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## Divining the data in Down & Dromore



**Rev Dr Stanley Gamble, Rector of Kilinchy and Kilmood with parishioners Robin Glendinning and Lady Shiels at the Down & Dromore evening on statistics and mission with Dr Bev Botting, Head of research and Statistics for the Church of England**

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A rector in the diocese posted the following report on Facebook -

Dr Bev Botting brought some good news and some challenges to Down and Dromore Synod members at a meeting in Belvoir Parish Church on Monday evening. Dr Botting, who is Head of research and Statistics for the Church of England, was sharing her findings after analysing all the data available to the diocese. The statistics were based on the NI state census (2011), the annual Easter Vestry returns and the 2016 Church of Ireland Census.

In her presentation Dr Botting gave a picture of the diocese overall but each parish was also given an individual 'dashboard' which they had an opportunity to discuss on the night.

### **Standout findings**

Attendance at worship across the diocese has increased by 4% between 2013 and 2016.

The income of the churches in the diocese has remained consistent overall.

The number of children attending has increased which is encouraging for growth.

However, attendance numbers in the 15–29 age bracket are decreasing.

The numbers of over 60s attending has stabilised, perhaps indicating the start of a re-balancing in the age profile of worshippers.

One fifth of all those attending the Church of Ireland in the whole island are worshipping in Down and Dromore.

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The statistics on Occasional Offices (funerals, baptisms and weddings) show that the Church of Ireland is with families at key moments on their lives.

More men come to church on Remembrance Sunday than on any other, highlighting the missional possibilities of this service.

Parish representatives had the opportunity to ask questions and chat over some of the findings with Dr Botting but they also discussed the following key questions in their groups:

In what ways does your congregation reflect (or not) the local population?

How are children integrated into your worship services?

What does your Church offer for 15 to 29 year olds

How can this information help your mission and outreach?

**The statistics also raise some issues for the future collection of data.**

It's notable, for example, that although Sunday school numbers have been falling we know that children's work in our parishes and church plants is thriving. How can we measure and celebrate that important work?

How do we measure worship during Advent – a time when families want the church to be part of their Christmas, just not necessarily on Christmas Day?

Although financial giving has held up, might we measure if it is keeping pace with inflation?

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We know that people are attending less often because there are other demands on their time on a Sunday, including work. How can we define and measure the size of the worshipping community – those that identify with a church and come at least once a month?

We hope that it was a useful and encouraging evening which was, as Dr Botting said, “first and most importantly about celebrating the good work that’s going on in the parishes of the diocese. We need to remember that these numbers represent people. They tell us about the people that live and worship in our parishes and that’s where the power of the statistics lies.”

## **Church adopts new inclusion policy after death of gay teenager**

A church in Manchester has adopted an inclusion policy and welcomed gay people after a 14-year-old girl killed herself fearing that the church would not accept her as being gay.

St James and Emmanuel in Didsbury has brought in the policy welcoming everyone regardless of race, gender or sexuality following Lizzie Lowe's death in September 2014.

During the inquest into her death, it emerged that the teenager did not want to tell her parents in the church about her sexuality even though they say they loved her whatever her sexual preference was.

Leaders at the church said it was "open and welcoming" before Lizzie's death back in September 2014 but they admitted that sexuality was not discussed for fear of causing controversy.

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Since Lizzie's death the church's congregations has become more diverse.

Songs are often signed and special prayers are offered for same sex couples who've married.

The church has also started a Youth Cafe for 200 young people where they can go to discuss any worries or problems they have in a safe environment.

It has gained new members from the gay community and even invited the first Didsbury Pride event to take place in the grounds.

St James and Emmanuel also joined eleven neighbouring churches to become the first inclusive Deanery in the Church of England. Its Area Dean is gay and each church is sharing ways to welcome and support parishioners.

The Rt Rev David Walker, Bishop of Manchester, told the Manchester Evening News: "What we can do in Manchester will show churches across the country and not just in the Church of England what inclusivity means, how you can really make something of it."

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The move has angered some parishioners and 25 members of the congregation left the church in protest.

## **Church's Newcastle care home wins again**

For the second year in a row, River House, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's (PCI) residential home for older people in Newcastle, County Down, has won first place for the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust region at the Northern Ireland Amenity Council's Best Kept Health and Social Care Facility Awards.

Managed by the Church's Council for Social Witness, the purpose built home opened in 1988 and offers care and support in a Christian environment for 29 residents and enjoys a quiet coastal setting between the sea and the Mourne Mountains.

The annual Amenity Council awards recognise the staff and residents of healthcare facilities who showcase their dedication and pride in their workplace or residential care homes by improving their surroundings.

Speaking after the awards ceremony Linda Wray, PCI's Residential and Supported Services Manager, said, "The Council for Social Witness, our residents and staff in River House are delighted with this award, especially as it comes as we look forward to celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary later this year.

"When someone moves into a care home we encourage them to remain as independent and active as possible. For

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**Pictured at the presentation are, from left to right: Rev Nigel Reid, Convener of the Council for Social Witness' Older People Services Committee, Hazel Dawson, River House Activities Coordinator, Mike Powell, gardener, Jackie Campbell who is a resident at River House, Stephanie Moore-Archer, Acting Home Manager, Molly Montgomery who is also a resident and Linda Wray, Residential and Supported Services Manager**

older people who have always had an interest in gardening we encourage them to maintain an interest in their hobby.

“Residents in River House are very proactive in working in the garden and in caring for the chickens that they have, along with discussing with staff what changes they would like to see in the garden for future seasons. Winning the best residential care facility for the south eastern area last

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year was such an encouragement. To win again in 2018 is overwhelming,” Linda said.

The Best Kept Awards have been in operation for over 60 years, with the Best Kept Health and Social Facility introduced as a category in 1995. Congratulating River House, Doreen Muskett, President of the Northern Ireland Amenity Council said, “The importance of a well-kept health and social facility simply cannot be overstated – buildings and grounds act as a first impression and an untidy atmosphere can lead to negative feelings, especially for those who live in the premises.

“Congratulations to our worthy winner, River House, for their commitment and perseverance in making the home outstanding. It is a testament to both your staff and residents.”

River House is one of five residential care homes for older people run by the Church and welcomes residents from all denominations. Two other residential care homes, Trinity House in Garvagh and Corkey House in Belfast were both highly commended at the awards.

The River House gardens are enjoyed by residents, their families and staff all year round with an additional feature introduced this year – chickens. The two birds, named Ruby and Penny, arrived in July and live in the garden.

“The chickens have been a great addition to the River House community as they have an intrinsic therapeutic value. The residents, supported by the staff, look after them



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which encourages increased mobility and activity,” Linda Wray said.

## **Moderator goes back to school at Omagh Academy**

Having attended Omagh Academy’s Speech Day and Prize Giving on numerous occasions when he was at the school in the 1970s, the Moderator, Rt Rev Dr Charles McMullen, returned to his old school to take on a new role at the annual event – giving the speech. In this blog the former head boy talks about this moving experience, the memories that it brought back for him and the three myths he wanted to dispel for the students arrayed in front of him in the Assembly Hall.

Dr McMullan blogs - Returning to Omagh Academy recently, my old school as guest of honour was, quite simply, one of the most moving experiences of my life. Barbara and I were there for the annual Speech Day and Prize Giving and were warmly welcomed by the new principal, Mrs Ruth Maxwell, senior staff and the chairman of the Board of Governors, Mr Bill Reilly - a longstanding family friend.

As we were taken on a guided tour by two exemplary students, deputy head boy Michael Marechaux and deputy head girl Lucy Brunt, memories came flooding back. Suddenly here I was standing outside classrooms and being reminded of conscientious and dedicated teachers who believed in me and tried to help me reach my full potential.

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Those in the science department soon despaired, however, while those in physical education tried in vain to give me an interest in the



oval ball. There was one memorable moment on what we affectionately called ‘the paddy fields of Campsie’ when a sports’ teacher told me that I would be more favourably disposed at home playing tiddly-winks – or words to that effect.

As I joined the academic procession to the Assembly Hall, I found myself being introduced to Emma Hagan and Ryan Armstrong, head girl and head boy. It was then that a big lump came to my throat, as Ryan was standing in the same place fulfilling the same role as I had done exactly 40 years ago.

Mrs Maxwell was generous in her introduction, highlighting aspects of my academic career and involvement in various school activities, including Publicity Officer of the Model Railway Club. That reference en passant made me burst out laughing!

Barbara was very impressed by the students as she gave out the prizes – their department, eye contact, warm

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handshakes and appreciation. Then it was my turn to give these students advice for the next 40 years of their lives, and hopefully beyond!

I dispelled three myths. Firstly, appearance and admiration do not lead to acceptance. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. Secondly,



**First Rathfriland Presbyterian Church has taken a unique way to advertise their Harvest Thanksgiving 2018 . The display was erected last weekend by John Ervine and his team. The Harvest Thanksgiving services are Sunday 7th October at 11.30am with Rev Kenny Hanna and 7.00pm with Rev Dr John Dixon. You are welcome to visit the church displays on Sunday 7th Oct between 3.00pm and 6.00pm. There will be tea and apple tart in the church hall. The displays are not open to the public on Saturday afternoon this year as the New Irish Youth Choir will be setting up for the Harvest Praise Night which is on Sat 6th October at 7.30pm. Everyone is welcome to all or any of these events.**

[churchnewsireland@gmail.org](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.org)

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performance and accomplishments do not necessarily lead to significance. No one on his death bed wishes he had spent more time in the office! Thirdly, status and recognition do not lead to security. Who we are is always more important than what we do; character comes before career.

What a privilege to share with them that there is a basic need in all of us to know that we are loved with an everlasting love. And only the love of Jesus Christ can ultimately satisfy. As I mentioned his grace and truth, I was drawn to the school motto, Veritas Vincet – Truth will conquer!

And then to the words of the school anthem: “Lead me Lord, lead me in thy righteousness/ Make Thy way plain before my face;/For it is Thou Lord, Thou Lord only/ That makest me dwell in safety.”  
How true! How very true!

## **Mothers’ Union members from around the world meet in Swansea**

Swansea hosted the Mothers’ Union General Meeting last week.

Members gathered from all over the world for the meeting in the Brangwyn Hall. The event began with two services each attended by 600 people in St Mary’s Church.

At the first service the Archbishop of Wales preached with the Bishop of St Davids preaching at the second.

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Both of the services were attended by the Archbishop as well as Bishop Joanna and Bishop Andrew Proud, the Bishop of Reading who is the Mothers' Union Central Chaplain.

The service was also attended by Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan, the High Sheriff and the Lord Mayor as well as Assembly member for Gower, Rebecca Evans.

The services celebrated the work of the Mothers Union worldwide and included a Welsh flavour with Revd Eli Jenkins prayer and God that madest earth and heaven (to the tune of Ar hyd y nos) sung by the choir of St Mary's.

The packed church at each service and the mood of celebration offered a wonderful witness to the city of the work of Mothers Union and the power of God to bring hope and peace everywhere.

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**Lyn Tembey,  
centre,  
Worldwide  
President of the  
Mothers' Union,  
left very early  
the  
morning after  
the General  
Meeting to go to  
Tanzania where  
she opened a  
new MU centre**

After the full day meeting in the Brangwyn Hall, where the Lord Mayor welcomed delegates to the city,



500 people returned for a concert in St Mary's. Morryston Rugby Club Male Voice Choir, Parti Llŵchwr and soprano, Iona Jones, provided a wonderful evening, hosted by a Swansea favourite, Kev Johns.

The evening closed with a rousing rendition of 'We'll keep a welcome in the hillside' and the Welsh National Anthem, hopefully sending people back to their homes all over the world with wonderful memories of Wales.

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## Methodist Church's Continuing Ministry Development Programme

The Methodist Church in Ireland is committed to encouraging all people to grow in their discipleship and further develop their ministry skills.

The Continuing Ministry Development (CMD) programme, a collaboration between [Edgehill](#) and [IMYC](#), is open to ordained ministers, probationers, and to lay workers employed in any capacity in the life of the Church.\*

Attendance at CMD seminars may be used to count towards the 20 hours (pro rata) of courses/training/professional development which ordained ministers and lay workers are required to undertake during each Connexional year.

### **2018 - 2019 CMD Programme:**

Navigating Conflict / Thurs, 18 Oct 2018 / Agape Centre, Belfast (Click [here](#) for info)

Collaborative Leadership / Thurs, 22 Nov 2018 / Edgehill College, Belfast

Preaching\*\* / Sat, 1 Dec 2018 / Edgehill College, Belfast

Intergenerational Church / Thurs, 21 Feb 2019 / Edgehill College, Belfast

Self-Care/Spiritual MOT / Thurs, 28 Mar 2019 / Edgehill College, Belfast

All seminars are held from 10 am - 4 pm. Tea and coffee are available.

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**Following worship at St. Patrick's Church of Ireland, Armagh, to mark the 750th anniversary of the building, The President of the Methodist church met a former parishioner. He later commented, "It was a joy to extend best wishes to the Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, Councillor Julie Flaherty in her year of office. Julie was a member of the Girls' Brigade in Edenderry, Portadown when I was their minister."**



There are no catering facilities so please make your own arrangements. There are a wide range of local shops/amenities nearby. A nominal charge of £5 will be requested on the day to cover expenses. You are asked to register for seminars in advance.

Email: [office@edgehillcollege.org](mailto:office@edgehillcollege.org)

### Seminars and Training Workshops

Edgehill staff are willing to work in collaboration with local congregations, Circuits or Districts to deliver training. Training workshops are offered throughout the year and details are circulated through ministers and local secretaries as appropriate. For further information, or to discuss



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opportunities for local training please contact

[grace.mcgurk@edgehillcollege.org](mailto:grace.mcgurk@edgehillcollege.org)

\* With the exception of the Preaching seminar (which is open to anyone). All seminars are only open to Ordained Ministers, Probationers and employed Lay Workers.

\*\* An Open Seminar with Neil Hudson, London Institute for Contemporary Christianity

[Download PDF](#)

## **Archbishop's views on Brexit don't reflect those of most Anglicans, poll finds**

The Archbishop of Canterbury's views on Brexit are opposite to most Anglicans, a poll has suggested.

The study, published in the journal Religion, State and Society, found that 66 per cent of Church of England Christians voted Leave, compared to a national average of 53 per cent.

Most Rev Justin Welby indicated ahead of the 2016 referendum that he would vote to remain in the European Union.

In fact, according to The Daily Telegraph, just one Church of England bishop, Mark Rylands, Bishop of Shrewsbury, is on record as supporting Brexit.

Greg Smith from the William Temple Foundation and Linda Woodhead from Lancaster University wrote in the London School of Economics and Political Science's blog to try and uncover the reasons for the disparity between "the beliefs of UK evangelicals - including the Archbishop of Canterbury - and 'normal' Anglicans".

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They concluded: "Most Anglicans take a positive view of English culture and ethnicity, and regard the EU as a threat to their heritage, values, identity and parliamentary sovereignty.

"These concerns, which are sometimes lumped together as 'nativist' are greater even than their economic ones."

They also noted that "Anglicans tend to be older than the population as a whole, and that older people were more likely to vote Leave".

## **TRIBUTE - Cork Columban ministered in Korea, Phillipines and USA**

Fr Joseph J. McSweeney was born on 14 March 1933 at Bealick, Macroom, Co Cork.

His parents were Jeremiah and Ellen Long McSweeney. He is survived by his brothers Daniel McSweeney and his wife Ann, Peter McSweeney and his wife Mary of Canada, and many nieces and nephews. He was the brother of the late Patrick, Timmy, John, and Tommy McSweeney.

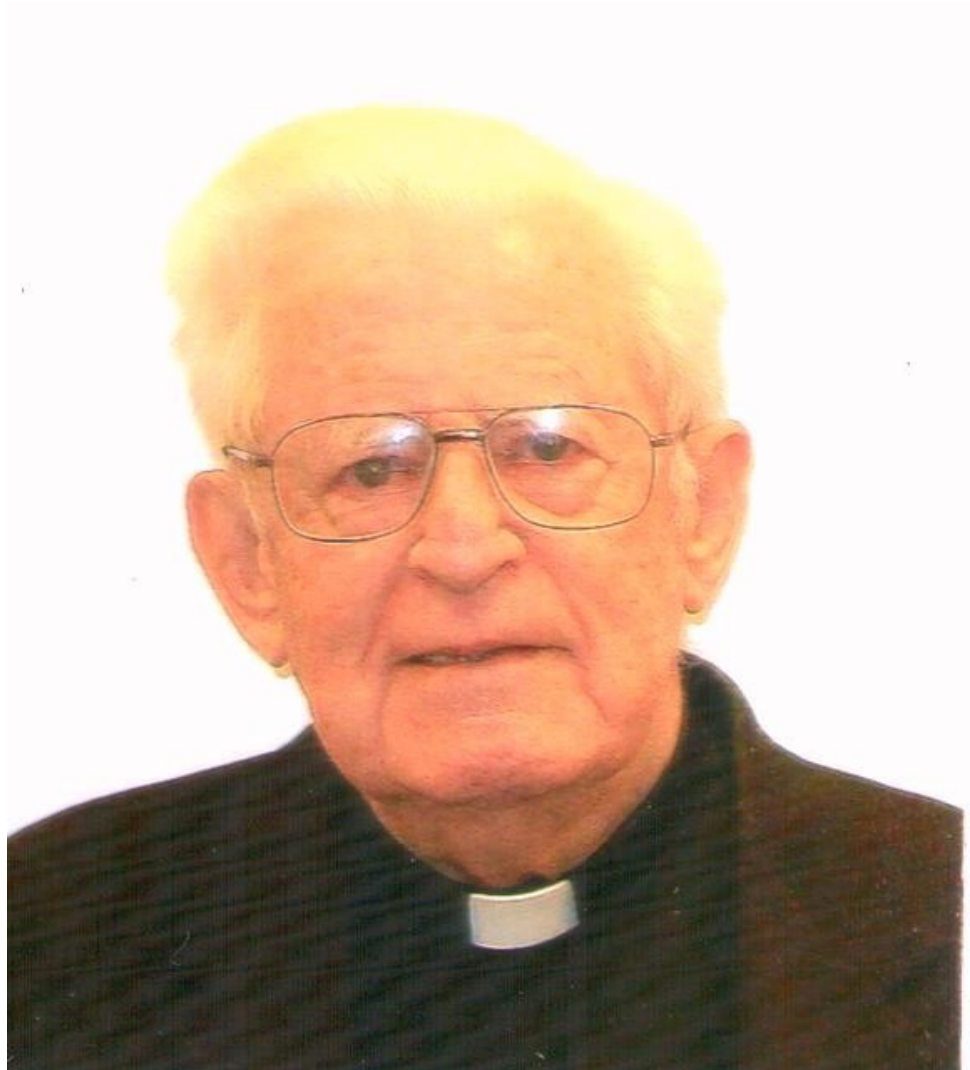
His primary education was at the National School Macroom from 1940 to 1946. His secondary schooling was at De La Salle College, Macroom from 1946 to 1952.

He entered St Columban's Seminary, Dalgan Park, Navan Co Meath in the autumn of 1952. Bishop Kyne of Meath ordained him to the priesthood on 21 December 1958.

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In January 1959, he was appointed to Korea and began language school toward the end of that year in Seoul.

In June 1960, Joe was appointed to Chunchon Vicariate as assistant in St Patrick's parish,



Chunchon (Soyangro).

**Fr Joseph McSweeney**

November 1961 saw him as assistant in the Cathedral parish, Chunchon (Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus). In November 1962 he returned as assistant in St Patrick's parish Chunchon.

In August 1962, he began an advanced language course at Seoul. In August 1964, he went to Samchok as assistant.

In June 1965 Samchok became part of the new diocese of Wonju. He continued as assistant there until he went on vacation in November 1965.

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In November 1966, he became pastor of a new parish called Hwangji or Tji Kangwondo. In March 1968, he opened a doctrine hall in a convent in Hoangji and in October of that same year he began a catechetical course in the Philippines. From 1969 to 1971 he was pastor in Samchok, Wonju diocese.

After vacation he was assigned to the US Region for promotion work and attached to the Milton house in July 1971.

In November 1973, he was transferred for promotion work to St Columban's, Bayside, NY.

He began a renewal course in Maryknoll in January 1981. After the course he returned to the Bayside house.

Joe went with the move of the Columban house in New York City from Bayside to Kew Gardens. In addition to his promotion work, he offered Mass every Friday at a local nursing home. He became involved with a local prayer group and assisted at Pre-Cana Conferences.

He also helped out at times with youth group activities at the Korean parish in Chicago. In June 1990, he became Vicar at the Kew Gardens house. After Fr Ernie Sullivan left the Kew Gardens house in the fall of 1991, Joe became the Superior there until he went to Bristol in the spring of 1992.

He was appointed to do Mission Education and Promotion. He helped throughout Rhode Island at many parishes, schools and religious communities including the RI Korean

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Catholic Community. Fr Joe had a special love for the poor and was always reaching out to those in need.

The annual Columban Festival in Bristol has been going on for over 70 years. Each year Fr Joe would set up a Mission Booth there and could be seen in colourful attire “meeting and greeting one and all.”

There was nothing too unusual for Fr Joe. One day he gathered many motorcycles at our Bristol residence for a Blessing ceremony. Another time he participated in a Blessing of the Mt Hope Bridge which connects Bristol to Portsmouth and Newport.

Fr Joe enjoyed visiting and going out for meals with his friends and Columbans. But as his health declined, he travelled less and less and spent more time in our residence. He took up painting and enjoyed it. He lived in our residence until April 2018 when he went to St Elizabeth Nursing Home in Bristol.

He passed peacefully to the Lord on Thursday, 13 September 2018. May he rest in peace.

