

BALLINA CENTRE OF MISSION

November 2020



Emma Rodrigues and Marian Edwards

‘The LORD keeps you from all harm and watches over your life’ (Psalm 121:7)

These are certainly challenging and unprecedented times. Once again, we find ourselves in ‘lock down’ in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The road ahead requires resilience and the ability to cope effectively with uncertainty and change. In our work in the town of Ballina, we see the lives of people being impacted and people needs support in so many ways.

Updates

Pastoral care:

Since the beginning of the crisis in March, our work for Ballina Churches Together has changed. We were no longer able to use the Big Blue Bus for weekly drop-in and kids-clubs. We could not have the weekly bible study either and in response we have changed how we do our work and adapted to meet the new challenges. Initially, life in ‘lock-down’ was fine, but after a few weeks, it began to take a toll in the lives of many people.

Many of the people we work with need pastoral care, encouragement and practical care. All this required that we continued to do our work, but we had to adapt to our new circumstances. We became a ‘listening ear’. Through phone conversations, texts and WhatsApp groups. We sent emails, letters and cards in the post, we provided words of encouragement and hope and did shopping for those self-isolating and vulnerable.

Through volunteering with St Vincent De Paul, Marian has been able to provide fuel and food to

Hello, If you are self-isolating, we can help.

We are representatives from Ballina Churches Together & The Big Blue Bus. Please feel free to contact us via email: ccballina@gmail.com or call: Emma (087) 434 7612 or Marian (086) 842 6536

If you're self-isolating due to Covid-19 we can help with:

- A friendly phone call Prayer

Coronavirus is contagious. Therefore, we will take every precaution to make sure we're only spreading kindness. That being said, there are still ways that we would like to offer a bit of encouragement in these difficult times. If you feel like these things would be a blessing please feel free to email or call.



a lady in need. She has a serious underlying medical condition and lives alone in isolation. She also has personal debts, but through the generosity of the St. Vincent de Paul, the financial burden has been lifted from her and she is much more at peace in herself. She also asks for prayer and has joined with us for worship on-line.

Emma is continuing to help a Lady who recently came out of hospital. She phoned requesting help. Emma was able to connect her to meals on wheels and to a local carer agency. This lady lives alone and found herself in total isolation due to COVID restrictions.

Traveller community Marian has befriended several Traveller families. Many of the women have suffered domestic violence or lost their husbands because of tragic circumstances. One particular lady's life has been shattered and her heart is broken. She is a widow, and she has no children. She is in early thirties and she will never remarry out of respect for her deceased husband. Every day of the year, she visits his grave. Sadness and grief overwhelm her heart.

Another young mother also lost her husband a few years ago. She is also a widow and has three young girls. She is illiterate and poor. Recently, her father-in-law committed suicide, so it is tragedy upon tragedy. We work to bring a listening ear, friendship, hope and love to these women. Above all we endeavour to tell them about God's love for them.

Syrian families Emma continues to support one family who recently had to take refuge in the local women's refuge due to domestic violence issues. The links we have with St Vincent de Paul have helped and provided another Syrian family with a much-needed cooker.

Bus/Tent Due to COVID-19 restrictions and two Lockdowns this year. We purchased a pop-up gazebo to use outside beside the Bus. We attracted a lot of new people. We used the tent in the housing estates for kids' clubs. After the first lockdown, we brought the bus to the car park and gathered outside. Our gatherings included people who always came along and new people joining us. It was very encouraging. We spread out the chairs and enjoyed many cups of coffee and tea. People came to chat and sing (Jim Reeves songs), to share cheesy jokes and to find community. Many of these people have lived difficult lives, faced challenges, and have suffered with both physical and mental health. They used to attend the Dolmen Centre (Mental health day centre) for support, but that has been closed since March. One lady, who used to volunteer at the centre began coming to the bus along with her daughter. They both now in the process of becoming volunteers.



Chalk art When the first lockdown began to lift. We decided to draw chalk art on the footpaths outside Ballina Cathedral, words of encouragement, Bible verses and words of inspiration and hope. Many local people have expressed how encouraged they have felt reading our messages as they walk past, and our Facebook page has had more people liking our work. We have continued doing this to encourage local people in Ballina- many people thanked us for those encouraging words. Some conversed, took prayer booklets and with others we prayed.



Halloween gift bags for families:

We were unable to run our annual Light party in the Presbyterian Church Hall this year. Instead we decided to give out activity bags and goodies for the children in two housing estates. Each bag was filled with colouring sheets, a craft for making a paper lantern, crayons, markers, crisps, chocolate and sweets! Something for everyone in the family.



Missional community We brought our (post Alpha group) Bible study back on zoom on Thursday 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.

We ran one walk and reflection in Belleek woods on the 3rd of October. We had hoped to run more walks and reflections, but this had to stop due to restrictions.

'GLORIOUSLY ORDINARY' is a new book from Praxis Press which explores mission in contemporary Ireland. This book was written and edited by Ruth Garvey Williams and was released at the Praxis online conference last week. We along with others were involved in co-writing this book with Ruth. It is a collection of stories, experiences, learning and reflections of people living, and ministering in different parts of Ireland. This book seeks to unpack what it means for us to embrace incarnational mission in contemporary Ireland and to consider what it might mean for you as an individual or in your parish, church, or faith community.



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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.

If you would like to make a regular or one-off gift to support this work please email us or visit churcharmy.org/donate

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.

Thank you!
Emma and Marian

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