, as Minister of Maghera, 30 September 2025
Rev Anne Tolland, as Minister of Regent Street, Newtownards, 30 September 2025
Rev Cheryl Meban, as Chaplain U.U.J., 20 September 2025

Retired:

Rev Stephen Moore, as Minister of Gilnahirk, 15 September 2025
Rev Norman Cameron, as Minister of High Kirk, Ballymena, 27 September 2025
Rev Alan Buick, as Minister of Dunluce, 30 September 2025

THE ELDERSHIP

Ordained:

DROMORE (Co Tyrone): Doreen Keys, Andrew Oliver
MARKETHILL: David Bingham, Thomas Dalzell, Nigel Lockhart, Darren Wilkinson
ROSEYARDS: Mary Eakin, Joe Watson

Retired:

FIRST ARMAGH: Norman Shilliday

Died:

CAIRNCastle: John Robinson
CASTLEDERG, SECOND: Bertha Pollock
DROMORE (Co Tyrone): John Virtue
DRUMREAGH: Alex McEleavey
FIRST LARNE: Alexander Meban
HIGH STREET, HOLYWOOD: Trevor Drain
KIRKPATRICK MEMORIAL: Maurice Mills
LISSARA: Rhona Niblock
NEWTOWNSTEWART: Roy Jack
SCARVA STREET: Nathaniel (Nat) Eakin
WESTBOURNE: Ken Stephens

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Christian Aid Ireland is recruiting for three Board Committees - **are you ready to join us?**

Christian Aid Ireland

Is an international development agency founded by the Protestant churches of Britain and Ireland, a global movement of individuals and organisations passionately committed to ending poverty and injustice.

We are a separate legal entity within the wider Christian Aid family, sharing the same vision and values.

Our work is based on our Christian conviction that everyone is created in the image of God and deserves to live a full life. To that end, we work with people of all faiths and none to tackle both the symptoms and root causes of poverty.

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- be part of the solution to the persistent problems of poverty and injustice in the world around you?
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Do you have...

- experience and skills in the areas of human resources, finance in the charity sector, international programmes, humanitarian relief, or media and communications?

...if so, we'd really love to hear from you.

For more information and to express your interest, please send a CV and covering letter to Dr Nicola Brady, Chair of the Nominations & Board Governance Committee, c/o.jdonaldson@christian-aid.org by **Friday 21 Nov 2025**.



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