

**CHURCH OF IRELAND YOUTH DEPARTMENT
REPORT 2023**

Membership

Executive

<i>President</i>	The Most Rev Patricia Storey
<i>Chairperson</i>	Mrs Brigid Barrett
<i>Treasurer</i>	Mr Edward Hardy
<i>Secretary</i>	Mrs Judith Peters

Rev Aaron McAllister
Rev Philip Bryson

Central Board – Executive (above) and:

Rev Peter Ferguson
Miss Valerie Walker
Rev Alan Breen
Miss Amy Sherlock
Miss Sally Siggins
Rev Alex Morahan
Rev Martin O’Kelly
Rev Malcolm Kingston
Miss Hannah O’Neill

Co-options

Mrs Brigid Barrett
Mrs Hilda Connolly
Mrs Christina Baillie

Standing Committee Representatives

Rev Catherine Simpson
Mr Edward Hardy

National Youth Officer

Mr Simon Henry

Youth Ministry Development Officer (Southern Region)

Mr Steve Grasham

Office Manager

Mrs Barbara Swann

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Executive Summary

The CIYD team consists of a National Youth Officer, Mr Simon Henry, and a Southern Regional Development Officer, Mr Steve Grasham. They are both provided with administration and communications support by our Office Manager, Mrs Barbara Swann.

CIYD launched its Strategic Plan in 2022 for 2022-2025 alongside engagement with The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (ROI) and the *National Quality Standards Framework* - a process of self-evaluation and continuous improvement in refocusing its role and areas of ministry for the future.

Developments of note in 2022 were:

- “Exalt” – devotional prayer app for young people in partnership with Missional Generation
- “Fuel II” – a follow up to FUEL, focusing on Luke’s gospel helping young people focus on regular Bible reading habits
- The continued success & engagement of the Young Leaders in Ministry Fund, established to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Act of Disestablishment and to support Church of Ireland Ministry in the future, for young people aged 15-25 years, actively involved in church life.
- CIYD National Youth Forum meeting in person in April, the first of a 3-year cycle focusing on mental well-being and faith & church.
- Climate Justice Toolkit launch in partnership with GFS and Tearfund Ireland
- Missional Generation partnership – VR (Virtual Reality) and AR (Augmented Reality) resources including 3 days of seminars and workshops at Summer Madness & youth group & schools toolkits
- Partnership with the Irish Health Service to provide accredited Youth Mental Health First Aid training.
- A Day of Prayer for the Church’s Ministry with Young People, now the Sunday before Advent, with widespread participation and an updated Prayer Journal for young people.

CIYD ACTIVITIES IN 2022

Like all involved in ministry in 2022, our scope was limited for some portion of the year due to COVID 19 restrictions and many events were postponed, but we continued to support and develop with key stakeholders online, where possible.

Youth Ministry Leadership: Support and Development

In partnership with dioceses, and in response to their specific needs, CIYD organized regular training and support events for those involved in youth ministry in a paid (full-time and part-time) or volunteer capacity. These events were tailored to the needs and contexts of each region.

- Aurora (Southern Region) – In response to actively listening to our stakeholders in difficult times, our Aurora course hit pause for this year with a view to re-start for the end of 2023.

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- Southern Region – CIYD’s “Connect” programme, training youth workers and volunteers, met regularly throughout the year online, facilitated by Mr Steve Grasham – covering areas such as Mental Health, Climate Justice and peer support for Southern DYOs. We were also able to run in partnership with Church Army “Train the Trainer” course for Faith Empowered - a resource designed to enable Dioceses to train and develop local lay evangelists.
- Northern Region - The “Connect” programme, partnering with the Irish Methodist Youth Department, continued throughout 2022 with relevant training for youth workers and volunteers. This included youth evangelism training with the Church Army and Inclusive Faith based youth work training facilitated by YouthLinkNI. We also hosted an Education Authority (NI) “SHARED” event alongside the Presbyterian Church and Irish Methodist Church which saw around 150 youth workers from the faith and non-faith-based youth work sector gather together to learn and discuss the valued place of the faith-based youth work sector in Northern Ireland. We concluded our year of events with a “Connect Christmas” event in December with lunch and a Christmas Communion led by Bishop David McClay.
- Annual Youth Workers’ Retreat – After a long delay we had our annual retreat for youth workers in London with Bishop Harold Miller leading our devotions and Bible study time. This was a great trip away for youth workers after waiting so long since our last trip away.
- Summer Madness – The festival returned to full capacity after a much missed few years on the grounds of the Portglenone Monastery, Co Antrim. Numbers were very encouraging and young people were so glad to be back together worshipping and learning more about Jesus. Our National Youth Officer, Simon Henry, was also a host on the mainstage platform at worship sessions each day with the CIYD venue very active with a programme of seminars each day focused on digital discipleship.

Engagement with Young People

Whilst most of the work of CIYD seeks to resource Youth Leaders and to be available to assist in Youth Ministry Programmes, where guidance is appreciated and where participation is sought, the organization is also keen to assist directly with diocesan youth programmes.

- National Youth Forum – This annual event, which gathers young people from each diocese to be a voice for affecting change in the church, had to be postponed from January until April in 2022 with encouraging attendance and lead by Bishop Andrew Forster and Ms Susie Mapledoram (Youth Officer for Diocese of Manchester) in the first of a 3-year cycle focusing on young people, mental health and their faith journey.
- Summer Camps – Throughout the summer months our full-time staff supported Diocesan summer camps and events.

Diocesan Support

CIYD is heavily involved in supporting Youth Leaders, both employed and volunteer, in the work that they do with young people across both the Northern and Southern Regions.

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They have also worked to raise the profile of youth work in the wider church. This has been done in a variety of ways:

- Direct work with Dioceses - CIYD staff supported a range of Diocesan events and resources as well as working with certain Dioceses on strategic development and supporting DYOs. We were also able to have an in person all Ireland DYOs Gathering facilitated by Innovista Ireland in November.
- Day of Prayer 2022 - this well-established Day of Prayer for young people and youth ministry has now moved to the Sunday before Advent, agreed by the House of Bishops. Our Praying for Young People & Youth Ministry booklet continues to be popular and can be used in lots of other ways to develop prayer opportunities in young people, groups and services. In 2022 we were able to offer free copies of a new “Prayer Journal” for young people to compliment the current resource.

Resource Development and Communication

CIYD like to be available for recommending and providing resources for youth leaders and clergy in a wide range of areas related to youth ministry.

- ‘I Believe’ – This Confirmation resource continues to prove popular with both clergy and young people alike and merited a recent reprint. The resource has been written with the content of the Church of Ireland Confirmation Service in mind and refers to elements of the Apostles' Creed, The 10 Commandments and the Church Catechism. It is a 12-week course examining essentials of our faith and offers interactive activities to enhance the learning experience for candidates.
- “Exalt” – devotional prayer app for young people in partnership with Missional Generation
- “Fuel II” – a follow up to FUEL, focusing on Luke’s gospel helping young people focus on regular Bible reading habits.
- “Climate Justice Toolkit” a resource for youth groups in partnership with GFS and Tearfund Ireland
- “Missional Generation” – VR (Virtual Reality) and AR (Augmented Reality) resources
- “Youth Mental Health First Aid” - Partnership with the Irish Health Service for this unique training.

National Quality Standards Framework.

This process involves self-evaluation of the organization based on various criteria laid down by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Representation and Collaboration

CIYD staff and Central Board members continued to represent the Church of Ireland on committees of the following organisations: -

- Church of Ireland Board of Education (ROI & NI)
- Church of Ireland Council for Mission
- The Board for Ministry with Children and Families
- Department of Youth and Children’s Affairs

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- National Youth Council of Ireland Board - Special Orgs, Equality and Inclusion Network & Membership Review Committee
- Summer Madness Main-stage committee and seminars teams
- Youth Link NI Council
- “Together” Youth Leaders Forum
- Education Authority (NI) Regional Advisory Group

CIYD ACTIVITIES IN 2023

Our staff team continues to work closely with Diocesan Youth Officers and key stakeholders in each Diocese so that CIYD can better complement the work of each Diocese and seek to establish new initiatives and links where appropriate.

Youth Ministry Leadership: Support and Development

- Southern Region – Aurora was put on “pause” in 2022 as we gauged people’s needs on the ground emerging post Covid. We are aiming to restart Aurora for a September 2023 intake. Bespoke training events will continue to take place both to support existing youth leaders and to equip upcoming leaders.
- Northern Region – regular training days are planned for the year ahead with our “Connect” programme in partnership with the Irish Methodist Youth Department. A youth workers’ retreat is planned for April to Manchester working in collaboration with the Diocese of Manchester.
- Summer Madness - CIYD will be running the Connect Café as usual and hosting breakfasts and a seminar stream for youth leaders, developing our partnership with Missional Generation. CIYD is also involved in shaping main stage and seminar streams at committee level as well as having our National Youth Officer, Mr Simon Henry, as one of the mainstage hosts.
- CIYD Youth Forum – CIYD’s annual Youth Forum in 2023 will have a focus on mental health, faith and church.

Development and Communication

- Churches working together – Northern Region - under new Education Authority (NI) funding streams and criteria, denomination youth departments are actively looking at new ways of working together to benefit faith development in young people across the region, as well as becoming individual Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations to the benefit of funding for parishes and groups on the ground.
- “Holy Habits” – delayed due to the pandemic, CIYD aims to launch a youth group bible study resource in 2023.
- “CIYD Website” – 2023 will see a relaunch of the CIYD website for improved communication, updates and resources available
- “Instagram” – CIYD will be launching an Instagram account – **ciyd_insta** – in 2023 to improve communications with relevant stakeholders and agencies and to promote our own work resources.

National Quality Standards Framework

The NQSF process will continue with the implementation of a Continuous Improvement Plan for those involved in working for and running the organisation.

Representation and Collaboration

CIYD staff and Central Board members will continue to represent the Church of Ireland on committees of relevant organizations.

ARMAGH

AYaC ministry events

The AYaC Board of the Diocese (Armagh Youth and Children) met across 2022 (in person) on at least 5 occasions in regards to prayer and planning for Diocesan youth and children's activities. This work saw a day's strategic planning for Board members held at the Kilbroney Centre, Rostrevor (January) a "Messy Easter" and a "Messy Christmas" service for families with young children held at St. Patrick's Cathedral Armagh, the "Easter Dawn" service for parishes across Armagh Diocese and a Diocesan-wide youth and children's ministry audit was undertaken in November 2022. Sadly the first two-day AYaC residential after Covid (November 2022) had to be postponed due to the rising cost of living facing families and many parishes still re-building parish volunteer teams and their organisations.

Youth and Children's leaders training

It remains the reality for some parishes that youth and children's ministry and volunteer teams across 2022 still faced some challenges in re-establishing ministry post Covid. Much of the Youth and Children's Officer's time was spent supporting parishes and their Sunday schools, youth fellowships and youth clubs in finding a new "normality". Specific training was also delivered across the Diocese in terms of youth mental health first aid awareness and trauma-informed children's ministry practice. The support of the Church of Ireland Youth Department and the new Children's and Family Board for the Church across the Diocese was greatly appreciated.

The Archbishop of Armagh's "Flourish" initiative

With an inter-generational focus, at Diocesan Synod (October 2022) the Archbishop of Armagh's "Flourish" initiative was launched to the Diocese. The Flourish initiative supports local parish groups in terms of addressing local environmental challenges and creation care projects. This exciting project has 9 parishes from across the Diocese committed to a range of environmental projects involving all ages and we pray and support the local church in living out the good news of Christ locally and globally.

CASHEL, FERNS & OSSORY

We are happy to share the post-Covid positivity in our youth work.

Diocesan Residential Summer Camp:

- Held in Gurteen Agricultural College, Limerick jointly with Cashel Ferns & Ossory and Limerick, Tuam and Killaloe.
- Attended by 49 teenagers and 10 adult leaders with wonderful, enthusiastic participation along with Chaplain Canon Ian Cruikshank (with Max the dog and Tyson the cat!).

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- Our worship had Bible stories and parables to encourage the youth to love God and neighbour.
- Subsidised by €30 by the diocesan youth grant, we are grateful to the 10 adult leaders who volunteered their time.
- Activities included a trip to Killaloe for outdoor pursuits and games, tournaments, arts and crafts on site in Gurteen.

Hopefully, this will become an annual event.

Diocesan Youth Intern:

- Ms Victoria Hawkins has taken on this role with help from CIYD's Young Leaders in Ministry Fund grant scheme.
- Victoria has a degree in Theology and is undertaking the COI Foundation course. She has assisted with confirmation preparation in Wexford and is happy to get involved in all youth activities.

Minecraft Competition:

- Co-ordinated by Ms Emma Purser, we had 30 entries to our online Lent competition with the challenge to recreate the Easter story & Empty tomb, through the computer game Minecraft.
- There were two age categories and great interest from all over the diocese. Our judges were Mr Mark Gee and Mr Sam Purser.

Church of Ireland Youth Department (CIYD) Youth Forum:

Rev Canon Nicola Halford took three young people from Enniscorthy and Ferns to the Church of Ireland Youth Forum in April 2022, overnight in The City North hotel provided by CIYD.

- The day focused on mental health & faith in young people including discussion around the future of our church, the negative impact of Covid-19 on many young people and where the church might be able to help with these challenges.
- Youth were encouraged to go out and be the church – compassion & love.
- The day began and concluded in prayer.

Youth Clubs and Youth Workers:

- Covid-19 has had a very negative affect on parochial youth work with many young people losing interest. There is a need to start again; grow youth ministries from scratch and employ more youth workers.
- Groups starting in Gorey, Abbeyleix, Enniscorthy with Ferns, Bunclody.
- There is Hope - more parishes will restart this important ministry over the coming year.

Summer Holiday Bible Camp:

Enniscorthy & Ferns Union plans a parish holiday Bible camp.

- First week of August for primary school children.
- Teenagers will assist the rector with leading the camp.
- Theme for the camp is 'Go Global' - how to spread Jesus' good news across the world.

Confirmation

- A return to normal.
- Over 40 in Kilkenny College.
- Plans for diocesan pre-confirmation retreat.

CLOGHER

Youth Ministry Perspectives

At the 2022 General Synod Mr Simon Henry used the words “crisis” and “crossroads” to describe where youth ministry possibly is at present and issued a call for church leaders to positively respond. The Presbyterian Church has been talking about a youth ministry in need of, “re-evaluation, fresh thinking and re-shaping” and the Elim Church has suggested the pandemic has highlighted the church’s weakness in its discipleship making. In the light of all of the above and acknowledging their reality, we are endeavouring to tentatively navigate a way forward within this changing landscape, searching for new leadership, fresh initiatives, and looking for innovative opportunities within our own diocese.

Youth Ministry Grants

It has been encouraging that many parishes have been able to get their youth ministries up and going once again and have sought out Youth Ministry Grants to help. Initiatives have ranged from a Football Outreach Competition, development of a Youth Room and programmes, Christmas outreach events, capital costs for materials and general youth programme running costs, to name only a few.

Youth Ministry Projects

We would love to hear from parishes who have a larger vision for youth ministry than they might be able to act on – perhaps hindered by financial constraints or know how. As we move forward, we want to be open to new ideas, new ventures, and building partnerships that can make our plans happen.

“Onwards”

As we as a Youth Council navigate our way onwards; and as our parishes and deaneries and diocese move onwards, hopefully pushing out and further away from the pandemic, it is envisioned that, for us as a Youth Council, that onwards journey will be filled with possibility, potential, new opportunities and a fresh gaze at the positives of what the Lord will have ahead for His church and of course His young people. Youth Leadership training, resourcing youth work, collaborating opportunities, young people on mission trips and weekends away, discipleship, finding faith and meaning in a challenging world, Godly answers to culture’s questions, sharing and demonstrating faith in school, college and the community, growing in faith and the love of God, opportunities to worship together, growing in an understanding of God’s living word – the Bible, and so much more. The apostle Paul says in Philippians that he is forgetting what is behind and is now straining forward to take hold of all that the Lord Jesus Christ has taken hold of for him. Can this be an inappropriate posture or attitude to assume for the year ahead – This is the posture and attitude that we as a council seek to move with and serve with over the year of opportunity that lies ahead.

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The aims for the Youth Ministry Programme continue to be led by our Diocesan aims and objectives for youth work. These aims and objectives focus on our 5 “T”s, which reflect the Anglican Communion’s five marks of mission; Tell, Train, Tend (People), Transform, and Tend (Creation). We intend to be guided by these elements and to encourage action, vision, participation, and development within these areas.

CONNOR

In 2022 Connor Youth Council bounced back with a full complement of our Diocesan events for young people. It was a delight to be able to see young people from various Parishes connect and engage through social activities, faith conversations and serving together. We have been really encouraged by the number of Parishes connecting with the Diocesan events.

To kick off the new year, we had planned to run our Connor Takes The Castle residential event but due to continuing Covid-19 guidance this was changed to an outside day event. Thankfully we were still able to ‘Take the Castle’ holding our event in the grounds of Shane’s Castle with Escarmouche Action Park. The young people took part in laser tag, assault courses and challenges with a chippy lunch. It was great fun and encouraging to see young people reunited from across the Diocese.

In September 2022 we were able to hold our full residential event. We had 12 different Parishes attend for talks, worship, activities and fun! Our annual Connor’s Got Talent evening was a standout night as well as paddleboarding on the lake that afternoon. Ms Hayley Cullen from Youth For Christ led our talks and young people connected really well. Over the summer we were excited to run both Summer Madness and Streetreach. Summer Madness took place in the grounds of Portglenone Monastery and we were pleased to have a marquee space for our groups to gather, connect and share meals together.

Streetreach had its second year partnering with Mossley Parish after a two-year break. Forty-one young people and leaders from 13 parishes in Connor Diocese took part along with other volunteers from Mossley. Teams led kid’s clubs, ran outreach activities in the community, painted fences in a local Primary School and went door to door offering to pray with people. There were many great stories of young people stepping out and sharing their faith, building confidence in their gifts, and enjoying making friends across the team. Thanks to CIYD for their ongoing support of the youth ministry in the Diocese and to all those supporting young people across Connor Diocese.

CORK, CLOYNE & ROSS

The Cork Diocesan Youth Council (CDYC) were only trying to get back on their feet in 2022 after all the Covid lockdowns and restrictions, but nothing keeps the young people of Cork, Cloyne & Ross down for long!

- In March we had our Confirmation Retreat weekend in Bandon - it is always a great weekend for the young people to meet and to enjoy their Confirmation journey together.
- In April a small group of us attended the delayed CIYD Youth Forum in City North Hotel, Dublin.
- Easter arrived and the group spent a day doing activities which ended with a Eucharist service on the local beach.

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- Lots more events were held in May, June and July – trips to Zip-It in Farran Woods, followed by two day-trips to Oysterhaven Outdoor Pursuits Centre.
- In the summer our Diocesan Youth Officer, Ms Hilda Connolly, brought 4 young leaders to help run the CIYD Connect Café at Summer Madness – the first full festival since 2019.
- In September, the group headed to Kerry for a residential to the Muckcross Youth Hostel (which is an old parish church), the annual table quiz took place and so did the return of the Dublin Christmas shopping trip followed by an Advent service with Rev David Bowles and sleepover in Whitechurch Parish hall.
- In Sept, a new group of young leaders commenced their Leaders in Training course in partnership with the YMCA.
- This is an 8-week course, and it really benefits the young people in youth leadership skills but also in confidence and career choices.
- As part of their course, they must plan and run an event completely by themselves. Their choice of event was to hold the annual Advent Youth Service, in Rosscarbery's St. Fachtina's Cathedral.
- The theme of the service was about expectations and the pressures of trying to meet what people expected from them. And so, the service was named "Great Expectations"
- The group organized the service in a way to expect the unexpected and that they certainly did achieve, through drama, music and activity stations around the church which demonstrated the pressures teens are under and experiencing – it was a very powerful and moving service.
- The new year started off with an ice-skating trip, and a few weeks later was the first Youth Leaders Retreat Day for any young leaders or youth workers needing some inspiration and a chance to mingle.

- Parish youth groups have been starting back up around the diocese and are attracting big numbers again.
- As you can see by the report, the Cork Diocesan Youth Council are very much active and working full steam ahead, with plenty more planned for over the coming months.

DERRY & RAPHOE

As a diocese, we've seen many churches making excellent efforts to engage with their young people after the difficulties of Covid. There have been youth fellowships started and restarted, new leaders coming onto the youth teams, leaders starting youth work training, and many groups engaging with diocesan events.

Derry and Raphoe Youth was able to create a varied programme last year, with a mix of in person and online events for both young people and their leaders. It was great to bring leaders together for different leaders' days to help resource them, give them space to think about their own ministry areas and a retreat day.

Having our **Diocesan Confirmation Day** is a fun day to see those going forward for Confirmation and meeting everyone. Joining together during Lent online, using the new **FUEL II** resource was a special way to connect with God during a reflective time. We had our **DRY Weekend** in Fermanagh at the Cleenish Centre, with a weekend of bright

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sunshine, games and thinking about being a Christian in different areas of our lives. With the help of our Diocesan Youth Reps, we headed to the **CIYD Youth Forum** to think about mental health, and came up with the idea of our Walk, Talk & Snacks which we held in various parts of the diocese. The weather actually stayed dry for all three of them and meeting new families was such fun.

The huge highlight of the summer was heading off to **Summer Madness** in Portglenone, where we had our young people and leaders hear speakers from 24/7 Prayer, including Pastor Pete Greig. Having five days of mainstage, seminars, big games, water games, sharing meals together and meeting people from all over the island was an incredibly special time.

Freedom has been a constant throughout the year, running on the second Saturday of the month from October to April. We've had amazing turn outs with individuals and youth groups traveling from all areas. It's wonderful to hear of groups incorporating dinner as part of the night, sharing food and talking together.

It's our hope that 2023 will see more growth in the lives of young people, their families, churches and leaders. Derry and Raphoe Youth is here to help all churches, please contact Ms Claire Hinchcliff to discuss programmes or resource ideas, training opportunities or joining in with Diocesan events. In all that we have planned going forward, we pass everything to God and the work of the Holy Spirit, remembering the message of Ephesians 3:20 *“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us”*.

DOWN & DROMORE

Down and Dromore Youth Department underwent a period of change and transition in the early part of 2022. Mr Tim Burns, left the role of Diocesan Youth Development Officer in Down and Dromore after a number of years' service at the end of 2022. It is important to acknowledge Tim's contribution to Youth Ministry in the diocese over the last number of years and we thank him for that. In February 2022, Joshua Thornbury was appointed as our new Youth Officer.

2022 was always going to be a very significant year in terms of getting young people back out to events and engaging with the church as this was the first year with no significant Covid related issues. This began with a Saturday Night Live in March with over 60 young people coming town evening of worship, bible teaching and fun at Hillsborough Parish Church. This was a springboard for the Confirmation Weekend held at Castlewellan Castle in April. There was 107 young people in attendance at the weekend, where they explored: who Jesus is, why we pray & why we read the Bible.

Down and Dromore also provided a diocesan space at Summer Madness for our groups, this enabled youth leaders to bring their groups to the marquee to be together where they could be fed, connect with one another and where leaders could spend time with their young people. This catered for 150 young people over the 5 days at Summer Madness and was a great success.

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The Kilbroney Adventure Camps, at the Kilbroney Residential Centre in Rostrevor, were again operational in July and August and this is a key discipleship tool as we seek to see young people grow in their knowledge and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. We ran three weeks of Camps, with each week being geared towards a specific age group. Over the three weeks, we engaged with 102 young people. This allowed them to grow in confidence as they established new relationships with other young people from the diocese, they were exposed to new experiences as they engaged in the activities on offer and they grew in their knowledge of the gospel as they explored the “*I AM Sayings*” of Jesus. There was a number of Junior Leaders who played their part and developed their own leadership skills over the week too which was so encouraging to see.

In September, Down and Dromore Youth and Children’s hosted a special Training Day for all who work with youth and children - this was attended by 80 workers/volunteers who left the day being equipped to restart/start up their ministries in the diocese. The SERVE Young Leaders course ran again between October and December with five participants taking part. Thanks to Hillsborough Parish for hosting us for the duration of the course. Additionally, there was the commencement of an OCN Level 2 in Youth Work. This was with 10 workers/ volunteers in the diocese and has borne much fruit. Thank you to CIYD for supporting us with funding for this specific programme. 2023 will continue to be a year where we seek to support young people in their faith and development.

DUBLIN & GLENDALOUGH

We have had a great year in DGYC. As restrictions were lifted, we got running again with some DGYC Big Days Out in conjunction with YFC Ireland. We rented inflatables, ate ice-cream, played cage soccer and silly games, and generally had a great time at these events, connecting with other youth groups and enjoying each other's company and fellowship.

Connection has been such an important part of the past 12 months. Connecting young people back into their church youth groups or school CUs, connecting leaders and volunteers, and connecting people in real-tangible ways. It has been great to be part of youth services, confirmation groups, school assemblies, services and retreats, crazy adventure days, and larger youth events like OneYouth Conference and Summer Madness.

With youth ministry having taken a hit over the previous years, we released a resource in the Autumn called “Youth Group in a Box”. This has 4 ready-made youth group sessions, as well as insight into adolescent development and building social skills. The hope is that this would help both new and old youth groups get back up and running. It is available for free to any youth group. Have a look on our website for more information.

It has not gone unnoticed that anxiety and mental health struggles are prevalent among our young people. It was great to get some of our youth workers, volunteers and clergy trained in Mental Health First Aid thanks to CIYD and the HSE. We also ran two training events

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for supporting adolescents struggling with anxiety, in conjunction with Zestlife Therapeutic Services. We will continue to resource, support and train where we can.

DGYC are so grateful to God for his provision and guidance in 2022 and we cannot wait for what 2023 has in store for us and the young people around the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough.

Website: www.dgyc.org

KILMORE, ELPHIN & ARDAGH

Emerging from the worst of the Covid pandemic, youth ministry within KEA restarted in many parishes. Two very successful confirmation mornings were held in Royal School Cavan and Longford Parish. A large number of young people were confirmed in 2022. It was particularly great for parishioners to be able to celebrate these special days with their young people as they took another step in their faith journeys.

In August 2022, Mr Damian Shorten stepped down from his role as Diocesan Youth and Children's Coordinator. We sincerely thank Damian for all his work, in particular his perseverance to continue to provide youth ministry where possible via online formats during the lockdowns. We wish Damian every blessing for his future work and continued involvement in the Riverstown group.

Across the Diocese there have been new links forming with various organisations including: Operation Mobilisation, Church Army and Youth for Christ. This support has enabled some additional youth work to happen in schools, including youth alpha courses in Longford and Sligo. Mr Claudio Barguena, a youth worker in Sligo, led a group to "MOVE" a Christ in Youth 5-day summer event where the young people experienced different types of worship, games and other fun activities.

Diocesan Youth Activities this year have been happening under the theme of Soul Survivor, looking at the book of Daniel. The theme is to equip young people to live the Christian life, and bring them together for praise, prayer and worship.

We would like to thank in particular CIYD for their funding to help parishes restart and deliver youth work, as well as providing some excellent print and digital resources. We also very much appreciate the funding from Mind Matters to some specific projects within our Diocese.

LIMERICK, KILLALOE & ARDFERT

The following has been formulated as Mission Statement for Youth Ministry in the United Dioceses of Limerick, Killaloe & Ardfert:

"To provide opportunities which will facilitate and encourage Christian spiritual growth, fun and fellowship among young people from throughout the United Dioceses of Limerick and Killaloe".

The volunteer committee of United Diocesan Youth Council of Limerick & Killaloe planned and successfully completed a good solid range of day, weekend and weeklong events. The programme catered for children from age of eight years (3rd class national school) of age right up to young adults in mid-twenties during 2022.

Key events:

10 plus Year Olds -

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- August – Junior Summer Camp (full week) – Densmore Lodge, Ovoca Manor, Avoca, Co. Wicklow;
- December – Mega Christmas Day trip to Dublin.

Secondary School and upwards-

- July - Summer Madness with Meath & Kildare group – Portglenone Monastery Estate, Portglenone, Ballymena, Co. Antrim;
- July – Senior Summer Camp in partnership with Diocese of Cashel, Ferns & Ossory - Gurteen Agricultural College, Co. Tipperary;
- July/August – International Exchange Trip in Ireland with a German Group (10 days) - Hann -Munden close to the city of Gottingen in Germany;
- November – Senior Autumn Adventure Weekend – Castledaly Camp & Christian Conference Centre, Castledaly, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

16 plus Years-

- April – National Youth Forum – City North Hotel, Julianstown, Co. Meath.

18 plus Years-

- December - Annual Christmas Dinner Dance – Fitzgerald’s Woodlands House Hotel, Adare.

The following were some of the key highlights from 2022-

- 2022 was a positive year for U.D.Y.C. with the opportunity to Restart and Reconnect after a pause due to a diocesan review and Covid 19.
- Working closely with our new Bishop Michael Burrows.
- The very many wonderful participants and leaders that came to events and really joined in with all aspects of the programme 100%. To see many happy faces during and at the end of the events, reading about positive experiences in evaluations and hearing superb stories from many parents/guardians and other family members.
- Joining and working with other dioceses during the year - Meath & Kildare at Summer Madness, and the diocese of Cashel, Ferns & Ossory for the Senior Summer Camp.
- It was great to see good numbers of participants at many events throughout the year, especially the Mega Christmas Day trip to Dublin which had over 80 people!
- Representation at National Youth Forum organised by CIYD and inputs from Diocesan representatives.
- Taking part in the International Exchange Trip to Germany hosted by a German Group from Lower Saxony for 10 days in Hann-Munden close to the city of Gottingen.
- Participation was welcomed from Dioceses throughout country with particular welcome to young people from Tuam, Killala & Achonry area of our new United Diocese.
- Continued collaboration and sharing resources with Tearfund, CIYD Central and other Dioceses.

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U.D.Y.C. of Limerick & Killaloe continues to be very thankful to Individuals, parents/guardians, parishes, diocese, C.I.Y.D. and wider church and community for continued support and help.

MEATH & KILDARE

Since the end of lockdown restrictions in 2022 we have able to hold central Youth events again in the last year. The first was our confirmation celebration day in May 2022 which was held at Wilson's Hospital School and attended by more than 50 teenagers who enjoyed a slip 'n' slide and a drum workshop amongst other things. In the Summer we returned to Summer Madness for the first time in a few years and brought over a dozen young people. Everyone had a great weekend and all want to return next year.

Since September we have run four events. In the autumn we hosted another event at Wilson's this time alongside young people from Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh Diocese and in December we held a Christmas party in Tullamore. Between fire-lighting classes at the former and 'alternate nativity' film-making in the latter we really tried to push the boat out in terms of unusual activities!

In February we held another day event, this time at Billis in Kilmore Diocese and in March he had an activity day at Donadea Forest. Alongside all of this we have been able to visit National Schools again, we have over a dozen in the Diocese, and been able to distribute resources like Shaken and Fuel II, the Bible reading notes for Lent.

In local parishes, the Clonmacnoise Warriors continue to meet in Tullamore and Geashill Unions whilst Canon Alastair Graham continues to support and guide the 'Lighten our Darkness' project in Mullingar. These young people have developed a Christian response to climate change called 'God's Gardens of Hope' and will be presenting it at Synod this year.

TUAM, KILLALA & ACHONRY

As COVID restrictions fully lifted in our schools it was a delight to see children mixing again outside their 'bubbles' and 'pods' and life in school returning to normal. Recognition must go to the hard working teachers and others in the Church of Ireland schools in our diocese who met the task of educating our children through the pandemic, in a year of changing guidelines and restrictions. Their steadfastness and patience in supporting our children is commendable. To them we owe a debt of gratitude.

Our thanks as a diocese to all who play a part, however small, in the support of this ministry. We really could not have done this without you. A huge thank you to Mr Steve Brickenden, who stepped down as Youth Officer during the year. He has been the energy and backbone behind all the youth work in the diocese for very many years and we thank him for all his service in the diocese to the glory of God. Thank you also to the Bishop and Diocesan Council who support this important ministry.

We are looking forward to the year ahead in the hope that new and regular events might be able to happen and with the two dioceses coming together we hope that we'll be able to look to a future where our youth and children's ministry can embrace the whole of our new united diocese.

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Our huge appreciation must be noted to Rev Canon Jennifer McWhirter for all the work that she has done as Co-Ordinator over the last number of years and we wish her well in Clogher Diocese.

As we move forward with our friends together as Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe Diocese, we look forward to full and varied TLK programme of events for our children and young people.