

TheLight

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Seymour
Street
PANTO!



THE MAGAZINE OF THE LISBURN AND DROMORE METHODIST CIRCUIT

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Little Red Riding Hood by Seymour Street

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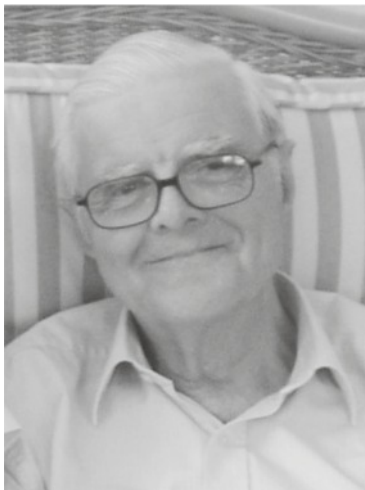
Around the Circuit

In memory of Fred Jackson

Music copies of the new Methodist hymn book 'Singing the Faith' have been purchased by Seymour Street Choir in memory of Fred Jackson who was a faithful member of the choir for many years. The Church has also purchased a digital version of the words.

Fred Jackson was a well known face for many years to anyone who frequented Seymour Street. He was devoted to the church and was a stalwart of the choir in the true sense of its meaning, rarely missing either the weekly rehearsal or a Sunday service.

Fred was quiet and unassuming - a man who really did not like the limelight. He was astute, generous with his words and in his deeds, had a wonderfully



dry sense of humour and, most importantly to him, had a deep personal faith.

He was a son of the manse, and due to his father, Rev William Jackson, being stationed for a time in the South, he boarded at Methody for a number of years.

Fred had many interests and was well travelled. He had a huge video and DVD collection; he enjoyed photography (with pictures from many foreign holidays); and he was a great philatelist with a large collection of stamps.

Although Fred sang gustily on more than one occasion he seemed to have nodded off in the stalls. Paul Good, Music Director at Seymour Street commented 'I don't believe for one minute that Fred was sleeping - rather, he was enjoying the presence of God, listening intently and basking in the glory of the Saviour who meant so much to him.' ■

Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Gwen Kennedy

Gwen was brought up in Coventry, but lived her married life in Belfast. When her husband died in 2002 she moved to Lisburn and joined Trinity. Due to a measles infection when she was only 8 months old Gwen totally lost her sight. However she never let this get her down! She was a wonderful pianist and was organist at Alexander Presbyterian Church for many years.

At the Service the former minister of Alexander Presbyterian spoke warmly of her unique contribution to the life of the church and her remarkably positive approach to life. She often said that 'Disability does not mean 'inability'! Her two daughters also described how Gwen would tackle anything - including wiring a plug or even sawing branches off a tree in the garden! Perhaps the most moving part of the Service was to hear a recording of Gwen telling the story of how she became a Christian.

She loved to have the opportunity to play the piano at services across the Circuit. Those of us who knew Gwen will always treasure the memory of her warm personality and living faith. ■



Gwen with Heidi,
her guide dog

The president Visits Seymour Street

The President of the Methodist Church in Ireland was welcomed to morning worship in Seymour Street Methodist Church on Sunday 15 December the Rev Brian Anderson. Brian said Dr Morris has made a significant contribution to the life of the Methodist Church across Ireland and spoke warmly



The President lets Faith Ferguson try on her special stole

of the impact she had made in many areas of Church life including working with the other Church Leaders

In her address the President challenged members of the Congregation to focus on the true Christmas message and to reach out practically to help those for whom the Christmas season had the potential of being a lonely and painful time

Rev Brian Anderson to move to Bangor

Following a number of meetings of the Connexional Stationing Committee it has been confirmed that Rev Brian Anderson is to leave the Lisburn and Dromore Circuit at the beginning of July this year.



Brian will move to the Bangor and Holywood Circuit and Rev Mervyn Ewing, now serving on the Belfast Jennymount Circuit will join the Ministerial Staff on this Circuit. All appointments are subject to final approval at Conference in Dublin in June of this year

Second Annual Broomhedge Youth Service

Broomhedge Methodist Church has had a successful Youth Club running on a Saturday night for many decades, under the loving leadership of Maudie Boal. However, most of the children attending either are members of other churches or have no church connection. It was suggested by

Society Steward, Terry Lilley, in 2013, that we have a Youth Service in the church to make the Youth Club feel more a part of the main fellowship. This first service was very successful and it was therefore decided that we would have a follow-up service this year. This took place on the morning of 2nd February with a good size congregation of encouraging parents and relatives. The whole service was well conducted by the ever-youthful guest speaker, Shirley Carrington from Seymour St. Shirley had spent a lot of time rehearsing the children, many of whom took part, and she herself delivered a simple message "See I have written your name in the palms of my hands" illustrating the message with signed pictures and the music of various bands and singers such as One Direction, Hugo Duncan, and of course (as his no. 1 fan) Daniel O'Donnell. A most enjoyable service, which, I'm sure, will have a successor.



New appointments

Deborah Kinghan was recently appointed Society Steward at Seymour Street and David Anderson Property Steward. Harold Baird has been appointed Chairman of Damask and Wilson Stewart steps into Harold's previous role as Treasurer of Damask.



Deborah Kinghan



Harold Baird

Team on Mission 25 @ Trinity 2014

So after an amazing 2013 with TOM 24 at Trinity we had the arrival of TOM 25 with an extra member! Olwyn, John, Natasha, Jordan and Bethany joined us for a full week activities! The team had chosen Galatians 5:22-23 as their theme for the week so in Church we had a 'Fruits of the Spirit' smoothie before the team led Trinity Zone on their first day.

On Sunday evening the team shared in the Circuit Service with the President, Rev. Dr Heather Morris, through a drama and a song followed by questions in the Church Hall.



During the week the team did not just get involved in the youth organisations but all aspects of the Church such as Girls' Brigade, Craft Club, Luncheon Club, Evergreens (which they nearly started a war with Scategories), Shell Club and Toddlers. They also got involved in leading

assemblies, leading Scripture Union, RE Classes in the local schools and a service in Lillie Court.

The Team led two special events, the first being a Pizza Praise Evening on Friday 7th which was attended by over 60 primary school children who made crafts, sang, danced, played games and had

Pizza. This was a fantastic night which the children all enjoyed.

Next up for the team was Saturday Night: Live an opportunity for the boys and girls from our BB, GB and YPod came together for a night of activities including games, worship and a workshop on Prayer.

As the young people headed home from Saturday Night: Live the team finished final preparations for Sunday morning worship. Unlike TOM 24 this team didn't finish with the morning service – they had a quick lunch and then back to the church for Messy Church and a final see you later at Soul Mates!!

Trinity was blessed by the visit of Olwyn, John, Natasha, Jordan and Bethany and we will be remembering them in our prayers as they continue to serve Christ throughout Ireland over the next few months. ■



The President at Broomhedge

Rev Peter Mercer

The President Rev Dr Heather Morris had a busy weekend around Lisburn at the beginning of February. From a workshop with Magheragall Methodist on the Saturday she was then the main speaker at a Circuit Service in Broomhedge Methodist on the Sunday evening (and she had managed to preach at Braniel Methodist in the morning!) Broomhedge Church was packed for the service, which was



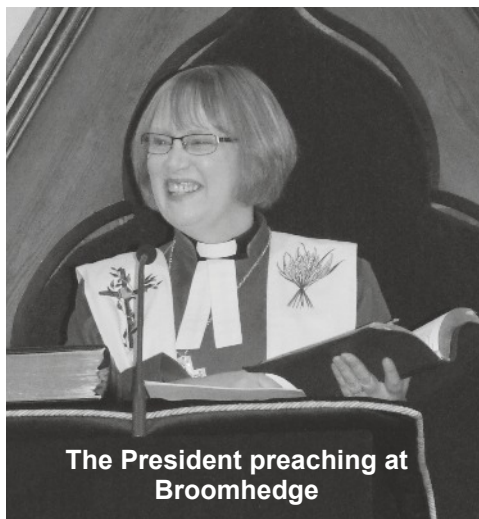
the passage from Micah 6: 1- 8 to again emphasise the need for true discipleship: *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God*

After the service there was the traditional cup of tea and a good supper provided by the ladies of Broomhedge. Following the tea, there was also a question and answer session, chaired by Rev Brian Anderson, at which both Heather and the Team on Mission fielded questions from those assembled, questions such as "Do you think the Methodist Church is still a Connexion?" and "Do you think the Presidential term should be continued beyond the traditional one year?" Good discussion followed and it was a fitting end to what had been a great couple of days of fellowship and challenge. ■



The President presents Daphne Hannah with her Local Preacher Certificate

led by the local minister Rev Peter Mercer, and was a very "busy" one. Not only was the President speaking, but the Team on Mission also took part and there was a short service of welcome to Mrs Daphne Hanna of Seymour Street as a fully qualified local preacher. This part of the service was presided over by the District Superintendent Rev Brian Anderson. Jesus' invitation to follow him, and all the objections put forward as to why that invitation couldn't be readily accepted, formed the basis of a challenging drama by the Team on Mission – what does it really mean to be a true disciple? The Team also sang a very moving piece "Desert Song". President Heather Morris used



The President preaching at Broomhedge

A date with the President

Rev Peter Mercer

On Saturday 2nd February over 30 people arrived at Magheragall Methodist Church to be welcomed with cups of coffee/ tea and scones provided by Magheragall Parish Church. But this wasn't just a social occasion; those attending had come to listen to and to be challenged by our President, the Rev Dr Heather Morris.



whom should we go, what if people don't listen, what would we have to say?

Heather developed her message through talk, discussion groups and group activities. In one of the latter we were invited to stand in areas approximating to the countries of the world. To begin with we were to stand in the country where we were born, then where we were aged 21 and finally where we were when we heard God speaking to us in a meaningful way.



Heather took as her theme words from Mark 3: 14: "Jesus appointed twelve-designating them apostles-that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach."

There are two parts to the text:

- that they might be with him
- that he might send them out

In other words, when the twelve were with Jesus they were receiving instruction, practical advice and encouragement for the proclamation of the Gospel, but without the sending out there would have been no point in being with him in the first place. Heather used the illustration of a poster she had in her room when she was growing up. The poster showed a ship in a harbour and underneath were the words:

A ship is safe in harbour, but that's not what ships are built for.

Heather made the point that the church is not just about having followers, but about making disciples so that they in turn may make more disciples. We are to be sent out, even though that may be a daunting process for many - to



The whole morning passed in the twinkling of an eye and before we knew it we were having our lunch, again provided by Magheragall Parish.

It was a great morning and we hope and pray that many of the ideas encountered there will be used in the days, weeks and months to come to make our church more of a missional organisation. ■

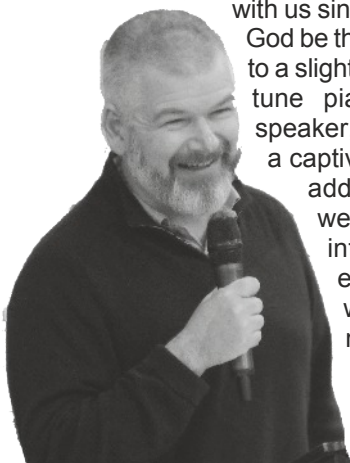
The message of Global Vision 2014

Lindsay Easson reports on his first visit to Global Vision

If your image of missionary meetings is a bit stuffy, then maybe like me you need to go along to Global Vision to have the cobwebs blown away! Yes, it did start

with us singing 'To God be the Glory' to a slightly out of

tune piano, but the main speaker, Brian Heasley, gave a captivating and challenging address, the seminars were diverse and interesting and by the end of the day we were worshipping to more modern praise ably led by young musicians drawing us into a time of prayer and reflection.



off the rails, later being expelled from school and ending up in prison four times!

He was converted when in prison in England and went on to become a Baptist Pastor before being called to begin the new work in Ibiza.

Brian shared vital insights into place of prayer in the Church's life of mission which for him began with an appreciation of prayer in the life of Count Zinzendorf and the early Moravians who had such an influence on John Wesley. With a backdrop of the famous Michaelangelo painting of God

The Keynote Address

Brian Heasley, founded the 24/7 prayer movement when he was called to Ibiza where he worked for 7 years praying for and ministering to the young people flocking there to party. He was born in East Belfast, went to school in Craigavon but when at the age of 11 his mother died he went

There's no point in being light in the light

stretching out with every sinew to impart the gift of speech to man, Brian challenged us to use this special gift to pass on the message. A leader who forgets to pray has not realised its significance (Spurgeon), and a missional church needs to be a praying church.

We cannot live unless we both breathe IN and breathe OUT, so it is with the Christian life, unless we breathe out God's message in our lives we are not functioning as Christians.

The clearest message from Brian was that we need to reject the 'Judgemental' ethos that pervades

Trinity members enjoying Lunch together at Global Vision



society today (eg X Factor and The Apprentice), and stop being so 'Risk Averse', 'Don't be conformed to this world', as Paul says. We need to take risks in order to reach out for Jesus. There is no point in being light in the light, we need to be light in the darkness.

Responsive Sensitivity

In Ibiza a group were praying in a room at 3am when there was knock at the door - 'Sorry to interrupt your meeting, but someone out here needs your help!' the man said. Is that not what Jesus is saying to us - 'Sorry to interrupt your cosy meeting - there's somebody out in the real world who needs your help!' We need to position ourselves among the needy, offering to pray for people and give them practical help. The church needs to concentrate on blessing - not selling!

**We need to be
blessing not selling**

In our mission we need to be sensitive, sensitive to the question BEHIND the question of the



The 'Pop-up' Church

person we meet, and to the gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit so that our witness becomes one of responsive sensitivity.

Vision for Evangelism in Germany

Parked outside the front door of the conference venue was a big yellow bus! In fact it was The Big Yellow Bus of the Methodist Church in Germany, which has travelled round Europe as part of the outreach of the Church. Equipped

with a cinema and coffee bar, the bus stops in public places, villages and a range of venues where the team with the bus perform drama, and praise and share the gospel message.



Barry Sloan, mission partner and Director of Evangelism in Germany

Barry Sloan, one of our missionary partners, is Director of Evangelism for the Methodist Church in Germany and he shared a little of his vision for the work. As well as the yellow bus he brought a 'Pop-up Church' which is much like a bouncy castle except you can worship in it!

During the week after Global Vision the Big Yellow Bus was being used for mission work in Coleraine.

Mission is partnership

After the opportunity to attend two from a wide range of seminars the General Secretary of the MMS (Ireland), Rev Laurence Graham shared that the Methodist Church is increasingly seeing all mission, whether home or overseas, as one, whether it is in a local church in Belfast or Germany, the Surf Project in Cork or a school in Belize. Today we work in partnership with Christians across the world and the prayer is that it will bless both those who send and those who receive, those who go and those who return. ■

The 'Big Yellow Bus' used for outreach across Europe



Stepping out in Faith in Belize

Based on a talk by Maggie Patchett
at Global Vision

Belize, formerly British Honduras, is a small English speaking state in Central America between Guatemala and Mexico. The principal industry is tourism as it is a beautiful country, boasting the 2nd longest coral reef in the world, tropical beaches, diverse wildlife and amazing scenery. It is similar in size to Wales and has a



**New Church recently opened after
outreach work by three Methodist ladies**

specialist cancer unit was only opened in 2011. For many years Belize has been a trafficking route for drugs from South America to Mexico, although during 2013 progress was made in reducing this. Perhaps due to the drugs trade there is a very high homicide rate with an annual rate of 39 deaths per 100,000 compared with only 1 per 100,000 in the UK.

In the midst of this struggling society local Christians have been stepping out in faith. In 2011 three ladies from a Methodist congregation started to build a new church. First they provided food and clean water to people in need then and soon they were able to form a congregation and build a new church.

The Methodist Church runs a number of Schools, including Wesley College in Belize City, which is very highly regarded and many parents want to send their children there and to the other

Methodist Schools. As the Methodist Church in Belize has no financial resources the Container



**Primary pupils may do caretaking duties if
they cannot afford the fees**

First phase of Belmopan High School which opened in September 2013



population of about 1/3 million, but even that relatively small population includes many diverse ethnic groups - Creole, European, Maya and Mennonites for example. Half the population are under 18, over 43% live in real poverty and 46% of 16-24 year olds are unemployed. The country has no national health service and the first



Ministry from Northern Ireland has supplied resources which are greatly appreciated. During 2014 JMA in Northern Ireland is also supporting Wesley College in Belize and money raised will be used to improve the facilities and security of a playground next to the school.

Although the government pays 100% of the salaries of primary school teachers parents still have to contribute to cover the running costs of the schools, and often this is done in kind for example by children carrying out the caretaking work or by donations of food. Sadly over 16% or



Belize has beautiful beaches



The Cunningham family who have recently had to return to Australia

primary ages children do not attend school. During the holidays repair work and repainting is carried out by the teachers themselves, and Primary Schools are very poorly supplied with resources such as books.

Over 60% of secondary school age children do not attend school as there are not enough places. In 2012 the Belize Government therefore asked the Methodist Church to build a new High School in Belmopan. Through missionary giving from the UK building work commenced in March 2013 and the first phase was completed ready for the 96 1st year pupils in September 2013. However, the building needs a 2nd story built onto it, ready for September 2014, otherwise there will be nowhere for the 2nd intake of pupils! As the Government only pays 75% of the teacher's salaries in secondary school there are school fees of about £500/year. Through our missionary giving the school is able to offer some scholarships to allow more children to attend.

In 2012 Methodist Church in Ireland Mission Partners Andrew and Julie Cunningham, and their family, took up the work in Belize, Andrew with responsibility for five churches and Julie working to support the development plans for the four Methodist Schools. Unfortunately due to a serious health issue the Cunninghams have recently had to return to Australia, where Julie is from, and will not be able to return to Belize. Nevertheless the Methodist Church in Ireland remains committed to supporting the church in Belize in whatever way it can and it is likely that the incoming Methodist President for 2014/15, Rev Peter Murray, will visit the Church in Belize during his year in office. ■

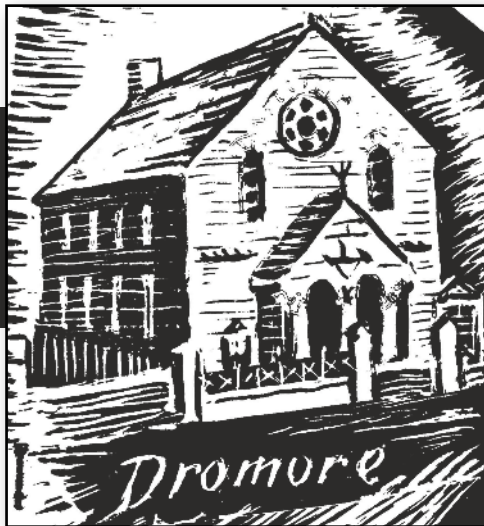


**Belmopan Methodist High School Project
Giving Belizean Youth
hope for the future**



Dromore's youth training just keeps on growing!

The June 2013 edition of the Light reported on a new venture taking place with Dromore Youth Club in partnership with the Southern Education & Library Board Youth Service. The first year was spent delivering a Leadership in Youth Work Programme. Since then the work has been expanding and developing in new and exciting ways. So it was about time you had an update....



There are now over 20 people in the 14-17 age range registered on the course this year. Paddy Hughes of the SELB Youth Service is the course leader and now, in his second year delivering the course here, has got to know the young people well. There is a mixture of backgrounds of those attending: urban, rural, church and non-church but the various exercises have turned them into a formidable team!

The 30 hour programme has been designed for those who have been involved in youth work in the past and who are now seeking to develop leadership skills. The course is split into 3 areas: Leadership, Communication and Planning & Delivering Youth Activities. As the course is under the overall supervision of the Youth Work Training Board for Northern Ireland, it is hoped that the young people will work towards two OCN qualifications during the course of the year. As part of this, the young people have organised a grotto for Santa which the young children of Junior Youth Club really enjoyed! Their current project is setting up a Youth Forum which includes preparing and delivering presentations. At a later date they will travel to Newry to be part of a regional forum with 100 other young people. Currently, they are the only Youth Forum in the whole Banbridge district.

Alongside this there has been a similar development using the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme again with the help of the SELB. Fifteen of the young people are registered in the Bronze or Gold levels and in common with other D of E programmes they will do voluntary work, skills training, physical programmes and of course the famous "Expedition"! Youth club leader Fiona McCullough has been appointed coordinator and assessor for the group and is currently helping and preparing the young people and answering such questions as: "What are gaiters?" which come her way! The first expeditionary walk will take place in the Mourne Mountains in early March and the young people are "very excited about it." New members to the training and Duke of Edinburgh Awards are very welcome and anyone interested just needs to contact Betty or Fiona for more details.

The leaders of the Youth Club have worked hard to make sure that these projects are will be able to provide great opportunities for the young people from within the congregation and without. Most recently, they had to appeal against threatened budget cuts that would have withdrawn the SELB support. For the moment, their plans are secure and the future is looking good. Who knows what the young people of Dromore will be doing next!

Our thanks to Fiona, Betty, Mark and Paddy for taking time out to tell us about these recent developments. ■

What does the Secretary of Conference do?

The Editor talks to the Rev Donald Ker

While we are all familiar with the prominent role of the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, much of the day to day organisation and administration of the Church is under the direction of the Secretary of Conference, Rev Donald Ker. I met with Donald at 1 Fountainville Avenue, Belfast, the rather unassuming administrative HQ of the Methodist Church, merely indicated by the sign 'Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland', which is the legal body owning much of the property and administering the finances of the Methodist Church. The modest office suite is indicative of the 'tight ship' which Donald assures me the Church runs when it comes to financing administration, allowing the maximum resources to be deployed back to support the wider work of the church.

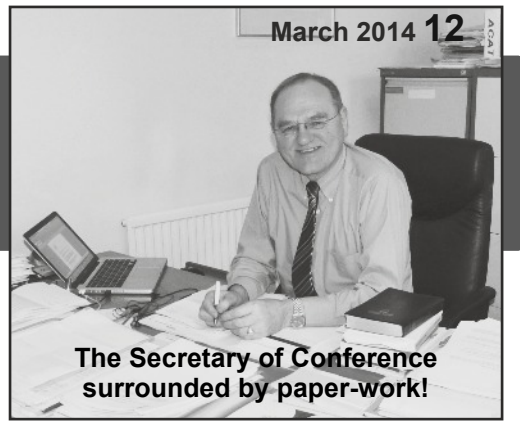
When Donald was ordained and took up his first charge in 1976 in Bray, DunLaoghaire and Blackrock he envisaged himself remaining in the pastoral ministry, but that was not to be. Soon he was called to be Methodist Chaplain to the Dublin Universities and then to Queen's University where he also started to teach New Testament Theology. He was a full time lecturer from 1991 to 2003, then became superintendent of the Belfast Central Mission

until his appointment as Secretary of Conference in 2007.

An influential Role

The annual Methodist Conference is the decision making body of the Church and one of Donald's key roles is to ensure that each Conference runs smoothly, with all the necessary reports duly published in the 'Blue Book', received by Conference, debated where appropriate and decisions voted on. In recent years in order to clear the way to allow for more strategic thinking and reflection many of the reports have been received *'en bloc'* without being considered individually. The 2013 Conference in particular saw its main aim as seeking God's guidance and leading for the future direction of the Church.

The Secretary of Conference, however, is not just an administrator, he is a key member of the small 'Purpose and Leadership' group along with the President, past President, President Elect, Home Mission Secretary and others that



The 'Top Table' considering serious business at the 2013 Methodist Conference



The Secretary of Conference



sets the goals of Conference and indeed over several years has been moving the Church to streamline its structures and seek a new vision for how God wants it to take forward its witness and worship. Already the plans are in place for the 2014 Conference, which will be Donald's penultimate as secretary before he retires in 2015, and following on from 2013 the aim will be to think and pray about how Methodists in the community can become more faithful and effective disciples through 'Warm hearts', 'Tough hands', and 'Wet Feet'.

Representing the Methodist Church

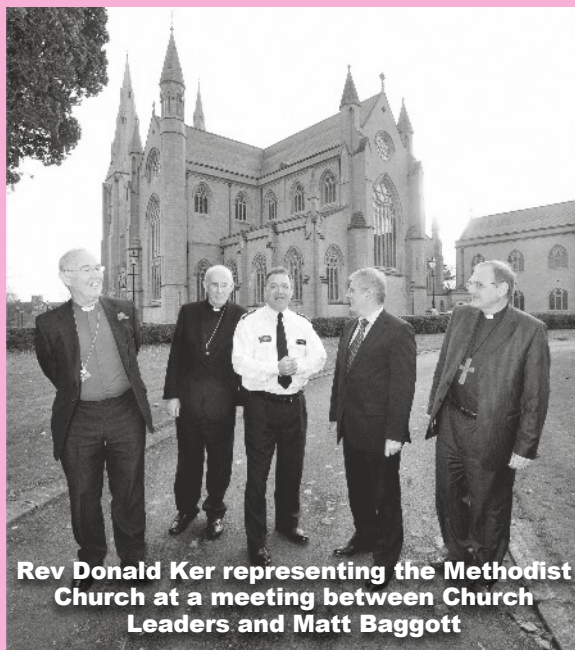
However, Conference is only one facet of the work of the Secretary of Conference. Throughout the year he is called to represent the Methodist Church in Ireland on many committees, public bodies and representative groups. For example he is co-chair of the European Methodist Council and attends the

World Methodist Council. He meets regularly with other church leaders in the Irish Council of Churches, the Irish Inter-Church Committee and the Conference of European Churches. On the day I met Donald he was about to head off to represent the Methodist Church in discussions with the Girl Guides about the rewording of their Promise, and in his diary were also meetings with the Department of Education and Learning about teacher training and a meeting about a review of Prison Service Chaplaincies.

By virtue of his office Donald is a key member of many of the committees of the Methodist Church, such as Home Missions, Faith and Order, General Committee, Communications Committee, and the Council on Social Responsibility. He is able to contribute a unique overview of the life of the Church and thus guide the decisions of the various committees towards the greater good, avoiding unnecessary conflicts along the way. A particularly important role is that of the Stationing Committee which recommends the ministers who will move to a new church or role each year.

Key Pastoral Role

When asked what is his more important role, however, Donald replied that it is his 'pastoral' role. As church members we turn to our Minister in times of need, but who does our Minister turn to? Illness, family problems, the stress of dealing with difficult situations in the life of a church, or a crisis of personal faith can all lead ministers, Church leaders and lay members of the Church, to turn to the Secretary of Conference for help. Donald has to provide wise council in many different situations, judging when it is necessary to take steps to protect the well being of a minister, the spiritual well being of a church and the reputation and interests of the Methodist Church.



Rev Donald Ker representing the Methodist Church at a meeting between Church Leaders and Matt Baggett

As if all of the functions already discussed do not already fill more than 100% of the Secretary of Conference's time, he also acts as Secretary to the Board of Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland. This body of 36 clergy and lay members handles matters associated with the legal status of the Methodist Church in Ireland such as its charitable status and gift aid. The Trustees also hold ownership of much of the property and administer the finances including the comprehensive assessment through which each Society contributes to the central costs of the Church. An important issue currently under consideration, for example, is how the Edgehill College premises could be used more effectively to benefit the Church as a whole.

Part of a Team

Asked if he has more power than the President, the Secretary of Conference gave an emphatic NO! But he does feel privileged to be part of the team working with the President to bring about change. The world we are living in is changing rapidly and so too is the Church. Donald observed that people are becoming less conscious of denominations and this together with the

welcoming in of people from a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities can lead to friction, and a loss of a Methodist identity. Although by far the smallest of the big four churches in Ireland, the Methodist Church more than pulls its weight, and often has a distinctive message of moderation and healing. Also changing, from Donald's perspective, is the expectation of our members that the church should have a fuller involvement in the community.

Moving on

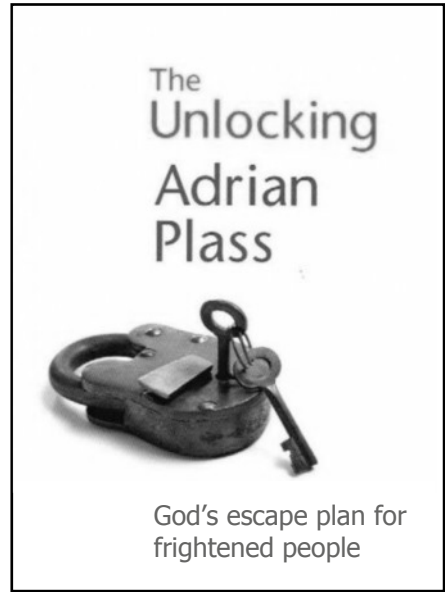
Donald's time as Secretary of Conference will draw to close when he retires after the 2015 Conference and he and Sandra will move to England to live near their son and his family. Since coming to Lisburn at the start of his term he and Sandra have appreciated the warm welcome and support of the people of Seymour Street, and we too have appreciated their fellowship. While the name of his successor has yet to be announced we look forward to welcoming them to our Circuit when they in their turn move into the 'Manse' of the Secretary of Conference on Belsize Lane! ■



Nineteen young people were received into full membership at a service in Seymour Street on 19th January.

What Lent means to me

Rev Colin Gracie



"We don't really go in for that sort of thing". That seems to sum up the reaction that I felt for most of my life when the topic of Lent was raised. It all seemed a bit too much like saying that we had to give up good things in order to keep God happy. So it was that on Ash Wednesday during my student years, I and the Muslim medical students were the only ones queuing for the beef pie in the student canteen, instead joining the long line queuing for the fish dinner.

During my years on Circuit things have changed a bit. As I work through sermons, week by week. I came to realise that Easter was a wonderful celebration that just simply didn't pop up in the beginning of April. Through the Gospels, particularly Mark and Luke's accounts, we see Jesus and his disciples journeying towards the Passover celebrations in Jerusalem. The stories of miracles, parables and teaching build up the tension and excitement that something significant is going to happen. In a sense, I wanted to journey with him too. By the time Holy week comes around, I feel as if the special services are simply the next stage in this progression.

It's not just with Lectionary readings and Sunday sermons that I find my self being drawn in to the Gospel events. Part of my personal devotions usually includes a Lenten type book. Adrian Plass's "The Unlocking" has been used for more than one year. Each day's reading is short and to the point, and of course, couched in his own style of humour. Even our own Superintendent has posted a Lenten blog on the wonders of the internet.

There are those I know who still insist on "giving something up for Lent" – chocolate, sweets or whatever, only to binge on Easter Sunday. To be honest, it still doesn't grab me. Perhaps I'm too fond of creature comforts to forgo chocolate digestives or perhaps I prefer to think of Lent as "preparation time". I'd love to say that every year I adopt some deeply spiritual habit for forty days and forty nights but I think it would be more truthful to say that for forty days and nights I try to be a bit more spiritual in the hope that when Easter arrives it has become a habit too worthwhile to want to return to the old ways. ■

Lent as "Hearing a cry from the Poor"

A reflection in Lent reprinted from the online ministry of Creighton University

Each year Lent is offered to us as a time of personal renewal in terms of our relationship with the Lord. Our renewal becomes concrete when it comes down to self-denial which allows us to live our faith more authentically. The alms we give helps us express our gratitude and allows us to exercise generosity. However, Lent can also be a time to focus beyond ourselves. It can be a time of renewal that is offered us to hear the cry of the poor and grow in solidarity with them. Ultimately, this is spiritual renewal as well and helps us grow closer to the Lord who tells us that if we wish to love him, we must express that love as love for the least of our brothers and sisters.

How can I make this Lent a time to hear the cry of the poor? If we recognize a desire to be more attentive to the poor and to grow in affection for and solidarity with them, then it is likely that this is a gift we have received. Many things may have happened to open us to this gift, but it is important to name it and welcome it. Perhaps God has been offering us this gift for some time and preparing us to receive it this Lent.

Who are the poor? Who are most in need? Who are most pushed to the margins of neglect and powerlessness? It doesn't take a great social analysis to come up with some immediate answers. Listening to the news - locally, nationally, globally - is a beginning. Who appears to be suffering? Who seems to be tremendously burdened? Not all the poor are in the news, but a sensitive scan of the news is a place to start.

The misery of the poor seems almost inescapable. Many are trapped in poverty. So limited are their opportunities, their poverty has become structurally entrenched. Their lives are severely diminished; their hopes are crushed by a persistent and oppressive poverty that denies to all but the boldest the basics of human dignity and the opportunity to live happy and fulfilled lives. Perhaps the most pressing and painful examples are forced migrants (refugees, migrant workers, the undocumented); inner city populations (racial minorities, the elderly, the homeless, the persistently poor); indigenous peoples at home and abroad; and the globally destitute, more than 800 million people who go to bed hungry each night."

What do I do when I begin to hear the cry of the poor? We tend to not think of the poor very much

because to do so can render us sad or feeling "unable to help." But, if we use a time like Lent to try to reflect upon the situation of the poor near us and around the world, then the poor will help us come to know God's special love for them. In this reflection we will discover God's love for us because we will experience a solidarity with the poor. We can become aware of how narrow our concerns are or how self-centered we have become. Reflection upon the situation of the poor will draw us closer to them, helping us understand the mystery of radical dependence on God. Ultimately, our closeness with the poor during Lent will make us more "Christ-like" for he is the one who became completely one with us.

How will my prayers be different during Lent? If we

spend Lent reflecting upon the situation of the poor, we will begin to pray differently. We will see not only see their radical dependence upon God but we will find ourselves turning to God on their behalf, before we ask anything of God for ourselves. This kind of prayer purifies our prayer. It helps us pray with a renewed spirit. It frees us from so many of the demands we can place on God, especially for things like comfort or success or just getting things my way. With the poor as our prayer companions, we can surrender more easily and ask God for what really matters - first on their behalf and then for ourselves. Our prayer for ourselves will more freely become a prayer that we might be transformed to be better servants for others, especially conscious of those on the margins of Society. It will ultimately lead us to ask the Lord to help us make our lifestyle more simple. It can lead us to ask to be freed from our dependence upon so many of the benefits of the unjust social structures of our world. Finally, it might lead me to ask for the courage to act against those unjust social structures, even to dismantle them.



Lent spent hearing the cry of the poor starts with awareness, is spent in growing solidarity and leads to deeper compassion and transformative prayer. ■



Christians against poverty



TCI (Trinity Community Initiatives) recently held three successful sessions on home money management and they proved so popular that we are planning to hold another soon.

The CAP Money Course, devised by Christians Against Poverty, is a revolutionary money management course that aims to show people budgeting skills and a simple, cash-based system that really works. As many as 10000 took the course through local church's just like Trinity last year.

It challenges people to live without relying on credit cards, tackle existing financial problems and save for a stable future. The system is very flexible and can help people debt proof their lives.

There's no cost, there's no need to share any of your finance details, it's open to everyone and we would love to see people from outside the church family. Most of those at our first course had no connection with the circuit at all. There is a fantastic opportunity for evangelism during a course, so would ask especially ask everyone to pray for lives to be changed.

It's a useful for all times of life from the newly retired, students, families, anyone planning saving for something special and people with loans and debts they want to straighten out. We even have some special extra elements covering for example couples, young families, retired persons and a spiritual module.

TCI will be looking at expanding the course to hold workshops for 14 - 16 year olds. It will try to teach young people how to build a balanced budget so that they can live within their means. This course is the first step towards giving our young people the tools they need to avoid many of the problems of managing their money.

Hebrews 13:5

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

If anyone would like to know more about CAP Money or the work by TCI at Trinity, please email us at capmoney@trinitylisburn.com or phone the Trinity office at 02892605335.

For more about CAP see www.capuk.org ■

From the registers..

Seymour Street

BAPTISM

Harvey Alexander, son of Paul Dorritt and Adele Gray
Colin Gary Mason, son of Sharon Mason and
Foster-son of Brian and Lesley Anderson

WEDDINGS

Michael Graham Bridge and Caroline Louise Baird

DEATHS

Mrs Joan Kernohan, 30 Llewellyn Avenue
Mr Gerald Hanna, 5 Ruskin Park
Mrs Heather McCullagh, 8 Woodland Gardens
Mrs Gwen Kennedy, Parklands

Trinity

WEDDINGS

Jonny Hill and Leanne Anderson

BAPTISMS

Dylan Ray Sofley
Joshua Zak Sofley
Tyler Jon Sofley
Grace Eva Elizabeth Montgomery

DEATH

Mrs Gwen Lilley, 8 Knockmore Park

Dromore

DEATH - Dora Greer,

Priesthill

DEATH - Muriel Pierson

Little Red Riding Hood



While some church activities might be described as being a 'bit of a Pantomime!' Seymour Street's Little Red Riding Hood was the real thing - oh yes it was! Directed by the experienced Lynne Trainor - of the talented McCalister family - and with her husband Brian Trainor as the lead Dame Dumpty the rest of the roles were filled by 33 Seymour Street members who morphed into their stage roles remarkably easily - Steven McCrea as the evil Jack Frost, Shirley Carrington as Lily the Cleaner, Simon Kinghan as Danny Dumpty and Beth Parkinson as Little Red Riding Hood spring to mind!

hugging her mop as though it was Daniel O'Donnell than with it on the floor!

Beth Parkinson was a delightful Little Red Riding Hood ably assisted by Vida, Maid Marian, Robin Hood and Will Scarlet played by Susy Good, Caitlyn McCrea, Emelia Wright and Alyson Clarke. After the evil Jack Frost assisted by the deceptively cuddly wolf (Richard Wiseman) captured Little Red Riding Hood it took the extra-terrestrial interception of Dr Who (Paul Good) to rescue her. Meanwhile the love-struck Danny Dumpty (Simon Kinghan) was having no success in impressing Millie Muffet (Wendy Piper).



After carefully trying to follow the plot I am really not sure who married who in the end - but everyone was happy ever after - except the evil Jack Frost who was betrayed by the wolf - 'He's behind you!' and bonked

While the plot was as convoluted as all pantomime plots are, based on a script written in the distant past by Lynn's father, the humour was brought bang up-to-date with many references to Seymour Street personalities such as Rev Winston Good - 'That wee man who likes to think he can preach!' said Lily and Terry Lily (no connection) who would no doubt have a difficult job to clean up the mess left untouched by the lazy cleaner Marigold (Deborah Kinghan - she will have to do better as Society Steward!) who spent most of the time with her feet up. Lily spent more time



Little Red Riding Hood



on the head. The biggest round of applause of the evening went to the children playing the Forest Creatures who performed a dance through the forest.

I have been careful to avoid saying anything about Brian Trainor as our Pantomime Dame in case Equity sends me a bill, because he is the consummate professional who loves to *ad lib* as he goes along, probably necessary with this sort of a show! Brian has indeed played many leading roles in Northern Ireland shows, most recently as 'Teyve' in Fiddler on the Roof in the Belfast Opera House, and so Seymour Street is indeed fortunate to be able to draw upon his musical and acting abilities.

Have you heard the story of the Minister of Religion, two Hospital Consultants and the Bank Manager? If



anyone thought the pantomime plot was dragging a bit then there was light relief in the form of the cast just mentioned (alias the Anderson Sisters) performing live on stage! Wilson Stewart on the trumpet usually turns a bit red

when he plays in church, but this time he was playing so hard his face was scarlet (in spite of being only miming!) and Richard, Brian and Paul only needed to have shaved their legs to be unmistakable from the real thing!

Supported by an equally large cast of musicians, and teams doing make up, sound, lights, stage management, props, costumes, etc. everyone put on a tremendous show - well done. Perhaps it won't be long before the next Seymour Street Pantomime!

The TIMES arts critic

