

CREATING COMMUNITY



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

April, 2011

# Newsletter No 25

## Christian Unity Service in St Michael's



### Canon O'Reilly welcomes the congregation

*John writes:* A hundred worshippers joined in the service of prayer for Christian unity in St Michael's Church, Enniskillen, on Thursday, 20th January, 2011. We were warmly welcomed by Peter Canon O'Reilly, who led us very musically in unaccompanied singing, when there was an unexpected hitch over an accompanist. Some 10 members of FCF shared in readings and prayers, Sister Marie Cox sang two beautiful solos, and Fr John Skinnader reflected on his 30 years' experience in Africa in his attention-holding address. In Sierra Leone he had co-operated fruitfully with Methodists and Lutherans, and in Ethiopia he offered hospitality to an Australian evangelical

family and enjoyed their friendship and many theological discussions. We too were able to enjoy friendship across the denominational divides in the parish centre after the service over refreshments provided by ladies from the different churches. Our offerings raised £390 each for Christian Aid and Trócaire.



The congregation joins in a Unity Service hymn

### FCF Lunch with the Clergy



Eight Clergy lunch with FCF committee members

*John writes:* Another interdenominational event early in 2011 was a soup and sandwich lunch in the Killyhevlin hotel on Tuesday, 8th February. A total of eight clergymen from four churches joined four members of FCF committee for a pleasant, friendly meal and discussions, at which it became apparent they experienced very similar challenges and shared many views. We hope this meeting has paved the way for further interactions and future co-operation.

FCF contact person: [Tanya Jones](mailto:Tanya.Jones@fermanaghchurchesforum.org), 7 Lakeside Avenue, Irvinestown Road, Enniskillen. (028) 66340227 [info@fermanaghchurchesforum.org](mailto:info@fermanaghchurchesforum.org)

## Remembering Forthcoming Centenaries



**Rev. Johnston McMaster addresses the gathering**

*Tanya writes:* On Saturday March 19th, around 35 folk attended a conference on “*A Decade of Centenaries 2012 – 2022: How Do We Remember?*” in the Manor House Hotel. We were welcomed by Tommy McLaughlin, from Fermanagh District Council, who had generously funded the event. He emphasised our shared history, symbolised by the tragic casualties, Protestant and Catholic, in the Somme battle. Eileen Gallagher and Rev. Dr. Johnston McMaster of the Irish School of Ecumenics hosted us. Johnston launched by inviting us to identify some of the principal forthcoming anniversaries, from the 1912 Third Home Rule Bill to the Irish Civil War. He placed Irish history within a European and global context, in an age of imperialism and newly developed nationalism when the labour and women’s movements were growing, religion played a dominant role, and a concept of ‘blood sacrifice’ was fuelling a lust for war.

He introduced us to the concept of ethical remembering, a viewpoint which seeks new perspectives, an honest evaluation and the raising of critical questions. An ethical analysis would approach critically historical characters and their motives, their actions and policies and the consequences. Ethical principles, identified by Richard Kearney, of narrative hospitality, flexibility and plurality could help us in this – recognising and welcoming others’ stories and perspectives, transfiguring the past and offering and seeking forgiveness as well as justice. The decade is crying out for big creative gestures and shared actions to avoid the conflict and bitterness triggered by previous acts of remembrance.

Some small groups explored the idea of narrative hospitality, of shared initiatives such as the Mayo Peace Park, the role of festival and song and the need to address misconceptions and seek a deeper empathetic understanding. Other groups asked to what extent the violence of the decade was necessary or justified, exploring the ramifications of resistance and negotiation. In the second session we considered the Ulster Covenant, its background and effects. We looked in particular at the roles of churches and clergy and within the Bible the covenant concept, a vision of equality, justice, peace and social solidarity. After an excellent lunch, we moved to the Easter Rising, again exploring the events and characters which had led to the event, its implications and consequences. In small groups we considered Patrick Pearse’s concept of sacrifice, its mythological and theological roots and how influential it still is today.

Our groups also asked the question “*How will Fermanagh remember?*” seeking to distinguish between remembering and celebrating, to explore how we can be proactive and encourage generous and thoughtful perspectives. The recent success of the Saint Patrick’s Day celebrations in Enniskillen provided a positive example and many suggestions were made for ways in which we can remember, learn and share, exploring the past in order to build a more peaceful, just and joyful future.



**The audience enjoying refreshments and exchanging views**

## Ash Wednesday on Lough Derg



**FCF members enjoying Ash Wednesday in Lough Derg**

*John writes:* Despite ominous forecasts the day of shared worship on Lough Derg was blessed with sunshine. Several members of FCF attended, along with a crowd of over 400, and enjoyed a memorable address from Bishop Fanta Clark on Isaiah’s prophecy that God would put new hearts of flesh in his people to replace their hearts of stone, and shared in meaningful and moving worship together, with enjoyable refreshments later.

### For Your Diary

**Lenten Reflections:** These continue on Wednesdays from 1 to 2 p.m. in Enniskillen Churches in Lent till Holy Week.

**Faith & Friendship: Lisnaskea:** Thursday, 14th April at 8 p.m. in the Enterprise Centre.

**Enniskillen:** Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> April at 12.30 p.m. in St Macartin’s halls.

**Regional:** Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> May in Omagh. Details later.

**Community Relations Week:** Event focussing on the Shared Education project’s success on 24<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30 p.m. in the Clinton Centre.

**Walking Round the Churches:** An event involving the Presbyterian, Catholic, Church of Ireland and Methodist churches in Enniskillen may be held on the afternoon of Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> May, but this has yet to be confirmed.

**Pentecost Sunday:** This year the Bishops’ event will be on Devenish Island on the afternoon of Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> June.