

CREATING COMMUNITY



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

January, 2009

# Newsletter No 18



## AGM 2008

### Reviewing our history and future direction.

This year the committee decided to open our AGM with an opportunity for our members to reflect on what we have achieved and where we might go in the future.

David Bolton opened the evening by inviting Eileen Gallagher to remind us of our journey so far. She started by saying how proud she was to have been a member of Fermanagh Churches Forum from the start and felt it was a journey of faith, hope and love. She took us on a trip down memory lane with some photographs of members joining in activities during the past 6 years. She reminded us of our Mission Statement and suggested we reflect on our aims and objectives listed in our Forum leaflet.

Kate Doherty told the members how the committee had spent a day of retreat in the Prayer Room at Mt. Lourdes School. After a morning of reflection each individual was able to share his or her own stories of growing up in their own communities in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. This had made everyone aware of the rich diversity of the group. It was the openness to change, which brought strength to the group and was a characteristic of any spiritual change.

Thomas Maguire led the group discussions. Each group was asked to share memories of things they enjoyed or found moving or inspirational. Then they were invited to respond with what they saw as the biggest challenges and what they would give priority to in future plans for Fermanagh Churches Forum.



A short feedback session allowed each group to share their thoughts. The main points raised were to:

- Find inspiration in the message of Jesus with more Bible study and prayer;
- Engage with young people and invite them to set up a Youth Church Forum. Bring in someone who is a 'star' who could inspire the young;
- Increase FCF membership by projecting our presence and ask for more support from the clergy;
- Raise the profile of FCF by trying more controversial subjects;
- Address our Christian concern about the effects of climate change on the environment;
- Create safe spaces where things left unsaid in the past may be shared;
- Invite people from other groups and communities to share their experiences; and
- Recognise secularism in our society and share in more practical activities.

### Committee 2009

Joint Chairpersons: Eileen Gallagher  
Kate Doherty

Treasurer : John Phillips

Members : David Bolton, Ronnie Brown  
Thomas Maguire, Michael Mooney  
Jane Russell, Liz Sheridan

Secretary: Barbara Rivers

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## Christianity in Dialogue



The 6-week ISE course presented by Denis Anderson and Eileen Gallagher gave us much to think about Christianity in a world of religious diversity. The first four weeks prepared the way for us to open our minds to other religions, including humanism and atheism before we had a chance to meet and talk frankly with friends from the Muslim community.

*Tanya writes:* This year's course was the second that I'd attended, and, as before, I found it an inspiring and energizing experience. I felt my horizons extended, especially when Ali and Banihan joined the group to speak about prayer within the Muslim tradition. The discipline of making time for prayer at specific times of day, familiar to us from the Christian monastic hours, was given a new and contemporary focus while the bodily actions, bringing all of creation before God, have a special resonance for us upon today's fragile earth. We remembered once more how much unites us and how closely we share many of our deepest experiences of God and of fellowship.



**Taking a coffee break during the course in the library.**

## A Light from Heaven



Sheila Phillips hosted the December meeting of Enniskillen **Faith and Friendship** at her house. We read the scripture passage Luke 1: 67-79 known to many of us as the Benedictus. This well-known canticle is the culmination of the story of how Zechariah had been unable to believe the news brought by the angel Gabriel, that he and Elizabeth were to be parents for the first time in their old age. For this he was struck dumb for the whole nine months and it was not until his son was presented to him at 8 days old that he was filled with the Holy Spirit and told everyone that the boy's name was John, just as Gabriel had told him. Zechariah spoke of God's promise to the people that his son John would be a prophet to prepare the way for our Lord who would come to save the world and forgive us our sins.

In Rev. Ruth Patterson's reflection on this story, she referred to today's world where so many individuals, communities and even nations are suffering poverty, disease, famine, violence, oppression and terror. She asked that during the days of Advent we seek moments of quiet when our hope for a better future and our presence in the community may shine like the light from heaven.

Ruth ended by saying that she thought it would be awesome if, centuries down the line from that first Advent, someone would write, ***"It all begins with a few people meeting together in faith and friendship."***



## Ring the Changes



December 6<sup>th</sup> was International Day of Action on Climate Change. The Bellingrings at St. Macartin's Cathedral rang their bells at 12 noon while members of Fermanagh Churches Forum and Friends of the Earth handed out flyers to the passing public.

### **Volunteer needed:**

Barbara has held the position of secretary for four years and feels it is time to hand over to a new and younger person. We are looking for an enthusiastic person who will continue this vital work. Familiarity with use of the internet and e-mail is a great help in communicating with the membership, but is not essential.

### **Dates for your diary**

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January

**Faith and Friendship in Lisnaskea** in the Enterprise Centre at 8 p.m.

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January

**Faith and Friendship in Enniskillen** in St Michael's Parish Centre at 8 p.m.

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> January

**Our annual Service in Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** will be held in St. Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen at 8 p.m.

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February

**Ash Wednesday at Lough Derg** Arrangements will be published in churches and the local press.

Contact Barbara Rivers if you need transport or can provide a seat for another in your car.

**Members will be notified of more events during the spring.**