

The Light

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We are
GOD'S handiwork!



THE MAGAZINE OF THE LISBURN AND DROMORE METHODIST CIRCUIT

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If you have material or photos for the next edition of the Light please send them to the address above or give them to your church representative by Sunday 3rd May 2020

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Easter?

Rev Alan Craig

I am currently sitting at my computer desk on Friday 7th February 2020, storm Ciara, the worst to hit the UK since 2013, is approaching and I am reflecting on Easter as it approaches. Preparations have been made for the Easter week. The Rev. Jim Rea has been confirmed as the speaker and the dates for Holy Week are in my diary and as I sit head listening to the wind and rain. I ask myself, what does the Easter celebration mean to us here in Northern Ireland?

For some people Easter is celebrated as a pagan holiday, it often seems to be more about 'Chocolate Eggs, and Easter Bunnies'. The word Easter is derived from the Anglo-Saxon "Eostre," the name of the goddess of spring. The ancient Saxons celebrated the return of spring with a boisterous festival in honour of the goddess of spring and her symbol was the rabbit. The custom of exchanging eggs in springtime was already in place when Christian missionaries encountered Saxon tribes in northern Germany. Commercially, Easter must be worth millions of pounds and I have already seen Easter Eggs in our local shops. I am particularly fond of a certain cream egg. But, I have to admit that they are much smaller now than when I was at school.

To me and many people, Easter means much more than celebrating a pagan festival, buying or receiving chocolate eggs and chasing the Easter bunny. To me it is a time when I can reflect and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who loves me



and who died for me. The scriptures tell me; *that at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly (Rom 5:6). That means 'At just the right time' Christ died for you and for me.* The Apostle Paul tells us; *If Christ has not been raised from the dead, our preaching is worthless, and so is your faith (1 Cor 15:14).* That tells me, 'if Jesus was not raised from the dead, God is not who he says he is'.

A man once asked 'Professor McDowell, why can't you refute Christianity?' 'For a very simple reason,' he answered. 'I am not able to explain away an event in history — the resurrection of Jesus Christ. 'How can we explain the empty tomb? Can it possibly be accounted for by any natural cause?

Josh McDowell was a sceptic and after more than 700 hours of studying this subject, He came to the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is either one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted on the minds of human beings —or it is the most remarkable fact of history. Read the book for yourself; *The Evidence for the Resurrection.* Josh McDowell

HE IS RISEN!



Kilbroney, God and Me-

how camp has changed my life for the better

Kathryn Allen



My journey with Kilbroney Girls Adventure Camp began in 2014, when I walked through the doors of our centre to what would turn out to be many years of unimaginable joy and special times at camp. Kilbroney is a camp run by Scripture Union Northern Ireland for girls aged 12-15, designed to teach them more about God, let them build a relationship with Jesus as their personal Saviour and have a lot of fun through a week of crazy adventure activities and camp

**"an incredible week
of laughter, joy, fun
and learning!"**

traditions. God is at work during this week in the summer in the forests of Rostrevor, and it's an honour to be a part of it.

My early experiences

First, a little about my experience as a camper. In my first year, I had high hopes for camp but was horribly nervous when I walked in to a room of girls and leaders I had never met before. Thankfully I had no reason to be concerned, quickly making friends and throwing myself into camp life. So much of my camp experience has been documented in diaries I have kept over the years and it's clear looking back that 13 year old me loved camp, declaring it an 'incredible week of laughter, joy, fun and learning'!

This led to me happily returning for a second summer at Kilbroney, where I really saw my faith and self confidence grow as I reunited with friends and leaders that had taught me so much as well as taking part in ridiculous dramas, trying new things like bouldering and high ropes courses and even sharing my testimony with the others.

By my third and last year, camp was one of the most precious places in the world to me and I made the most of my last





summer there by enjoying all our camp traditions, deepening my faith and looking out for the younger girls. At last the dreaded day came and I had to say goodbye to the place I thought of as my spiritual home - although my head leader assured me that I wasn't saying goodbye, just 'see you later' to Kilbroney. I had no idea how right she was.

Returning as a leader

Two years later, I returned to camp as a leader at the ripe old age of 17, making me the youngest on the team. That was not a problem though - Camp was as joyous as ever and that first summer that I was a leader saw me make huge strides in my walk with God as I had new chances to lead small groups and games.

Christianity isn't just a religion or a church you attend on Sunday, but a personal connection with God

I learnt so much from both the girls and my fellow leaders, many of whom are now like sisters to me. I even got to give a talk one evening about self worth and self image, which was a hugely significant for me after struggling so much with this during my years as a camper. Getting to see how God used his word and my experiences to impact everybody was such an incredible experience. One year of leadership was

never going to be enough though, and the summer of 2019 saw my second year as a leader. I was again involved leading talks and helping to organise games and activities during the week.

Becoming Head Leader!

Last summer marked the end of my time as a member of the leadership team, but God has greater things in store, and this summer I will be a head leader of Kilbroney Girls with my good friend and fellow leader Hannah. I can only imagine what my 13 year old self would've thought as she wrote in her diary about how much she enjoyed a week at camp!

Leadership is an exciting new adventure for us this summer- I feel so privileged to be able to give back to SU in this way as their

work really has changed my life. I have matured from a young girl to a woman over the course of my journey with Camp. I have also matured spiritually in huge ways- Kilbroney has and always will be a place where a personal relationship with God is encouraged by having quiet times, learning together and asking big questions. I know I have undoubtedly benefited from having other campers and leaders to encourage and challenge me in my faith. Camp has

made me a more confident person, and shown me the value of silliness and being myself as a part of fellowship.

It has also shown me the value of investing in young girls even when they already have an understanding of God- it's not a classical type of evangelism, but it is important to show our young girls that Christianity isn't just a religion or a church they attend on Sunday, but a personal connection they can have for themselves. Seeing them dig deep into God's Word and realising the potential they have to share the gospel is so, so, worth it, and I am grateful for the chance to invest in their lives.

I'm excited to see what God has in store for camp this summer and give up my time and talents to serve him in this new way! If you know any girls aged 12 to 15 who would benefit from an experience like camp- where they can express themselves, learn to engage with God and have a lot of fun doing it- please please encourage them to check out the SUNI website for more details and come to camp this summer. I also would really appreciate your prayerful support as we begin this new journey of leadership, so that God never stops turning up and changing lives at camp. ●



The camp is held at the Kilbroney Centre which is near Rostrevor in the foothills of the Mourne Mountains

President leads Circuit Service

On Sunday 9th February the Rev Sam McGuffin, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland led a Circuit Service in Seymour Street. He brought greetings from the Methodist Church in Fiji, which he had visited shortly before he was appointed President, and commented that in Fiji 75% of the population are Methodists due to the excellent work of the early missionaries! Before addressing the congregation on his Presidential Theme of 'God is our Adventure' he commented that the Methodist Church is going through a time of change as our new District structures are implemented, but already he could see benefits in organisation in mission starting to emerge.



New communion set dedicated in memory of Mr Norman Foote



On Sunday 2nd February, as part of our Communion Service, Broomhedge Methodist Church dedicated a new communion set given by the Foote family in memory of Mr. Norman Foote, a long standing and faithful member of Broomhedge, who passed away last year. After the service everyone was invited to stay for lunch which was prepared in the hall by the church catering team.



Priesthill

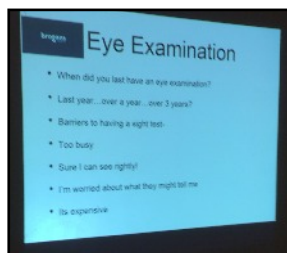
On Wednesday 4th December many from Priesthill, friends from the circuit and beyond gathered for a Christmas lunch at Sintons of Scarva. This function has become a yearly event and is looked forward to by all. A hearty meal was enjoyed, the conversation flowed and the folks were brought up to date with local news and each other.

We were grateful to Maurice McCann who paid a tribute to Annetta Crothers who had died unexpectedly. Annetta was a member of Broomhedge but had many family links to Priesthill and was a long serving member of the Girls' Brigade. Sympathy and condolences were sent on our behalf. Thanks are also due to Norma Stafford who organises this function year by year.

Good health and every blessing for the year ahead was wished by everyone. 🟡



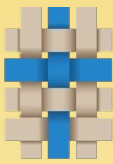
How Healthy are Your Eyes?



On 29th January The Magheragall Wednesday Group considered the topic was "How Healthy are Your Eyes?"

Hudson Kaunda gave an inspiring presentation on the life of Fanny Crosby. She was an American Mission Worker and became blind shortly after birth. Despite her disability she went on to write over 8000 hymns and gospel songs including Blessed Assurance and To God be the Glory. Her favourite sayings were "O What a Happy Soul I am, Although I cannot see, I am resolved that in this world, contented I will be." She also commented that when she gets to heaven: "The first face that shall ever gladden my sight, will be that of my Saviour."

We then welcomed Richard McNeight from Brogan's Opticians, Lisburn who advised us how to look out for problems such as Cataracts or Glaucoma and illustrated the equipment used and what they look out (no pun intended!) for in these conditions. It was a very interesting afternoon which made us all truly thankful for the gift of sight, and we thank Richard for his very informative presentation. 🟡



DAMASK
COMMUNITY OUTREACH



Damask wins 'Children in Need' funding for 'Go Project' for young teens

Damask has secured funding from Children in Need of £24,000 over three years to run an after-school project for 10's to 14's in collaboration with our partners, Youth Initiatives. To lead this programme Damask has appointed Rebecca Wills as a Session Worker and Youth Initiatives are also supporting her to work with Forthill College and Primary School as she engages with the young people who attend the Go Project.

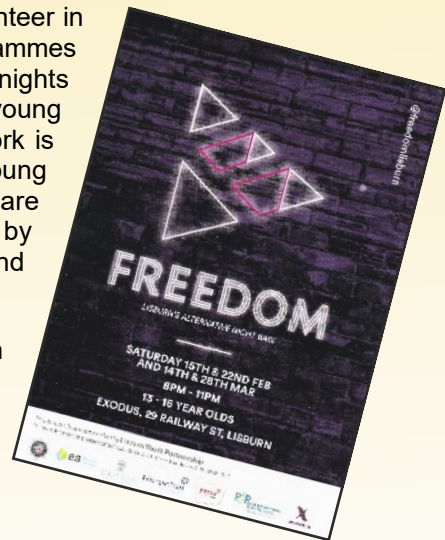


**Rebecca Wills with a number of the leaders
and young people in the Go Project**

The Go Project aims to help the young people build new relationships in an environment of hope and encouragement, understand and accept diversity and develop connections with those from different cultural backgrounds while learning to appreciate their own cultural identity.

Rebecca (front centre in the photo) has been a volunteer and enthusiastic supporter of the work of Damask and Youth Initiatives for a number of years. In addition to her funded role in the Go Project Rebecca is continuing to volunteer in other aspects of the Damask & Youth Initiatives programmes and heads up the detached outreach on Saturday nights when a group of leaders go out to engage with young people on the streets of Lisburn. This outreach work is recognised as playing a valuable role in protecting young people at risk from drugs and alcohol and who are engaging in antisocial behaviour, and is supported by the PSNI, Policing Community Safety Partnership and the Education Authority.

Damask is also part of the newly formed Lisburn Youth Partnership along with Exodus, the YMCA and the Resurgam Trust supporting a series of Saturday Night 'Freedom' events for young teens at the Exodus Centre. ●



Susan Gallagher & 10,000 lives

Susan is in the 2nd year of placement with Seymour Street in her training to become a Methodist Minister

Since September 2018, Susan Gallagher, who is a formation student for ministry at Edgehill Theological College has been on placement with Seymour Street Methodist Church. Here is her story.

Susan grew up in the Rossendale valley, in an old mill village in Lancashire, and during family holidays at Seahouses, Northumberland went along each year to a Beach Mission where she became a Christian. However, she ploughed a lonely furrow through school with little support from her church or school Christian Union. After studying food technology at university, she married Sean whose parents were from Ireland. When the children came along (3 boys now aged 32, 24 and 22) she became a full-time Mum.

It was when visiting Sean's extended family in Ireland in 1990 that she fell in love with this country and they moved first to Galway, Athlone, Moate, Cork and eventually to Kerry where they now have their home. Being a full-time mum has been important for Susan as two of the boys have multiple disabilities to be coped with. Now they peer support one another and lead independent lives.

Susan had never lost her desire to pray and find fellowship in a church, but nothing worked out for her until in 2007 she was led to find the Methodist Church in nearby Killarney. After many years with no functioning congregation, a new congregation had



re-started in 1995 almost entirely of European and African nationals and others who had moved to Ireland from all over the world, led by Jean and Ed Ritchie. To this day the only Irish born Methodists are the Manse family and the children born in the congregation since its reopening. Initially, Susan was happy to just be there – and then leave at the end of the Service, unlike most others who stayed and enjoyed fellowship. If asked she refused to lead in any way she gave a firm 'no'! When she joined the MWI, however, she was quickly promoted to President, and gradually became involved in the church praise team leading worship.

When asked to partner someone else studying to become a local preacher Susan discovered a deep hunger to learn more about her faith. As part of the course she had to write a sermon and at the bottom, she wrote – faintly – 'If this is acceptable I will preach it'. There was no response for 2 months while it sat in the pile on her examiner's desk, then the next Sunday she was preaching it! Susan had thought doing the Local Preacher course was enough, but God had other ideas and now she is

part way through her Edgehill training for the Methodist ministry.

Susan and 10,000 lives During her first year in Seymour Street Susan was delegated mostly to support the Damask youth programme with Youth Initiatives and also the Luncheon Club and Mothers and Toddlers group. Now in 2020 along with assisting the BB and Youth Initiatives Go Programme, she is helping with Seymour Street's contribution to the Lisburn 10,000 lives campaign during Lent.

Over Lent, the Lisburn Churches will each be contributing to a programme of events to reach out into our local community. We are planning that a small group from Seymour Street should, each market Tuesday of Lent, be somewhere in the Town Centre with an eye-catching and thought-provoking display. For example, as in the photo, a blackboard asking 'What do you read in the letters



'GODISNOWHERE'? ('God is nowhere' or 'God is now here') The display will act as conversation starters, not to buttonhole people but just to set them thinking. Small gifts of cards or pebbles with texts or sayings can be given to those who stop and chat.

Susan is keen to find volunteers from Seymour Street to join in with this act of witness as part of the 10,000 lives campaign. ●

Seymour Street MWI gifted toiletries to Women's Aid and held a Sunday Soup Lunch in aid of Methodist World Mission



Toiletries raised by MWI for "Women's Aid" were presented to Grace McGurk during our meeting on 7th January 2020. Grace, who is also the Learning and Development Officer in Edgehill College, spoke to the MWI ladies about Domestic Violence.



Lisburn Churches work together to share the Easter message during Lent 2020....

10,000 LIVES

In a concerted effort to pray for, and touch, the lives of 10,000 people in Lisburn about 20 local churches are working together with Crown Jesus Ministries to organise a series of outreach events and activities over Lent.

Crown Jesus Ministries was set up just over 20 years ago by three Bible College students who shared a passion for evangelism in Ireland. It is led by one of those co-founders, Mitch, who is from Castlereagh. Now with 16 staff and 13 academy students it reaches over 100,000 people each year working with churches of all denominations and in 200 schools across Ireland. It has a mission centre in Monaghan as well as an HQ in Belfast.

Here is Mitch's story

Mitch's Dad, died when he was 13 and his Mum, when he was 23, but he remains close to his two older brothers Colin and Philip. Up to the time of his father's death he attended Sunday School but then as a teenager he says 'I made bad choices, mixed with alcohol or drugs... then my footballer brother Philip and Crusaders' boss Stephen Baxter shared their story'. It was after a meeting at which Roger Carswell preached that Mitch gave his life to Jesus and started to grow in his faith as he shared his decision with his friends. After giving his testimony at a Youth Fellowship he knew that God was calling him to share His message with others.

Before training for Christian ministry Mitch worked in several jobs, as a fitness instructor, leisure attendant and then as a fireman for 11 years based in Springfield and Knock fire stations. It was when he completed his Bible College training in May 1999 that he and two of his fellow students founded Crown Jesus Ministries, and around the same time he married Amanda and they have two children. Noah 14 and Megan (11).

Crown Jesus Ministries has several strands to its work :-

Klass Kids is their children's ministry programme through which the team reach thousands of children each year in primary school assemblies, RE classes, after school clubs and church organisations.

1Way is their youth outreach to young people. Every year the team visits schools and churches across Ireland to share the love of God in a creative, relevant and challenging way.



Their **adult work** takes the form of various initiatives that deal specifically with prayer and evangelism and also community outreach through their Hope Mission centres and partner church projects.

Hope Monaghan - Loving the Local Community

Hope is their missional centre based in the heart of Monaghan town.

Their aim is simple, to share the good news of Jesus with the community through practical long term evangelism. They do this through a number of openings and events across the week and through special outreach events at key times of the year. From their Tuesday prayer mornings, our storehouse foodbank, Sunday events and our 1Way after schools youth cafe.

In addition to their weekly openings they also run the Alpha course for adults and NUA for youth at key points of the year.



10,000 lives Lisburn

A few years ago when working with Newtownbreda Baptist Church Crown Jesus Ministries developed a programme called '1000 lives' which, in line with their overall approach, was based on prayer and evangelism and sought to touch 1000 lives with the gospel. Now working with the churches in Lisburn this concept has been expanded to 10,000 lives. Over the last few months in our churches each of us has been encouraged to pray for five specific people, and a number of evangelism training courses have been held. Now the programme of 10,000 lives events is taking place with each congregation contributing activities and events which reach out into our local communities. ●

Seymour Street Craft Club

As part of our Craft programme this year the group have been making 'Pillowcase Dresses for Africa' in conjunction with Irish Methodist World Mission Partnership (Container Ministry). The dresses are made out of a pillowcase, fitted with elastic and bias binding (and a pocket if desired!!). The photograph shows some of the 30+ dresses that have been made, along with some of the Craft Group members who undertook this project. Both the morning and the evening classes made these dresses which will be taken to the container ministry once they are all completed. ●





Emily Moorhead

Northern Ireland Artistic Gymnast of the Year 2019

The editor talked to Emily from Seymour Street, and her mum, Julie-Ann, about her gymnastic achievements and to find out more about her sport.

Emily (age 13), a member of Salto Gymnastics Club in Lisburn, is a competitive gymnast who undertakes a gymnastics training programme of 25 hours per week in addition to her studies at Wallace High School in Lisburn.

How I became involved in

gymnastics: "When I was in P2 Salto came into my primary school to assess pupils on their gymnastic ability. I was invited to a trial in Salto gym and after that was really excited to be invited to join their elite performance development squad. Initially this required me to train only once a week but it has built up gradually over the years." Emily explained that in women's artistic gymnastics there are four disciplines -beam, bars, floor and vault.

'To compete in all-around competitions I am required to do all four. Floor is probably my favourite although I really

enjoy vault and beam as well. Bars would be the one piece of apparatus that I find most difficult but I'm getting there.'

Gymnastics requires a lot of hard work and Emily has to manage her time to fit it all in around her school work but she says it's worth it. 'I really enjoy getting the opportunity to travel to competitions and training camps. Last year was a really exciting one, in January I was in Iceland with my teammates to compete in the Reykjavik International Games. It was such an amazing place and we won team gold which made it even better!

Gymnast of the Year: In February I was the recipient of the British Gymnastics Northern Ireland Women's Artistic Gymnast of the Year 2019 Award. This was presented to me by Olympian Becky Downie at a special awards dinner at Titanic Belfast. It was



nice getting dressed up for the occasion and attending it with my family, teammates and coaches'.

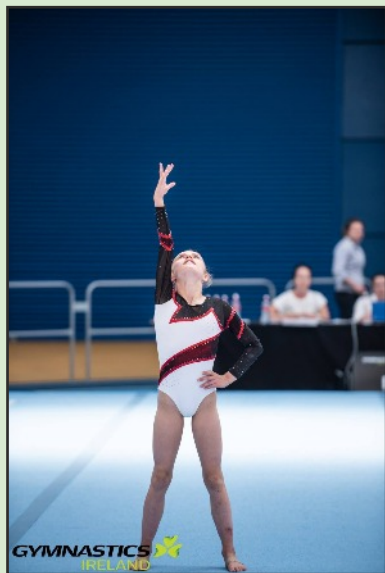
The Olympic and Commonwealth Games squads:

For the last three years Emily has been selected for the Gymnastics Ireland Women's Artistic Gymnastics Olympic Start Squad for 2024. This requires her to attend four training weekends per year in the National Sports Arena in Blanchardstown, Dublin and also compete in the National Series programme of competitions. She was also selected for the British Gymnastics Northern Ireland squad in preparation for the 2022 Commonwealth Games. She was delighted to qualify to represent Northern Ireland at the Home Nations Tournament in Perth Scotland last April,

however things got complicated when she was also selected to represent Ireland at the same competition! 'Unfortunately I was not able to retain my place on both squads' explained Emily 'I had to choose between them which was a hard decision. In the end I competed for Ireland and was delighted to win an individual bronze medal on beam and team bronze.'

Mental Preparation: Emily explained that mental preparation for competitions is as important as physical. 'I have had to learn to control my nerves -hard work in the gym is pointless if I allow nerves to ruin my performance. I'm making improvements but my mum's nerves still need working on! She usually covers her eyes when I'm doing my beam routines. Somersaults on a 10 cm-wide beam are not her favourite thing to watch!'

Future Goals: When asked about her goals for this year Emily said 'I have recently been selected for the Irish International Development squad, which is a progression from the start squad, and have been called for selection trials in Dublin at the end of March for the Junior European Championships. I am currently working hard on my routines to try and achieve the qualifying score although I have had a few injuries lately which have impeded my training. Dealing with injury is all part of the sport and I'm hoping they won't hold me back. It would be really exciting to compete in Paris in April! Regarding her longer term ambitions Emily said 'I would love to compete in the Commonwealth Games in 2022. If I dare to dream, the 2024 Olympics would be the ultimate goal but that's a long way off. In the meantime I will continue to work hard, develop my skills and enjoy the support of my teammates and family along the way. 🍷'



We are God's Handiwork

One of the fruits of the Seymour Street 'Doing Life Together' project



Seymour Street has, for the past 18 months, had a number of events under the banner "Doing Life Together". These have included a Church weekend, days away and home groups.

The 'Last Lights Service' on 31 December was organised by the Doing Life Together team with the theme "We are God's Handiwork", words taken from Ephesians 2:10. This Service was a little different and included dividing into workshops to prepare elements of the Service. One of these was a Craft Workshop.

During planning, Stevie Gray thought that creating a mosaic would be a good craft and he ordered a box of mosaic tiles, having no idea what colours they would be and what we were actually going to do with them! After some thought he felt that a mosaic of a church would show that

every piece was important and that it takes every piece to make a complete picture. This helps illustrate that every one of us is important in the Church and it is not complete without us.

Adrienne Stewart asked her brother-in-law, who is also the architect who designed the new worship area in Seymour Street, if he could cut a piece of wood which would represent Seymour Street. Little did she know that two days later he would arrive with a board cut to the exact shape with an architectural drawing of the front elevation of the Church on it!

At the Service there were about 20 people, aged from 5 to 75+, who joined the Craft Workshop and worked together on creating the mosaic. How it all came together illustrates both that we are God's Handiwork and that each one of us is important in the life of the Church. ●

The Register

SEYMOUR STREET

Deaths:

Rev Ivan Carson
Mr Bobby Teeney
Mr Joe Edgar
Mrs Joan Bell

Baptisms:

Jessica Gillian, daughter of Curtis and Christina McDonald

TOM 31 at Trinity

16

As always, we kept the TOM team busy during their week at Trinity. They started off the new year with the theme of 2020 Vision and challenged all our groups to walk more closely with God during this incoming year. As part of their week of mission, they took RE classes in Dromore Central and Ballycarrickmaddy Primary Schools, they led all sections of the GB and BB and they shared with our young people in YPod, Connected and Hub. The team also ran a successful Pizza Praise Party and even managed to fit in a bit of knitting at the Craft Club and a Beetle Drive at the Ladies' Group! Sara, Amy and Aaron were well prepared and engaged with everyone they met from the youngest to the oldest. We were challenged and encouraged by their message and wish them many blessings as they continue to serve God through 2020.

Here's what the Team said about their week in Trinity:

Amy: My highlight was the GB Seniors and Brigaders. I loved the atmosphere



and how we had such a great laugh together. I loved getting to reflect on 2019 and look forward into 2020!

Sara: My highlight was the school's work! We did action songs and interactive prayers and talked about how we can make good choices in the future!

Aaron: My highlight was the 2 events we ran at the weekend! The first was our Pizza Praise Party for primary school kids which was great fun because of all the action songs and games we got to do. The Saturday night was our Saturday Night Takeaway with the young people. It was great to get to spend time chatting with the young people and getting to know them before sharing our stories. ●

Trinity Zone Helping Others at Christmas

Trinity Zone Sunday school raised £65 for the Methodist Childcare Society this Christmas. They encouraged members of the congregation to write their Christmas greetings on star tags instead of sending individual Christmas cards. These stars were then hung on the Christmas Tree. The money raised will go to help children whose families are under stress or hardship for many reasons. Thank you to everyone who donated to this worthy cause. ●



Christmas Joy!

The Rev Ross Harte reports on the Christmas Tree festival at Dromore Methodist Church

Nearly a year ago, Dromore Methodists decided to attempt a 'big push' to clear the remaining debt on our new hall, marking its tenth anniversary and 160 years of Methodism in the town. As the summer approached, letters were sent to local businesses, schools, churches and organisations, inviting them to participate in a Christmas Tree Festival.

Plans began to be put in place as we asked ourselves, how many trees could we accommodate, and were there enough plug sockets for the lights? Could we cater for large groups? What sort of atmosphere did we want to create? How could we help the local community feel part of the Festival?

The Festival begins!

Following a huge amount of detailed work by a committed team, and with a fair amount of both trepidation and excitement, the Festival was opened by the ABC Council Lord Mayor on 13 December 2019. A choir from Dromore Central Primary School sang some beautiful pieces from their seats in the gallery over the gathered congregation below. The Methodist District Superintendent led us in prayer, and the weekend was off to an inspired beginning.





Visiting the Festival

Visitors arrived at the porch of the church to a warm welcome and a tree with white and blue lights symbolising the Angel Gabriel visiting Mary, a candle in the centre of the tree indicating that Jesus, the light of the world, was on his way. They were given a map and followed a trail of nearly forty trees that had been carefully crafted and decorated to highlight a range of activities and meanings, often with intricate details and prayerfully selected themes. One corner included a tree from each of the six churches of the Lisburn and Dromore Circuit.

Several trees offered the opportunity for interaction, where many people added their own requests for prayer, names of people they were missing at Christmas, and commitments to act kindly. As evening fell the sanctuary took on a special sense of God's gentle presence, with twinkling lights overhead and carols played by a variety of gifted musicians. Meanwhile, a dedicated catering team served festive refreshments to visitors who chatted with one another about all they had experienced.

The Christmas Fair

Our annual Christmas Fair occurred on the Saturday morning. That evening a special worship night took place in the midst of the trees, where praise and silence mixed with stories expertly told by the Methodist Lay Leader; Sunday's morning worship with the President and afternoon Carol Service were equally meaningful. Monday morning buzzed with 250 local school children touring the trees and crafts. And then it was over! Rather than remove all the trees at once, we held on to many of them for Christmas Day, gradually reducing their number so the place didn't seem starkly bare.

And afterwards

Thanks to the generosity of people giving their time, resources and money, enough was raised to pay off our main loan, which brings a great sense of accomplishment (and relief!) to the Methodist people in Dromore. But perhaps more importantly, our congregation was encouraged that prayerfully listening to God for the next step in the journey brought our people together and blessed countless folks in the community who appreciated the time they spent in the trees. Our overall theme was, "Christmas Joy" – the smiles of members and visitors alike suggest that the good news of Jesus' birth and his presence with us, as expressed through trees, lights and decorations, brought joy to many people. ●



CHRISTMAS JOY

