

Springhill Community House Trustees Report

1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023

Charity Contact Details:

Springhill Community House

6&7 Springhill Close

Belfast

BT12 7SE

Tel 02890326722

www.sch.ie

Charity No:100911

Company No: NI017628

Charity Aims and Objectives

The purpose of Springhill has and will continue to be about empowering people to take control of their own lives. This remains at the heart of what SCH is about and involves tackling the apathy and frustration felt by individuals through programmes of personal development, life coaching, education, training, health awareness and confidence building. SCH has continued to build on its early ethos of free learning and provides a wide spectrum of courses: Statistics show that many in the West Belfast have little or no qualifications on leaving school and that mainstream schooling has been a negative experience for them. This negative experience has tainted their view of mainstream education and acts as a barrier for returners to education. SCH is about overcoming these barriers by providing programmes in a relaxed and informal environment that puts participants at their ease which creates a positive learning experience. Programmes include: Accredited and non-accredited courses, Life Coaching, Information Communication Technologies, Complementary Therapy Clinics and Training, Premises are used as a Community Resource, Victims Advocacy Support

Charity Purpose

The objects of the Company shall be exclusively charitable and be for the advancement of education (including the provision of training or re-training courses and facilities) and the relief of poverty in West Belfast particularly (but so that the Company shall not be limited to pursuing its objects only in such area nor shall those who participate in the activities of the Company be drawn exclusively from the residents of West Belfast)

The trustees have paid due regard to the charity commission guidance on public benefit. The trustees are confident that Springhill Community House's aims and objectives are in accordance with the regulations on public benefit and that the activities outlined in this report meet the public benefit requirements.

Charity Trustees

Tommy Holland – Chairperson

Elsie Best – Secretary

Eilish Rooney - Treasurer

Independent Auditors

Joe Quinn & Company

Certified Public Accountants

44 Glen Road

Belfast BT11 8BB

Bank Bank of Ireland 202 Andersonstown Road Belfast BT11 9EB	Solicitors Delaney & Co 54 Andersonstown Road Belfast BT11 9AN
---	---

Financial Review

The project's current financial position remains healthy with no significant changes, the current assets and reserves are sufficient to cover any unforeseen costs which may arise in the event that current levels of funding is not maintained, the directors will review the amount of funds that the charity requires to ensure that they are adequate to fulfil the charities continuing obligations.

Funding

Springhill Community House continue to receive funding up to March 2022 from the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS £114995) and the Department for Communities (DfC £34990).

VSS additional funding as follows:

- Recorded Lived Experience programme £1800

In respect of one year on video for Ballymurphy Inquests

- Spring/Summer Social Isolation Programme £10790

Delivery of a number of programmes including arts/crafts, basket weaving workshops, bus trips, photography, fun day, football and guided tours.

- Social Isolation Programme £7178

Delivery of a number of programmes including arts/crafts, basket weaving, bus trips.

- Additional therapy provision £4900
- Additional Heat & Light in respect of increased energy costs £1081

Fr Des Wilson – The People's Archive

Since the beginning of the project the archivist has been working on cataloguing the materials and has established a searchable database. He has also engaged in a number of outreach events including the launch event in Conway Mill.

The People's Archive - Fr Des Wilson Launch Event

It was great to see so many friends at the launch of The People's Archive - Fr Des Wilson in Conway Education Centre.

As well as an amazing exhibition of posters, photographs, and artefacts we were treated to a presentation by Springhill's archivist Tiarnan O'Muilleoir who gave an outline of the archive project and examples of the archive material.

The archive project will catalogue Fr Des' collection of correspondence, books, oral histories, videos, sound recordings and photographs. These will then be digitised and made accessible for historians and researchers as well as the general public.

In the long term, we will establish the Fr Des Wilson interpretive centre which will house the collection permanently and tell the story of The People's Priest.

Tiarnan said "Collectively, this material tells a story. They are invaluable historical documents that give an insight into a community which was often rendered voiceless by the powers-that-be"



The People's Archive

FR. DES WILSON



The People's Archive is a wealth of documents: correspondence, diaries, publications, film, sound recordings, broadcasts, oral histories and photographs gathered by Fr Des Wilson and the Springhill/Ballymurphy community.



"The substance of such archival material would provide an authentic historical background, as well as demonstrate and raise awareness, and aid in providing a coherent picture of the invaluable and integral work Fr Des and the community of Ballymurphy accomplished over the years." Sarah Gallagher



"The archive contains valuable lessons for people everywhere who struggle to solve problems and make positive impacts in the toughest circumstances" Eilish Rooney

Fr Des Wilson archive officially launched

Michael Jackson May 25, 2022 08:45



The work in the archive continues to highlight the work of Fr Des and the Community House with a regular dip into the archive –



“All men are equal before God”

Fr Des took up the prestigious post as spiritual director at St Malachy's College with responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the students going into the priesthood.

On this day 9th April 1961, 60 years ago today, Des celebrated mass in St Malachy's Chapel, the service was broadcast on BBC radio. In this snippet he talks about all men being equal before God and as Christians we can have differences of opinion but we must love our fellow citizens, an Easter message that is as relevant today as it was then.

Des would spend the next 15 years preparing young men for the priesthood just as he had done. He was excited about taking up the post having just left the Mater hospital which was overshadowed by sadness and grief.

Here he would help better prepare the young seminarians for what lay ahead drawing on his own experience. His excitement was short lived when he came to realise that like in his own day “students were made to study, and teachers were made teach, what was chosen for them by panels rather than encouraged to search out what interested themselves.”

He was determined to instil his own view that the church should be of the people for the people and that priests should be as close to the poor and suffering as possible. In a talk to 4th year students Des said; “Our view is that the world must be better when we leave it than when we entered it; that for every day of our life there should be someone who has more to eat, to wear, or to live for.”

There is no doubt that Des had a lasting impression on the students under his supervision, their abiding memory is that he made them question everything and think for themselves. One Student recalled “coming to one's notice as the months passed, was a man whose head suggested venerable wisdom and whose face was perennially young; a point of light in the

darkness, a man of common-sense and decency, of warm humanity; a man who clearly believed that the Gospel meant far more than what was being served up to us. He told us quietly, with utter conviction, that we were already totally acceptable to Jesus Christ and could count, with extravagant certainty, on His unfailing understanding, compassion and forgiveness."

Des advised students to keep a diary recording their thoughts and impressions while at St Malachy's. One of those diaries survives in Des' archive, in it a student records his thoughts on the sermons from 1958 to 1961 and in particular this entry dated 7th of March 1960.

"There are sometimes when I feel so tremendously moved emotionally that I feel I must put my thoughts on paper. I have just heard one of the finest sermons Father Wilson has ever preached to us. Like his two best of last year, ('Love of the Poor', 'Generosity') it included to some extent the priests relations with the people. I think we might call it a sincere polemic against the conventional conception that a priest should have a comfortable middle-class existence. Oh God how sincere he was in his request of us never to forget that the priesthood was a Life of suffering, of hardship, of pain, of abandonment. Sometimes this came to me, more often (in Ireland) we must impose it on ourselves lest we become dis-attached from the people - Our people. We must examine our consciences frequently and ask ourselves: how does this or that affect my relationship to my people? Am I reading this many years hence? Question: Have I a comfortable middle-class existence? Am I so wound-up in the compromises of this situation, this semi pondering to myself that I have forgotten in the midst of comfort that I have dedicated my life (ie 8am to 10am) to taking up my cross daily, denying myself daily, and following him daily. What place does the golf course play in my life? The cinemas, books the theatre, TV, amusement in general? Do I lead a frugal existence in which I can easily be united to God and his chosen people? OR do I lead a comfortable life and approach his people as an "Outsider" a Quasi Prince a condescending nobleman. God help me if I do I have failed as a Priest of God."

This really was thinking and questioning at its best.

Highlighting the work of the archive on Blas BBC Radio Ulster

Our archivist Tiarnán Ó Muilleoir will be speaking with presenter Dáithí Ó Muirí tonight on Blas on BBC Radio Ulster about our People's Archive - Fr Des Wilson.



Launch of Ballymurphy Massacre Film - Ballymurphy Massacre Inquest Findings - A Year Later

This day last year Lady Chief Justice Dame Siobhan Keegan published her verdict in the Ballymurphy Massacre inquests in which she declared all victims "Entirely Innocent."

In this film the Ballymurphy Massacre families reflect on the roller coaster of emotions they went through as they listened to the verdict and their elation afterwards as the Ballymurphy community greeted them.

Threads that connect us through time.

Weavers were back in the Falls Flax Spinning Mill today 180 years after it opened its doors.

Originally owned by James Kennedy and Sons of Clonard House, the family merged with McConnell to form the Falls Flax Spinning Company in 1865, by that time they were spinning and weaving linen.

With the boom in the linen trade Belfast became the linen capital of the world. Falls Spinning Mill was able to keep its doors open longer than many of its contemporaries, but in 1972 it was forced to close.

In 1982 Springhill Community House took over the 2nd floor and established Conway Education Centre no the largest community Education Provider in West Belfast.

Springhill was back today in the footsteps of previous mill weavers delivering a weaving workshop. We were able to use some of the original linen threads left behind 50 years ago. Thankfully working conditions have improved and I'm sure you'll all agree the weaving looks amazing.

Conway Mill is presently owned and managed by Conway Mill Preservation Trust. The trust was set up in 1999 as a registered charity with the aim of preserving, protecting, and restoring the mill complex for the benefit of the inhabitants of Belfast and of West Belfast in particular.



Outdoor screening of Ballymurphy Massacre Film

Today marks the 1st anniversary of the publication of Justice Keegan's verdict into the Ballymurphy Massacre.

We launched a film of families reflecting on the "entirely innocent" verdict and the welcome received from the Ballymurphy Community.

We will be screening it tonight at 9pm on an outdoor screen in Springhill Close, outside Springhill Community House, your welcome to join us.

Due to weather conditions the film was screened in the community House.

Paws for thought.

It's a sad day here at the community house as our resident cat, Silver, of 17 years has gone to cat heaven.

He was born in the roof space of the house opposite and was spotted on the roof before we rescued him from falling.

He stayed with us in the back garden for the next 17 years keeping the house and garden mouse free.

He would appear at the window at feeding time and his favourite place was wrapped around the heating flu for warmth. In his later years he ventured inside for the comfort of the sofa.

He enjoyed human interaction and a pet but only on his terms, a quick snap with his razor sharp teeth was the signal that he'd had enough.

Thanks to Silver who brought joy to many of our visitors to the Community House and is now reunited with his heavenly friends.



"Bread for all and Roses too" in Gairdín an Phobail

American women's suffrage activist Helen Todd spoke those words in 1910, later explaining that bread represented home, shelter and security, and Roses; music, education, nature, books and culture. Her slogan later inspired the poem "Bread and Roses" by James Oppenheim.

The meaning of this was never more evident than today in Gairdín an Phobail when we were treated to Opera, foraging and food.

Northern Ireland Opera provided the music and singing and Gairdín An Phobail provided the foraging and food including delicious pizza cooked in the onsite pizza oven.

It was beautiful to see and hear children from local schools interact with singer Fionn Ó hAlmhain in a rendition of Baidín Fheilimí.

Well done to all involved for organising today's event and to Northern Ireland Opera's Fionn Ó hAlmhain (Singer) Tristan Russcher (pianist) for the pop-up Opera. No doubt there will be more Bread and Roses events to come.



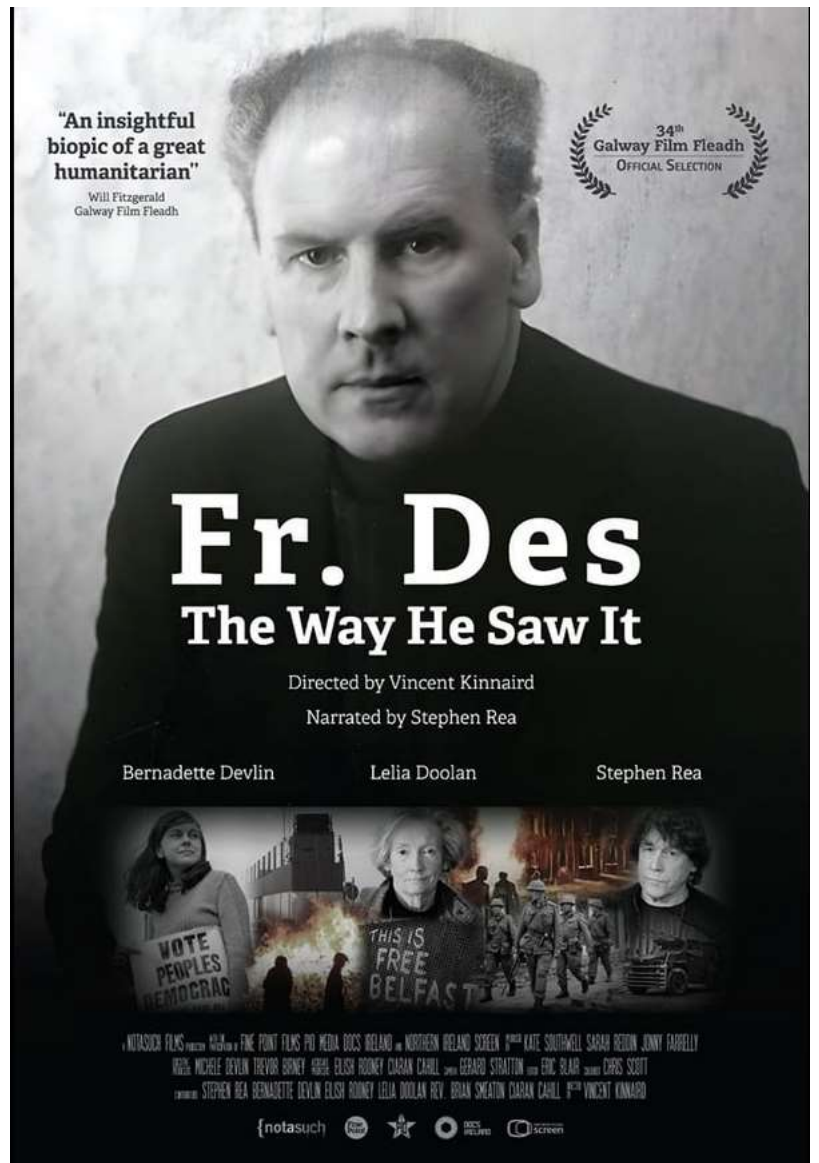
Remembering Fr Des on his 97th Birthday.

The screening of Vincent Kinnard's film "Fr Des The Way He Saw It" at the Galway Film Fleadh was to coincide with Fr Des' 97th birthday.

He was on a level with everybody he met and you always left his company feeling better.

I've said it before and it's worth repeating, he walked in the footsteps of Jesus like no-one else I know and was a true disciple.

We were blessed to have him with us and his legacy continues in the many community initiatives he started.



He wrote this poem on his 90th birthday.

The Young Man on his Ninetieth Birthday

On his ninetieth birthday
The young man said,
Why do I live so long, when after all,
My father died at fifty eight
Hale and hearty as you might say
While I at ninety am still inhaling heartily.
On the other hand,
His father, my Grandpa, lived to be a hundred and two — or four
We don't argue about it —
After a lifetime believing he wasn't well.
Every market day he'd visit the doctor in the town
Saying he wasn't well.
Until the doctor — to confirm his best suspicions you might say — Said, "Mr Wilson, you are
right, you are suffering
From a severe surfeit."
He never needed to see the doctor again
Happily spending his life busy and between times
With his friends all trying to work out what a severe surfeit was.
Happily it was nothing at all.
He passed away in great dignity
Still wearing the glasses the chemist gave him
Which helped him to see
Happily and busily for the rest of his life
Although they had no magnification in them at all.
Maybe that's the secret of a long life.
Happy mystification without the unnecessary magnification.
Maybe the truth is my two grandpas and two grandmas
Had so many things really right with them
They had to invent
Things wrong with them to show they were normal.
So on his ninetieth birthday
The young man said, "Why should I live so long?"
Why not? I would like to live
To a hundred and two
Or a hundred and four — we'll not argue about it.
Or even live to a hundred and twenty
But only if all of us could do it together.

Not all heroes wear capes.

It's been tough for us all during COVID and lockdowns but more so for the residents and staff of nursing homes who felt the force of it more.

We were delighted to deliver 130 remedy packs for the staff of Our Lady's Home in Beechmount.

Receiving the remedies were manager Isobel Nerves, staff nurse Siobhan Regan, support worker Maureen Delaney.



Thank you to all our frontline workers who are continuing to battle with the virus ours was just a small gesture of thanks and gratitude for all their work.

Springhill Community House, literally at the heart of the community.

Since installing our defibrillator in 2020 it has been accessed 4 times, thankfully each time was a positive outcome and it wasn't required.

It is located in a white box on the wall outside the community house, 6 Springhill Close, Belfast, BT 12 7SE.

It is available 24/7.

No need to ask, just take and return when finished.

The defibrillator can be used for adults and children as it has both pads supplied.

We know of 2 other defibrillators accessible to the public in the Upper Springfield area.

Gort Na Móna GAC

Location: Outside Gym

Accessibility : 24/7

Address:

25 Avoca Ct, Belfast BT11 8QT

Centre for Health and Wellbeing

Location: Indoors at reception

Accessibility: Office Hours

Mon - Thur 9 to 5pm

Friday 9 to 1pm

Address:

689 Springfield Rd, Belfast BT12 7FP

Thanks to our funders, the Victims and Survivors Service, we were able to purchase the defibrillator and deliver training with 10 people from the Upper Springfield area.



50th Birthday - Back to the future celebrations



Springhill Community House is Celebrating 50 years of delivering much needed education and health services at the heart of the Community.



To celebrate and thank the local community we are sponsored the Springhill Fantastic Fun Day on Friday 29th July just as we did in the early 70's

Activities on offer for the whole family included football, cribby, walking, bingo, wheelie bin race, cinema night and bouncy castles for the kids.

Again we would like to take this opportunity to thank all the residents in the Upper Springfield for your continued support and our team look forward to continuing our work for the next 50 years.

And it kicks off the start of our amazing fun packed day celebrating 50 years of Springhill Community House with the football tournament for the Fr Des memorial cup and more fun packed activities throughout the day.



Great morning of football playing for the Fr Des Memorial cup, teams paraded around the pitch just before the final playoff.

What an amazing setting in the springhill play park with a backdrop of the beautiful black mountain.

Well done to all the participants.





Congratulations to The winning team Manchester United, but as the tournament coach Joe said we're all winners, it's not about the winning it's about taking part.

In the 1970's festival Jock Cush presented the medals and Trophies so it was great that his daughter Marian came today to do the same.

On to the cribby tournament now.

Cribby results Great community spirit at the final of the cribby tournament Geri v's Eileen and Eileen is victorious.



Our 50+ tea party and bingo is in full swing, plenty of prizes on the go.
The Free Fantastic family funday is about to get underway so why not bring the kids along to
springhill Park.



Fantastic Funday, free icecream and slush puppies to all the dancers.



There was great excitement for the long awaited wheelie bin race and Springhill Avenue was packed with onlookers, supporters and flour throwers. Seamus Bracken was the winner.

belfastmedia.com

NEWS SPORTS ARTS OPINION PLACE AD EVENTS FAMILY NOTICES E-PAPERS GAELGE PODCASTS POLITICS DONATE Q

WATCH: Wheelie fun day celebrating 50 years at Springhill

James McCarthy August 01, 2022 12:18



Marty McFly & Doc Brown would be proud of our Back to the Future Fun day and what a day it was.

We had sunshine a beautiful location at the foot of the Black mountain and a fantastic community who took part in football, cribby, seniors football, ladies rounders, 50+ tea party, family funday and the fantastic whellie bin race.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our community for supporting Springhill Community House over the last 50 years and for joining us today in celebration.

We also have to thank everyone involved in organising the events, the Springhill Team, Pete & Louise Maguire, Margaret Hyland, Ciaran Cahill, also Tommy Holland, Paul Conlon, Joe McDonnell, Julia O'Hollaran , and Cillian Mcgovern. Big thanks to Martin Keenan and Mark Allsop from Bayview Media.

Big congratulations to all those who took part in our events and received our limited edition 50th Anniversary medal.



Educational Touring Club revisited 2022 style.

In 1973 Noelle Ryan started the Educational Touring Club, the idea behind it was to allow people the opportunity to travel outside their own community and to learn or experience new things. A minibus was purchased with a grant from the Susan Langley trust. The first trip was to the lyric theatre to watch Jesus Christ Super Star and the last to Falcarragh Co Donegal with the Irish Class.

As part of our 50th Anniversary celebrations we revisited that idea with a trip to Kilmainham Gaol and Glasnevin Cemetery.

Kilmainham Gaol opened in 1796 as the new County Gaol for Dublin. While most of the prisoners were common criminals, it also held political prisoners involved in Ireland's struggle for independence. Included amongst those held here were Robert Emmet, Anne Devlin, the Fenians, Charles Stewart Parnell, Countess Markievicz and the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising, 14 of whom were executed by firing squad in the Stonebreaker's yard. The Gaol was closed in 1924 but was preserved as a national monument in the 1960s and restored by the Kilmainham Gaol Restoration Committee.

Glasnevin Cemetery holds the stories of 1.5 million people who are buried there. It's Ireland's largest burial place, a beautifully restored Victorian cemetery featuring epic monuments to our past. From poets and presidents, singers and suffragettes, the ordinary and the extraordinary - the stories of those who shaped our nation's history are brought to life through the tours and visitors centre.

The youngest person to be imprisoned in Kilmainham was 3 year old Thomas Roberts who was imprisoned for begging in 1856.

Michael Carey 11 years old, Francis Street Dublin was the first burial in Glasnevin Cemetery. The burial of Peadar and Kathleen Timmins resonates with Ballymurphy, they welcomed refugees into their home in Finglas during the early 70's. Its people like the Timmins who are unsung heroes.



Crafty Crafters

Great work at our craft workshop, decoupage, book folding and rock painting all in the great outdoors.

Looking forward to seeing the final results.

Well done all our crafter.



“Our revenge will be the laughter of our children.”

Movie night in Springhill Close 9th August 2022 is in stark contrast to this night 51 years ago when 600 Paratroopers invaded Ballymurphy leaving 11 innocent civilians dead, many more wounded, and a community traumatised.

Our streets were filled with very different sounds and it wasn't children laughing at the Goonies movie.

The army log for the 9th August records- 04.45 am " Screams and shouting all over Ballymurphy"

"200-300 outside the Henry Taggart Hall, Stoning and Petrol Bombing".

This was the community's reaction to the arrest and detention without trial or conviction of more than 300 men.

So we were delighted to hear laughter, cry's of more popcorn please, and smiling faces to mark Springhill Community House's 50th Anniversary, these faces are our future leaders.



Twit Twit Twoo.

Building Bird feeders and learning about common garden birds in Gairdín an Phobail.

Local environmentalist Aaron Kelly came along to talk about his work reforesting and rewilding on the Black Mountain and about some of his discoveries of pine martins, long eared owls among other animals.

Aaron spoke about protecting our natural resources not just for us to enjoy but for future generation.

He is a fierce defender of the Black Mountain and urged everybody to respect and appreciate it's natural beauty.

Everybody left with a better understanding and appreciation for nature as well as a few things to encourage birds into the garden including bird feeding table, binoculars, bird ID cards and bird food.

So why not become a twitcher rather than tweeter and get out into the great outdoors, even if it's for just for one day.

Come along and get involved in the Gairdín an Phobail who are planning to work with Aaron on reforesting and clean ups of the mountain.





Launch of Education Programmes

Springhill Community House is celebrating 50 years of delivering much needed education and health services at the heart of the community.

We are now recruiting for our programmes starting in September, if your interested please PM or call 02890326722 to reserve a place.

Here's a potted history of Springhill Community House.

In August, 1966, at a few days' notice, Bishop William Philbin removed Fr Des Wilson from his post as Spiritual Director at St. Malachy's College and sent him to St. John's on the Falls Road - as a junior curate with responsibility for Whiterock-Ballymurphy, one of the most deprived areas in Western Europe at the time.

Des was not prepared for the level of poverty and the culture shock that his new appointment would bring. He was appalled by the living conditions, social deprivation, unemployment and standard of housing due to years of official neglect.

He found that his parishioners "faced a constant struggle to make ends meet and to live with dignity". Des discovered that estates like Ballymurphy were built by the Belfast cooperation to house what they called 'unsatisfactory' or 'problem' tenants giving the estate a bad name. It was a constant battle fighting against the negative newspaper reports which he felt "gloried in describing degradation" and printed untrue stories just to sell papers.

In fact, he found the complete opposite, he described the tenants as "courageous and self-sacrificing" and found that the people of West Belfast had "done so much to understand,

define, suggest remedies for their problems and to propose plans for their future prosperity" than people in any other part of Belfast.

Des felt powerless. On the one hand was the poverty of the people, and on the other the wealth within the church, but as junior curate he had no input into decision making within the parish.

The priests of St. John's inhabited two large houses: one next to the church, the other (the Parish Priest's) on the far side of St. Kevin's Primary School. Des and his colleague, Fr. Hugh came up with the idea of securing a council house in Ballymurphy so that they could live and work with the people.

The idea was not well received initially, however, Bishop Philbin later purchased a house for Fr Mullan in Springfield Park. On the 9th August 1971 Fr Mullan left this house to attend to an injured man in a field opposite and was himself murdered by the British Army's Parachute Regiment, ten others would also die in the following days.

Des' idea of the worker priest, living and working within the community, never left his mind. The introduction of internment and subsequent attacks on the community by the British army strengthened his resolve to proceed. In December 1971 he secured the tenancy for a council house at 123 Springhill Avenue, however he didn't move in until January 1972.

This was a leap into the unknown and a journey that would see Des become the People's Priest and an integral part of the community. Springhill would be his home for the next 50 years during that time he: built peace, created work opportunities, organised education programmes, held public inquires, staged entertaining and thought provoking plays. All this to allow people to see the potential in themselves and to encourage them to take back control of their own future.

Des wasn't sure how the people of Ballymurphy would react to 'the priest' moving in and it was some time before local people came to realise that 123 Springhill Community House was an "open house".

It was one of the few places in the area with a working phone, and each day the house rapidly filled with distraught women making desperate inquiries about the non-arrival of social benefits without which they and their families could not survive, or they were distressed by what had happened to loved ones.


The Community House was an "open house", it was a place of neutrality committed to finding a better way of doing things. Springhill Community House facilitated what the people perceived as relevant to their needs by promoting the concept of "free learning" - learning not imposed from above, but devised by the individual.

While others contented themselves deciding from afar who was fit and who was not fit to be listened to, Des made it a basic policy from the very beginning that evil started by telling others that they were not welcome or had no contribution to make.

Great things start from small beginnings, and we have Des to thank for giving us Springhill Community House, through this small project he has given us all so much to live for. The junior curate done alright!

From its inception the purpose of Springhill Community House/ the People's School, has and will continue to be about empowering people to take control of their own lives. This remains at the heart of what Springhill Community House is about and involves tackling the apathy and frustration felt by individuals through programmes of personal development, life coaching, education, training, health awareness and confidence building. SCH has continued to build on

the early ethos of free learning that Des started and provides a wide spectrum of courses and services.



SPRINGHILL COMMUNITY HOUSE

GCSE CLASSES
Maths Blended Course Essential Skills
Numeracy/GCSE Wednesday
6.45-9.15pm
English Thursday 6.45-9.15pm
Science: Monday 6.45-9.15pm
Irish GCSE Thursday 6pm - 9pm

COMPUTER CLASSES
"Meet The Ancestors"
Introduction to online
Family Research - By arrangement

LIFE COACHING COURSES
HISTORY & POLITICS
Introduction to Women in History and
Local History 6 weeks

THERAPY TRAINING
Diploma Courses in Reflexology
& Flower Essence, participants
must meet victim's criteria.


**THERAPIES OUTREACH
BEFRIENDING**
We have a team of Therapists who offer
treatments in Aromatherapy and
Reflexology at Springhill Community
House. This programme is funded by VSS
and participants must meet victim's
criteria.

GAIRDÍN AN PHOBAIL
Volunteers wanted to help in the
Peoples Garden at the Whiterock Leisure
Centre. Getting involved is a great way
to learn how to grow your own
fruit and veg, what we grow we share.
Fridays 10am - 12noon

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION
Need help with English or Maths? We
can help you, just call in for a cuppa and
a chat.

OTHER CLASSES
Digital Photography

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ANY
OF THE ABOVE CALL INTO**



Springhill Community House, 6&7 Springhill Close, Belfast BT12 7SE
T: 02890326722

Springhill Community House is funded by the Victims and Survivors
Service & DSD/Belfast Regeneration Office Neighbourhood Renewal.

Exam Results Day

Congratulations!! to all our students who received their results today, its the reward for all your hard work. Best Wishes from all of us in Springhill Community House for the future.

But remember exams are a test of your memory, not a measure of your worth as a human being. Grades don't define you as a person or shape your future you are in control of that. Our programme of courses start again in September and there is something there for everyone, so why not enrol in one of our courses and broaden your horizons.

We have a great team in Springhill Community House who work hard to provide education, training and health awareness opportunities for our local community.

Each year hundreds of people benefit from our services and we are delighted that they realise the potential locked away inside them, all we do is encourage them to see it.

We're not about asking for thanks but when it comes it's very much appreciated and reminds us what our work is all about.

So we were delighted to receive this message of thanks from Pat Gregory who like many of our students went onto University and completed a degree course.

"Thanks everyone for the kind words on me getting over the line in uni. It was hard going at times a big thank you to everyone who helped me. especially everyone in Springhill Community house where i got my History GCSE which helped me get into uni."

Pat was a bit different to many of our students, his studies were interrupted after a stroke, but his grit and determination got him through it and he proudly holds his degree certificate.

Well done Pat and all our students from all of us in Springhill Community House you're an inspiration and the reason we do the work we do.



Last of the summer wine planting workshop.

And there wasn't a drop in sight, not even rain.

Just finished our last summer workshop planting in Gairdín an Phobail this morning. Everyone had a great time planting Azalias, Hebe's, chrisanthymum's and spring flowering daffodils which will look lovely in any garden. It's not just about the gardening, we also had great craic and plenty of food provided by the Anacka Women's Collective.



Photography for beginners workshop

"Taking an image, freezing a moment, reveals how rich reality truly is"

Sometimes we just need to stop and capture the richness of life before it passes us by. The saying a picture paints a thousand words is very apt for these pictures from our photography for beginners students.

Thanks to tutor Mal McCann and everyone who took part, more pics to come.



More examples from the archive highlighting Fr Des' work.

This time a brief letter of thanks addressed to Father Des from 'Red Ken', Ken Livingstone, for his support in the wake of Livingstone's 1988 suspension from the House of Commons.

Livingstone caused controversy when he condemned Patrick Mayhew, the then-British Attorney General, as "an accomplice to murder," following an official report which whitewashed allegations of 'shoot-to-kill' operations operated by the RUC in the North.

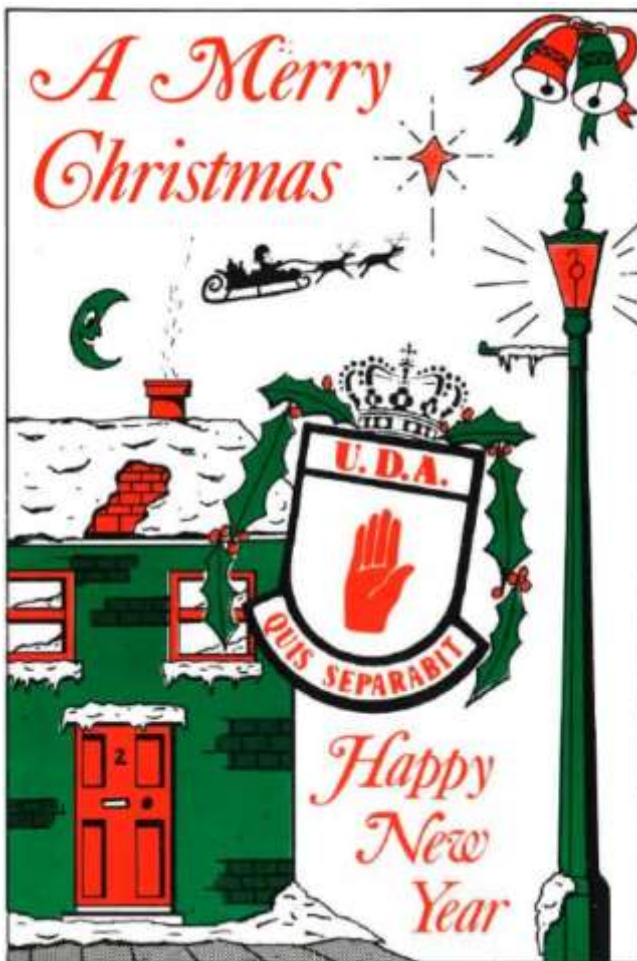
And a number of political Christmas cards, including republican and loyalist organisation's yuletide greetings, as well as cards highlighting the plight of internees and the Birmingham Six.



The BIRMINGHAM SIX...



Remember Them This Christmas



FROM: KEN LIVINGSTONE MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

11 February 1988

Fr Desmond Wilson
123 Springhill Avenue
Belfast BT12 7QF

Dear Fr Wilson.

I am writing to thank you for the kind and supportive letter which you sent me recently after I was banned from the House of Commons.

Please forgive the brevity of this note, but I have been inundated with letters of support. I've found it very heartening to hear from so many people, all over the country, and they have both cheered me and strengthened my resolve.

I am very grateful to you for taking the time and trouble to write.

Yours sincerely

Ken Livingstone.

Fr Des - The People's Archive Outreach presentation

Great to see so many young people from Coláiste Feirste's A'level history class attending a presentation on Fr Des' Archive.

Our archivist Tiarnán O'Muilleoir gave a fantastic overview of the archive, its contents and importance in local history.

Our long term objective is to house the archive in the Fr Des Wilson Interpretive Centre where it would be available to the public, researchers and academics.

I hope the audience left today with an understanding of the importance of recording and documenting our own history and not relying on the 'official' version.

Thanks to Glór Na Móna for hosting today's event as part of Feile Na Carraige.



Derry Focus Project Visit

We welcomed the Focus Project from Derry who meet with the Ballymurphy Massacre families who shared their their powerful stories of loss, resilience and continuing to fight for justice.



Honouring the Saints

Light is an important symbol in many religions it symbolised joy and life giving power. Stained glass windows from which light streams represents purity, the heavens, spirituality and genesis and usually depict saints and biblical stories.

How fitting that Conway Mill commissioned one of their resident artists, Alice McGuinness, to create a stained glass window in memory of our own two saint's Fr Des Wilson and Noelle Ryan.

Fr Des & Noelle's story is biblical in many ways, they like no others I know, they have walked in the footsteps of Jesus. They took on the might of the authorities and won despite being the

underdog. They stood by their people in their hour of need. They feed and clothed the hungry and championed the poor. They exposed injustice, inequality and brought about peace.

This window was unveiled last week as part of Conway Mill's 40th Anniversary celebrations and I'm sure you'll agree it a beautiful piece of work and worthy of the saints it honours.



Remembering Fr Des on the 3rd Anniversary of his passing.

It's hard to believe it's been three years since he passed and much has happened in those years.

The work that he started continues here in the Community House delivering education, training, health awareness, therapies and supporting victims of the conflict.

We miss him every day, but he has left us a wonderful legacy in the work that he has done; the projects that he started, many of which continue today.

We thank God for Des' priesthood, his faithful and dedicated service of God and for his lifelong service to his people.

To celebrate Fr Des' 70th anniversary of his ordination Fr Paddy McCafferty said Mass in Corpus Christi. It was just a few months before Des' passing and he couldn't be there in person but he wanted to say the following which was read out at mass.

It was his last public announcement and I think he used the opportunity to say thanks and goodbye to the community he loved.

"Seventy years. I never thought I would get this far. There were more than 80 priests ordained the same day as I was ; most of them are gone from this world, a mere handful of us laughing about which of us will reach the hundredth birthday first.

What I want to do now most of all is to thank God for allowing me to live among such good family, friends and neighbours during those years. You taught me what life means , you taught me that especially during the bad, sad times . I believe we are seeing the beginning of a renewed Ireland, a renewed Christianity , a renewed city of Belfast - and we are privileged to live in one of the most beautiful parts of the city - between the beautiful mountain that is full of surprises like the feast of bluebells in the beginning of summer to the snow topped hills in Winter, between that and the sweeping magnificent valley of the Lough and Lagan. This must surely be one of the most beautiful places for a city to be in.

This is where I learned the best lessons about life and I am grateful to family, friends, neighbours who taught me and even had great patience when I learned so slowly. I learned how good people show their dignity even during the hardest of times, show it most of all during the hard times.

So I am grateful to God for being here, grateful , to all whom I have had the privilege of being family and neighbour to. And very , very hopeful for the future. Coming out of the worst of times we could now be facing into the best of times. May God and good people make it so.

Father Paddy, like our friend Father Aiden, you are with us all at the beginning of a newly awakened church and a people refreshed by what they have suffered and achieved. together. We have good reason to be thankful for that and for each other."



Nothing worth having comes easy.

We love it when our students call to collect their certificates.

Well done Bridgeen, now a fully qualified therapist in Thermal Auricular Therapy.

All the hard work was worth it, congratulations to all our students.



A picture paints a thousand words phot exhibition

The culmination of our photography class was a photo exhibition in Conway Mill.

The photographs looked amazing framed and displayed.

Congratulations to all our photographers.

We'll be doing the course again in the new year so watch this space.



Picture Perfect

Springhill community House was delighted to deliver an introduction to photography course with award winning local photographer, Mal McCann.

The course for beginners was designed to help participants improve their knowledge of photography using mobile phones.

Over a number of weeks our budding photographers made use of the beauty on our doorstep including the Black Mountain, Titanic Quarter and the Bog Meadows, all became subjects in their finished work.

Conway Mill Theatre was the perfect venue to display the fruits of their labour. More than 20 framed photographs lined the walls of a once derelict mill which is now a shining beacon of arts, crafts, education, social enterprise and cultural expression.

The exhibition was the first time our photographers, as well as their family and friends, saw their masterpieces on display, and they were literally lost for words.

This project wasn't just about learning new photography skills, it was about bringing people together, sharing experiences and exploring the beauty of nature that we have around us. This poem, written by Bernie Robinson, one of our budding photographers, best describes our recent photography for beginners course.

Picture Perfect

It started with a vision,
 A group of five or six,
 Signed up for weekly lessons
 On how to take good pics.
 With their phones they fumbled,
 As they learned some new techniques,
 Slowly they became obsessed,
 Turned into "camera geeks".
 They saw the world through different eyes,
 Buildings, nature, faces,
 Opportunities to snap
 In many different places.
 Masterpieces were produced,
 And hung upon the walls,
 Gratitude and pride was felt
 In the Mill just down the Falls.

... have ... end Eamon Martin, Right Reverend ... and ... Dr John Kirkpatrick, Reverend David ... on our hearts, with our hearts to ... welcoming and meeting the needs of ... those who arrived here." ... both practitioners to deliver ... meaningful social justice and elim- ... inate poverty across this island," ... in that our vision of such as Chris- ... tians, we have a sure and certain ... hope of new creation in Christ".

Discovering the joy of photography in west Belfast



ALLAN PRESTON
 a.preston@wstnews.com

BIDDING photographers in west Belfast have displayed their work for the first time in public for a new exhibition.

In recent weeks, a course for beginners was taught at Springhill Community House with award-winning Irish News photographer Mal McCann.

Those taking part were able to increase their knowledge of photography using mobile phones to capture landscapes such as Black Mountain, Titanic Quarter and the Bog Meadows.

The results are now on display at Conway Mill Theatre, with more than 20 framed images lining the walls of the once derelict mill, which has been revitalised as a hub for culture, arts, crafts, education and social enterprise.

Springhill Community House coordinator Ciaran Cahill said: "The exhibition was the first time our photographers, as well as their family and friends, saw their masterpieces on display, and they were literally lost for words. "This project wasn't just about learning new photography skills, it was about bringing people together, sharing experiences and exploring the beauty of nature that we have around us."

Established in 1972 by Dr Desmond Wilson, the People's School at Springhill Community House has been dedicated to empowering the local community through education. Many of those attending over the years have had a negative experience within school settings which discouraged them from returning to education. Through offering classes and training in a relaxed setting, the project puts participants at ease and acts as a stepping stone to other service providers. As well as gaining formal qualifications, those taking part can also build their self-esteem.

The photography course will run again in the new year, with those interested asked to call Springhill Community House on 028 90326722.

LAUNCH: Far left, Mal McCann with Liam, Phil, Bernie and Ciara of the exhibition launch
PICTURE: Mal McCann

Photos from far left by Ciara McKay, Bernie Robinson and above, by Liam Shannon

PICTURE: Ciara McKay



History on our Doorstep

In partnership with Black Mountain Shared Space Project, Springhill Community House was delighted to facilitate a cross community tour of the Shankill area.

Tour guide, Bobby Foster, gave a fascinating history of the Shankill area including the graveyard and St Matthews Church.

The Shankill Graveyard, known now as the Garden or Rest is one of the oldest cemeteries in Belfast.

It is formed on the grounds around an ancient church or monastery in the nearby Glencairn which was once known as Monks Hill. The Shankill name comes from the Irish 'Seanchill' meaning 'old church'.

The church was situated beside the River Farset on the slope of the hill, avoiding the low-lying marshy area around the Lagan.

It was used for active burials for more than 1,000 years. Since 1934 it has no longer been an active burial site. The oldest standing headstone was erected to the memory of George McAuley who died in 1685. The gateways and railings are listed as being of historic and architectural interest.

Among those interred in the cemetery are thousands of victims of the famine, plague and blitz.

A notable burial is that of Francis Anderson Calder who was interred in 1855. A well-known philanthropist, Calder was the Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. He is best known as the founder of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Belfast. Through his work water troughs for horses and livestock were erected in Belfast. Though his headstone no longer remains at the cemetery, the Calder Memorial Fountain can be seen outside the Customs House in Belfast.

Archaeological finds of pieces of a late eighth or ninth century crozier (a bishop's ceremonial staff) prove the ecclesiastical building here pre-dates the Anglo-Norman invasion. The highly decorated bronze fragments, discovered in the Shankill Graveyard, are held in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. One segment appears to be the ferrule (the bottom of the staff) and another the reliquary box (a small container within the shaft containing a relic). By the 1860's the effects of disease, famine and urbanisation of the region meant that the graveyard had reached saturation point. Belfast Corporation was forced to look for alternatives and in 1869 opened Belfast City Cemetery.

Today the graveyard has been taken over by Belfast City Council and transformed into a Garden of Rest.

In 1872, at the corner of Shankill and Woodvale Road, St Matthew's Church of Ireland was reconstructed. St Matthews Church takes its name from the very first church that was built in the Shankill Graveyard.

St Matthews Church sits at the junction of the Woodvale and Shankill Roads and has served the community since 1869.

Designed and built by the renowned architects, Welland and Gillespie, who built many Church of Ireland churches throughout the North and South of Ireland.

St Matthews is built in the shape of the shamrock and the ancient Irish symbol of a round tower. It has a stained glass window in honour of St Patrick. This site is believed to be the oldest Christian site in Belfast, dating back to around 455AD. It is said that St Patrick himself visited this site.

There is a Ballaun stone outside the church, which was recovered from the neighbouring Shankill Graveyard. Folklore has it is that it is of Druid Origins and the old church used it for Christian baptisms. But, generations have known it as "the wart stone" because of its alleged mystical powers to cure warts.



History on our Doorstep Take 2

Last week it was the Shankill this week it was Ballymurphy.

Unfortunately the weather prevented us from walking but we had the next best thing a virtual tour of Ballymurphy and surrounding townlands.

Thanks to local historian Risteárd Ó'Murchú for a fascinating insight into the history of a small town land with a huge history.

Hill Hamilton was the landlord of Ballymurphy and rented land and buildings to a host of residents including Dan O'Neill. O'Neill Lane named after him ran from Brittons Parade up to Highfield and was known as the place to court. The New estate built on Beechmount pitches is now called O'Neill Lane.

In 1864 Hamilton evicted the residents of Ballymurphy House (now Corr's Timber yard) and Pipers House (now Sunny's or O'Hare's Farm).

Risteárd's tour included ring forts located just of the Whiterock Road at the junction of Brittons Parade.

To duels of honour in the Falls Bleach Green between Jack Lawless for Catholic Emancipation and Fortescue Greg against.

Brothers William and John Sinclaire founders of the United Irish men. John was the owner of the Falls Bleach green John invited Wolftone who visited his bleach green and later described standing on a hill (probably the Black Mountain) which had a view over three Lough's. Risteárd's tour also included murder on the hatched field, the rock dam, trolley buses and much more.

There's history in them thar hills is very apt for the black Mountain and the Town land of Ballymurphy.



History on our doorstep take 3.

Black Mountain Shared Space Project's genealogy/area history project finished up today with a tour of the Public Records office PRONI.

We were given a guided tour of the facilities and archive accessible to the public. Everything from Church records to private estate collection.

The staff were amazing and put on display some of the original documents including. BG/24/GJ/1 Newry board of guardians offence and Punishment Book 1850-1910.

Entry number 101, 29th Sep 1856, Mary Corry, Offence - going to the toilet without obtaining permission - punishment - Milk stopped at supper for one week.

D654/B/7/1/3 Travel journal "A narrative of travels to Vienna, Constantinople, Athens, Naples etc"
This velvet bound journal with ornate silver clasp recorded these journeys including hand painted illustrations.

D4563/1/3/3 Diary of Eva Chichester 1916. This is a fascinating account of 'three Ulster Women in the Sinn Fein Rebellion' Eva and two friends travel to Dublin April 30th 1916 to do some shopping, attend concerts and a church synod and find themselves caught up in the Easter Rebellion. They find themselves locked into St Stephen's Green and were not happy that the 'Sinn Feiners' had disputed their plans.

D3838/4/2/1 Diary of Roberta Hewitt - 1947-1950. The diary was a gift from Johnny for Roberta to record her story in her words "I write in this diary.. That it might be read when we are no more and fill in a part of the Belfast Picture.

I hope the worst thing in it will be my spelling".
Johnny began the diary with a beautiful poem.
For Roberta with birthday greetings and my Love.
let this blank page receive,
report of what occurred.
The wren, the falling leaf,
the wise, the friendly word,
the name to bring the face
back to the drowsy mind.
The actors, dancers grace
tho vanished, here defined,
all gain from life and art,
the weather of the sky,
the weather of the heart.
Here write your history.
From Johnny 1947

We should all take a leaf from Roberta's book and record our own history, start your own diary and record your family history.

PRONI is well worth a visit, get yourself down there and read Roberta's diary or Eva's account of 1916, fascinating stuff.



Eager Weavers

Our weavers were learning how to make bird feeders this morning in the first of 3 workshops in partnership with Gairdín an Phobail.



Ballymurphy Massacre - Patchwork of Innocence

We received a warm welcome in Portaferry today for the launch of the Ballymurphy Massacre Patchwork of Innocence.

Thanks to Fr Mullan's niece, Geraldine McGrattan, and his brother Patsy Mullan & family for hosting today's event.

Springhill Community House has supported families throughout their campaign and inquests. This took many forms, providing therapies, counselling, social events, encouragement, reassurance, and keeping a daily record of the inquest proceedings.

Families recognised that support would be much needed after the inquest verdict and through conversations, they came up with a number of projects including the Patchwork of Innocence quilt, Publication of their Pen Portraits, a film marking the first anniversary of the verdict and a digital photo memorial project.

The quilt project involved each family designing a square that would remember their loved one and reflect on the inquest verdict when Justice Siobhan Keegan declared all the victims in Ballymurphy, 'Entirely Innocent'.

Over a number of weeks, families came together to plan, design, and make the patchwork squares.

This process became therapy in itself allowing them to share their innermost thoughts, feelings, highs and lows of the campaign and inquest process.

Springhill Community House was delighted to be asked by families to contribute a square representing our support for them.

The Springhill square is made up of hands joined in the shape of a house to represent unity, strength, support, togetherness, and family.

We included the universally recognised saying, 'we shall overcome' and when things got tough during the inquest we reminded families of this.

The panel to the left of the quilt depicts the eleven doves that were released in Ballymurphy after the innocent verdict was announced.

The panel to the right represents the 50 years' journey families have been on from 1971 to 2021. The verdicts were announced during Covid lockdown and families organised a cavalcade through the streets of Ballymurphy to thank the community for their support. The cars bearing white flags in the left panel are symbolic of that too.

Before returning home we gathered at Fr Mullan's grave to lay a wreath from the Ballymurphy Massacre families and pay tribute to the priest who lay down his life for his flock.

The quilt will be on display in a number of events during the year.



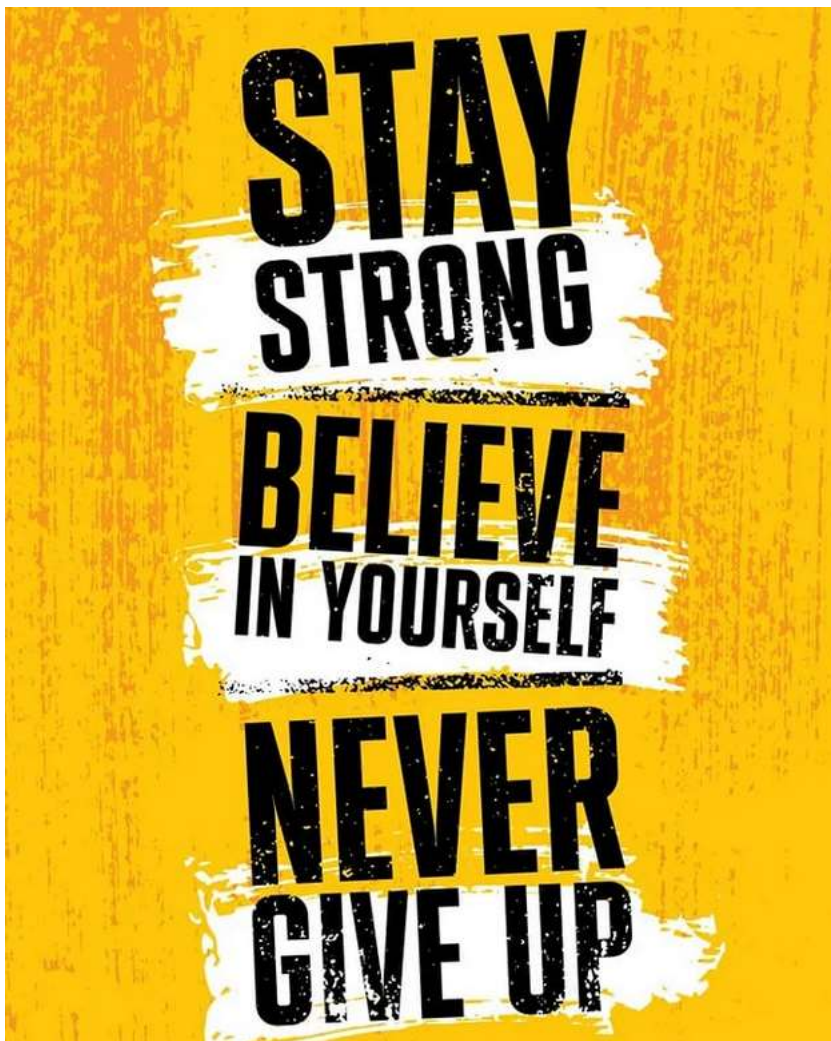
It's okay Not to be okay Campaign

You are the master of your fate and we are here for you, just reach out and we can help.

Stay strong, believe in yourself, never give up.

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.
In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.
Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.
It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.



Remembering Noelle Ryan on the 9th anniversary of her passing.

Noelle was a remarkable human being who always saw the good in people.

She dedicated her life to the service of God and the people of Belfast.

Originally from Dublin Noelle joined a Domician convent in Drogheda, it was an enclosed order that had no direct communication with the outside world, a life of contemplation and prayer. For anyone who knew Noelle that was never the order for her. She left after 6 years and became a street sister working in Lourdes, Liverpool, Dublin before arriving in Belfast. She met Fr Des and knew Springhill Community House was the place for her, over the next 40 years Noelle brought work opportunities, education and health awareness to the people of West Belfast and beyond, her work continues today.

She chose to live and work in Springhill and was a great advocate of Bach Flower remedies. She believed in the power of nature to heal us and we are still using back remedies in our work today.

“We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers”

This quote from fellow angelic troublemaker Bayard Rustin reminds me of our own angelic troublemaker Noelle.

Bayard Rustin was an American civil rights activist who was an adviser to Martin Luther King, Jr., and who was the main organiser of the March on Washington in 1963.

There are many stories of her civil and human rights activism, but a couple stand out.

While driving in Belfast city centre she crossed a one-way system and the police fined her, she took the opportunity to raise awareness of strip searching in Armagh gaol. She refused to pay the fine in the hope it would go to court and she would be sent to Armagh. Either the authorities got wind of her plan or someone unknown paid the fine, but the penalties were dropped and she didn't get her day in court. But this just demonstrates what she was prepared to do to highlight human rights abuses.

On another occasion she started a boycott campaign against M&S who were making substantial donations to the tory party. On different days she would go to all the stores in Belfast, fill the trolley with non-perishable goods and proceed to the checkout, when all the goods went through the till she would refuse to pay and ask for a manager. In a loud voice she would tell the manager and anyone in close proximity that M&S were implicit in all that the tory government were doing as they were major donors.

In a similar vein she and others started a boycott of the Northern Bank, the slogan at the time was “the bank that doesn't like to employ Catholics”. As part of the equality campaign, businesses who had an atrocious record of employing Catholics were targeted and the Northern Bank was one of them. Individuals and community organisations were asked to close accounts with the bank in protest at their unfair employment practices and they did. After a lengthy international and domestic campaign fair employment legislation was introduced, although not perfect it was a start in the reversal of unfair employment practices against Catholics.

So you can't get any more angelic than a former nun who gave a life of service to the people of Ireland and beyond, some might call her a troublemaker, I prefer revolutionary.

