



First Steps at Jennymount Methodist

This year Jennymount Methodist Church celebrates 30 years of growth for its First Step Drop-In Centre.

Today, the First Step Drop-in Centre on the York Road in North Belfast is a hub of activity. It started out as a small venture in 1984 when a group of people from Jennymount Methodist Church began a Christian outreach aimed at some of our more disaffected young people in the community. As the group met and talked to the young people it became apparent that there was a need for them to have a place where they could meet in warmth and safety.

It was not until May 1993 the minister and leaders of Jennymount Church provided purpose built premises for young people called First Step Drop-In Centre at 116 York Road. The Centre was managed by Billy and Marie Greer. Over the years the work grew and in 1996 the Centre was extended to double its size to facilitate the expanding work. It is now at the heart of the community and provides the following services and projects:

Community Cafe

The cafe is a great place to meet up with old friends or make new friends. Local business people use it to meet colleagues and enjoy the coffee and the delicious scones. It is open 6 days a week from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm and serves everything from tea and scones to a full meal. The cafe provides subsidised lunches for local pensioners as well as providing the finance for the day to day running of the Youth Centre and salary costs for 7 members of staff.

Youth Work

The Youth Centre has been working with young people in Lower North Belfast for thirteen years and has been at the forefront of youth service provision in this area. Their ethos and vision is to help young men and young women realise their full potential as human beings. They do this against the backdrop of multiple deprivation.

Two projects have been particularly successful. The *'About Turn Initiative'* which dealt with subjects such as development, identity, conflict resolution, drug awareness and discrimination. This covered a period of 16 weeks and had 15 participants (13- 16 year olds).

The other programme was a partnership with the Police Service, Include Youth (Young Voices project) and The First Step ('Building Bridges' group, 16-18 year olds). This initiative, through discussion groups, made it possible for members to meet representatives of the Northern Ireland Police Ombudsman's office and finally they had a face to face meeting with local police officers.

Hopes for the Future

Jennymount values its place in the urban regeneration area of Lower North Belfast and is very aware of the increasing needs an inner-city community presents. Thankfully things are changing; there is increased optimism as plans are unveiled for further regeneration. People are beginning to re-locate back into the community.

In spite of the above, Jennymount recognises that families, young people and older people still need their support. To try and meet these needs and support families they are currently investigating with professional bodies the possibility of providing a purpose built Family Centre which would build upon the already valued work of First Step.

‘Priceless’ deaths and marriages records stolen from Limerick church

THE Church of Ireland community in Kilmallock are appealing for the return of “priceless records” detailing deaths and marriages in the parish over the last century.



Jessie Griffin with the register of baptisms in St Peter and St Paul's church, Kilmallock. Jessie is appealing for the return of the registers of marriages and deaths

Limerick Leader - The records were stolen from the church on Christmas week.

“The community are very upset about the fact that the church could be broken into,” said Jessie Griffin from Bruree who is the church warden of St Peter and St Paul’s church.

The alarm was raised on December 20 when it was discovered that the vestry door of the church had been forced open.

“They stole the safe - the big old heavy safe - and everything in it including the church records,” Jessie explained.

“There was also a chalice and some silverware in the safe,” she added. The records of deaths and marriages over the last century were chronicled in big leather-bound books. A book containing baptismal records was not on the premises at the time as it had been taken away to be updated.

“There were two books,” Jessie explained. “These records are priceless. We haven’t them on hard disk or anything. The records of a church are very important. They are the main records for researching about your family and your family tree - think about Barack Obama, it was a little small church in Cloughjordan where his records were found.”

Jessie is appealing for anyone who may have information in relation to the records to come forward.

“Somebody out there knows where those records are - the robbers know for starters. We don’t expect them to take them to a garda station but if they know or have any idea where they are, then they should give them in somewhere like a public place such as a shop,” she said.

The church, which is located at Deebert, Kilmallock was burnt down in 1935 and was rebuilt in 1938 by the local community.

Mass is celebrated in the church every Sunday.

It is believed that more than one person was involved in the robbery and that they used some type of transport device to wheel the safe out of the church.

“It’s the violation of the church that has upset people - the fact that they could break in and get away with a massive big safe,” said Jessie.

“We would just be so grateful for their return. It is a shocking situation that all our records are gone.”

Jessie believes that the thieves did not open the safe prior to leaving the premises as the likelihood is that if they did open it, they would have discarded the record books.

The gardai in Bruff are investigating the incident and are appealing for information which may assist them in solving the crime.

Anyone with any information in relation to the incident can contact Bruff garda station on 061 382940.

Bishop Storey’s heart is still in Derry despite move to Kildare

Ireland’s first Church of Ireland female Bishop, Rev Pat Storey, may have left Derry to take up her new role as bishop of Kildare and Meath but her heart is still in Derry.

Derry Journal - Bishop Storey was based at St Augustine's Church on Derry's walls for many years before moving to Maynooth, County Kildare, with her husband, Earl, recently.



Speaking from her new home in Maynooth, the Bishop said the decision to leave Derry was difficult.

“It was a big opportunity and it was a hard thing to turn down but I was sad to be leaving Derry,” she said. “I love a small city because you know everybody and everybody knows you.

“We were very embedded in Derry and we knew a lot of people. It has a great parish and it’s a great city,” she added.

Bishop Storey also said she has not entirely broken her links with Derry.

“It’s where my daughter is settled because she married a Derry man.

“Carolyn stayed behind because she’s a teacher in Derry and my son Luke already left to be a holiday rep with SkiBound so he’s over in the Alps for the winter.

“He’s finished at the end of April so I don’t know if he will come and live here or if he will try and look for a job in Derry because they both love Derry so I think he might want to settle there too.

“Earl would be up and down to Derry every couple of weeks but he runs his own business so some of it he is able to do online and he’s got a bit of work down here as well.

“It is hard to leave a community you have lived in for ten years and I had no intention of leaving. It was shock,” she explained.

The first female bishop also said her new role will bring fresh challenges. “The role is really different and I’m still trying to get my head around that.

“When you are a vicar of a parish it is very clear who your community are and who you are working with and what your role is. Your role is to look after your parishioners and to lead a church.

“When you’re made a bishop your role is very different because there are 20 churches and 20 clergy and your role is more of an overseer. You are leading a diocese instead of a church,” she said.

Bishop Storey also said she will miss the city life in her new rural setting. “Geographically it’s quite widespread and there is no centre in the same way as Derry was the obvious centre for Derry and Raphoe.

“This is more decentralised and it does mean a lot of travel to get places,” she said

Church praying for the ex-treasurer who stole £21,000 in parish funds



Lyndsey Bredin at an earlier court appearance

The congregation of a church whose former treasurer admitted stealing £21,000 of parish funds say they will remember her in their prayers.

Lyndsey Bredin, from Primity Crescent in Newbuildings, Londonderry, has now left the church she stole from, but was supported in court yesterday by parishioners and a minister from the congregation she now attends.

Belfast Telegraph - She yesterday pleaded guilty to committing 10 offences when she was employed by Culmore Church of Ireland in Derry between March 2010 and October 2011.

However, the 27-year-old, who is eight months' pregnant, pleaded not guilty to nine other charges of stealing just over

£11,000 from parish funds, also between March 2010 and October 2011.

In a statement her former church said: "We are relieved, for all concerned, that the legal process has begun to address this distressing matter.

"We thank the relevant authorities for their diligence.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with all who have been affected.

"This includes the parishioners and friends of Culmore and Muff parish union.

"Guided by the compassionate teachings of Christ, we also remember in our prayers our former treasurer."

Ms Bredin, who has worshipped at the Methodist Church in Newbuildings for the past year, was accompanied in court by her parents – who it is believed still attend Culmore Church of Ireland – and the pastor of her new church, Reverend Richard Bryant, and his wife Mary.

Rev Bryant told the [Belfast](#) Telegraph he believed the role of the church is not to judge, but to love.

"It's my job as a representative of her church to be there and give her pastoral support.

"The role of the church is not to judge but to love."

He continued: "We are not like the courts, we are not like any other body in society. We are trying to model what we learn from scripture which is to love everyone and welcome everyone and treat everyone as fairly and equally as possible.

"She is a member of our church and we are there to support her, as we would anyone."

He added: "Forgiveness is a central tenet of Christianity.

"I support her on that basis, that if she has truly sought forgiveness from God, that's what we said and that's what we believe.

"I don't give the forgiveness, God does."

The case, at Derry Crown Court, was adjourned by Judge Philip Babington until February 27 to enable discussions between Ms Bredin's legal team and the Public Prosecution Service.

The defendant has been released on continuing bail until that date.

Pray for those flooded - Moderator

In a letter to clergy before last Sunday's services, the Moderator of the PCI, Very Rev Rob L Craig said -

We are called not only to rejoice with those who rejoice but also to weep with those who weep.

As Moderator, I have written to the Moderators of the Presbyterian Church in Wales and of the United Reformed Church and also to the Archbishop of Canterbury to assure them of the prayers of our Presbyterian family at this time.

In the past couple of weeks, on this side of the Irish Sea, we have been watching with alarm the extensive and rising flood waters in the South of England and Wales. Like myself, many of you and many within your Congregations will have family members living and working in the affected regions. Now, in the past couple of days several regions within the Republic of Ireland have also been seriously affected.

I am aware that many are already praying about the situation. Nevertheless, I am taking this opportunity to write to all of you urging that, this Sunday in particular, you lead your Congregation in prayer. Let us seek the Lord together asking that this cycle of storms coming off the Atlantic may soon cease; let us also pray for the success of the huge effort being expended to bring immediate relief; let us pray for families in distress who have witnessed such damage to their homes, businesses and farms; finally, let us pray for the Christian Congregations in the affected regions that as the Lord's people share in the suffering of others around them they can show compassion and offer help.

Charles Wood Singers applications

Application forms to become a member of the Charles Wood Singers are now available at www.charleswoodsummerschool.org.

The Charles Wood Singers, the resident choir for our week long festival, prepare an extensive programme of music for performance at many different events, under the direction of Dr David Hill, Chief Conductor of the BBC Singers. The closing date for receipt of applications is 18 April 2014.