

BALLINA CENTRE OF MISSION

June 2021



Emma Rodrigues and Marian Edwards

Is there light at the end of a very long lockdown tunnel? Corrie Ten Boom's quote encourages us to consider - "When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer".

The last few months were indeed dark and difficult for many, but by God's grace it seems that we are facing brighter days.

Updates

Gift bags for families:

St. Patrick's Day in Ballina, we sent out gift bags to the children of Mill View and Greenhills Estates. Through continuing connections, we have been able to keep contact with the children who used to come to our Kidz Clubs on the Big Blue Bus. A few volunteers crocheted shamrocks for all the bags. The St. Vincent de Paul and Dealz of Ballina also contributed colouring books, calendars, playing cards and sweets for the children. A ceramicist from Sligo made Shamrock fridge-magnets. We also included scripture colouring pages and a copy of St. Patricks Prayer in each bag.



For Easter, we filled the bags with easter eggs, gifts and Easter colouring sheets. We also added a new booklet from Ruth Gyves, entitled Joy for the Soul, which she had produced just in time for Easter. Ruth is a Diocesan Lay Reader in the Dublin and Glendalough Diocese of the Church of Ireland. On this occasion, we distributed the bags of joy to the elderly, the medically vulnerable and carers in the community. A volunteer from Ballina Methodist Church also made flower posies, which we gave to neighbours and friends of Ballina Churches Together. We delivered flowers, chocolates, gospel c.ds and booklets to the retired Mercy nuns who reside in Ballina. It was a joy to bless so many people, who were somewhat weary of lockdowns.

Pastoral care:

Our work has continued in pastoral care. There are people who live alone, the elderly - isolated from family and friends, some of whom do not have a support network. We continued all through the lockdowns to reach out to them through various means ... phone calls, messaging, post and doorstep visits to those who live alone in the countryside. We have also continued to take elderly people for hospital tests to the nearest Hospitals. We have continued our Pastoral Care work in the Community. Through a 'Ministry of Presence' on the streets of Ballina we have kept up contact with many of the men who used to frequent the Big Blue Bus. The prolonged period of lockdown and isolation has caused the vulnerable to experience loneliness and confusion. Sadly, for some, such as our friend K, he now requires hospitalisation at this time. We had worked with him and taken him out litter-picking in order to get him out of the house and keep him active. However, his mental health continued to deteriorate over time. He remains in our prayers.

Big Blue Bus

It was a difficult decision to say goodbye to the Big Blue Bus. The iconic bus was a well-loved by those frequented it and news of its sale was met with sadness. At the weekend, it was a place for adults to meet for community, tea, biscuits, song, prayer and community. Many young people also visited the bus at the weekend also. The bus was a café for them and a warm place to be on a cold winters' night. A place for hot chocolate, laughter and banter! Every Saturday evening, the young people would be standing outside Penney's, waiting for the bus to arrive. Through the buses ministry we came to know many people.

We also used to visit various housing estates for Kids Clubs. The children of Mill View and Greenhills Estates, would tumble out of their homes and pile onto the Big Blue Bus. We played games, had bible storytelling, songs and arts and crafts. The bus was a happy place filled with laughter and fun. For the turning on of the Christmas lights, St. Patricks Day and at the Salmon Festival, the Big Blue Bus would be parked outside the Jackie Clarke Museum. A team of volunteers were seated outside for face-painting and the children loved to visit the bus along with their parents.

Memories of the Big Blue Bus will stay with us for years to come. Many happy memories of friendships made, laughter and song, copious cups of tea and of winter nights in Tesco's car park!

Chalk art Ballina is a picturesque town situated on the River Moy. These days fishermen are once more back in the famous Ridgepool in search of Wild Atlantic Salmon. This is also a popular area for pedestrians as people enjoy walking around the bridges that cross the Moy. It is here that we leave our chalk messages on the pavements opposite the Cathedral. These messages can be funny, inspirational, thought provoking and scriptural. We usually get to do chalk-art once or twice a month, depending on the weather!



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Lord Williams of Oystermouth

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The art messages has been very well received by so many people, who have appreciated the messages of hope, joy and peace which they give. One lady approached recently and expressed her gratitude for the chalk art. She is interested in knowing more about Jesus and asked for a Bible. She had been looking in the shops for one and could not find one. We were able to give her a New Testament. She loves to sew and now she is making gift-bags so we can continue to bless people in the community.

Missional community We brought our (post Alpha group) Bible study on zoom on Thursdays at 7:30pm. We also brought the men's group from the bus (on zoom) and have a time of worship, prayer, and Bible study on Wednesday evenings at 8pm. We have had a few new people start to attend this. Our prayer group has continued through zoom on Sunday evenings.

Farewell In the past year we said goodbye to 4 of our volunteers. Three have moved to Scotland to work in a Church, and one has returned to Brazil after helping with the Futsal in the community for 4 years. Emma is also leaving Ballina and will finish her role at the end of June 2021. Following a 5-year spell in Ballina, she has taken the opportunity to review her future and felt that this was a good time to look for new challenges in her working life. However, Marian will take over as lead in the work and Rosemonde Adamson will be the new part-time pioneer evangelist. They will continue to raise up more people in the community to help build on the mission work begun in 2016.

PRAYERS

Please pray for...

- For our safety as we start to connect to more people in the community. Pray we would remain safe and no one will get COVID 19
- We pray for Gods financial provision to keep this project going as charities and Churches have taken a knock financially during this time.

Things to be thankful for...

- Thankful to God for the new people we have met and connected with and prayed for during the last few months.

Your support makes a huge difference to the impact here. If you would like to make a regular or one-off gift to support us please visit churcharmy.org/donate and quote ref. 1165 / 2017MED

We don't take your support for granted, so thank you so much for standing with us and praying for us throughout the year. It has been a good year and we are seeing God transform and touch lives. We want to pray for you so please let us know how we can, by emailing emma.rodriques@churcharmy.org Marian.Edwards@churcharmy.org

Thank you!

Emma and Marian



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