

CREATING COMMUNITY



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

January, 2010

Newsletter No 21



Jeremy Gardiner addressing the FCF AGM in the Clinton Centre

Body Language

John writes: Jeremy Gardiner certainly gave us much to think about in his address to our AGM on 18th November. If most of communication is by body language, how are we as Christ's body on earth communicating? He told how he had been guided, through seeing the disconnection between professed faith and action in the lives of young church folk he was involved with in Ballymena as youth worker, to start a group, "Random Acts of Kindness" which eventually brought Protestants to the point of repeatedly cleaning graffiti from Harryville Catholic church in unionist Ballymena. They then had the courage to take a chance to engage with loyalist paramilitaries leading to a wonderful shedding of preconceptions on both sides, dialogue between loyalists and Catholics and remarkable change in the fraught situation. We were challenged to see that if we are to be salt, preserving the world from decay, it is our actions that will speak loudest about our faith. As the 34 members present then went on to elect our new committee – Kate Doherty and Liz Sheridan as joint chairs, along with Ronald Brown, Tanya Jones, Thomas Maguire, Michael Mooney, and Jane Russell – we knew we had been challenged to new thinking about the way ahead. At the same time we remembered the work of past years, and Kate, from the chair, paid tribute to Barbara Rivers who had handed over as secretary to Tanya during the year and to

Eileen Gallagher, to whom a presentation was made as she retired as long term joint chair.



Eileen Gallagher with Presentation Bouquet

Climate Change Conference



David Bolton Guiding Discussion on Climate Change

Condensed from David's thoughts: In October FCF held a public meeting in the Clinton Centre on global warming. Our burning coal and oil and destruction of systems that absorb CO₂ (e.g. tropical forests) increase the CO₂ blanket around the Earth, trapping heat. Resultant warming, say many scientists (a small minority disagree that man is responsible but not that it is happening), is potentially disastrous in the next 50-100 years. While some countries (e.g. ours) may welcome a warmer climate, pressures will rise on many populations, driving them to migrate towards us. Melting polar and mountain ice caps will raise sea levels to flood low lying coasts (like overcrowded Bangladesh) and islands, and more extreme weather (droughts and storms) will exacerbate disputes over water supplies and food. These concerns climaxed at December's Copenhagen conference where 194 countries tried to agree on limiting CO₂ levels before the 1997 Kyoto Agreement expires.

At our meeting we watched two films that detailed global warming concerns and showed real stories from people living in Bangladesh and other vulnerable areas. Then we considered three questions that lead to some of these thoughts:

1 *Why should we take an interest in climate change?*

This is God's world and how we use it, affecting all our neighbours, matters to him.

Christians must be concerned for justice for others that suffer even when we do not.

If only some of the predictions on the impact of climate change happen, they will affect us, perhaps as war or immigration.

We must be concerned for future generations.

Our stewardship of world resources affects our daily bread.

2 *What should I, family and friends do in response?*

We should live simply, so others can simply live.

Reduce consumption, reuse, and recycle.

In shopping choose local and seasonal products to reduce transport costs and transport CO₂ production.

Increase local food production.

Reduce travel, especially by air, that produces much CO₂.

Wear extra clothes and improve insulation, rather than increasing heating.

Support business opportunities in 'low carbon' technologies.

Have faith we can overcome the problems and spread the word.

Take political action.

3 *What can churches do as part of community response?*

Churches must set an example to the community.

Change our attitude from greed to respecting earth's resources.

Talk with others on what progress in the development means.

Join others to act on developing eco-friendly life styles and political lobbying.

Pray for significant positive results from Copenhagen.

Be concerned about any reductions in foreign aid that clearly add to the impact of climate change.

Candle Lit Vigil



Candles in the Diamond, Enniskillen

Tanya writes: On Saturday 12th December, mid way through the Copenhagen talks, some thirty people gathered in Enniskillen town centre for a candlelit vigil, one of around 3000 vigils across the world to show solidarity with those most affected by global climate change. Fermanagh participants, from teenagers to the retired, enjoyed thoughtful conversations, meditative silences and overhead the beautiful sight of six swans flying in formation, white against the dark blue sky, a sign of hope and of the wonder and fragility of our world and its inhabitants.

ISE Autumn Course



Denis Anderson Speaking on St Paul's Journeys

Tanya writes: This year's Education for Reconciliation course from the Irish School for Ecumenics followed St Paul's travels and explored the relevance of his themes and experiences for today's Christians. The course was led by Denis Anderson and facilitated by Eileen Gallagher, and, as always, was stimulating, challenging and extremely enjoyable. Unfortunately I missed the session on A Woman's Place (after all, that kitchen floor won't scrub itself) but there was plenty of healthy controversy, as we discussed who is a religious maniac, what we would say given one minute in Stormont and whether Richard Dawkins was justified in claiming that Paul invented Christianity. Sadly, it seems that, owing to funding reductions, this will be the last of these courses for the foreseeable future.

For Your 2010 Diary:

Faith & Friendship monthly at 8 p.m. –

Lisnaskea on Thursdays from 14.1.10 in the Enterprise Centre
Enniskillen on Mondays from 18.1.10 in St Michael's Parish Centre.

Christian Unity Week service Darling Street Methodist church at 8 p.m., Thursday 21.1.10.

Follow up to Copenhagen – Keep Thursday 25 February free!