



# Lockdown books raise funds for Ugandan Hospital

How do you fundraise when a pandemic stops all face to face events?

During lockdown, Ballyholme parishioner, Andrew Gowdy, decided to try his hand at writing some children's books and has so far raised over £5000 for Kiwoko Hospital, Luwero.

Andrew, who works in finance, has never written or illustrated for children before but he was spurred on by a commitment to the hospital after visiting with a team from Ballyholme in January 2019.

"We witnessed first-hand the hardship that the doctors, nurses and volunteers face on a daily basis," says Andrew. "In Northern Ireland we take running water and access to basic medicines for granted, however in Kiwoko it is a very different story.

"To put the hospital in context, it has a catchment area of almost 1 million people and delivers 3,000 new-born babies each year alongside 5,000 operations. It has an operating budget of £1.5million for the year, which is the equivalent of less than one day's running costs of The Belfast Trust.

"Our remit in 2019 was to better understand the challenges the hospital faced and once home, raise awareness and funding through our various networks. We have raised over £20K so far which has enabled the hospital to install a new bank of solar panels. This means they now have a sustainable power back—up which is key to maintaining surgery and other treatments."

As COVID-19 spread across the globe and lockdowns became the norm, Andrew had the idea of writing children's story books to raise funds remotely.

"I had always fancied a go at writing children's stories and regularly complained to my wife Sharon about the quality of some of the books we had bought for Robyn and Benjamin. This was my opportunity to have a go at writing and illustrating. I have no training in illustration, but I like a good doodle and I do the drawings on an iPad.

"I have written 3 books so far on the theme of 'The Adventures of Benjy & Willis', which are largely true stories based on our family trips across Northern Ireland. Willis is Benjy's toy monkey who is forever getting lost on our trips with big sister Robyn having to find and rescue him."

All of the profits from the book sales go to the Hospital's Children's Ward and Andrew is asking for a minimum donation of £15 for a pack of 3 books. After printing and postage costs:

1 book pack pays for the safe delivery of a new-born baby

5 book packs pay for the hospital care of a child with life threatening meningitis

10 book packs pay for the salary of a children's nurse for 1 month

Andrew says: "The books are dedicated to all the doctors, nurses and volunteers at Kiwoko Hospital. The hard work and dedication undertaken by the staff when caring for their patients and community is truly remarkable."

For more information and how to make a donation and order your book pack please visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/benjyandwillis

All of the fundraising is done through the local Northern Ireland registered charity "Friends of Kiwoko Hospital" <a href="https://www.fokh.org.uk">www.fokh.org.uk</a>

# St Anne's, Shandon Hosts Cork LGBTI+ Awareness Week 2021



The Reverend Paul Robinson and Stephen Spillane welcome the Cork Inter-Agency Group to Saint Anne's Church, Shandon, Cork.

The Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Joe Kavanagh, accompanied by the Lady Mayoress, Stephanie Kavanagh, hoisted the progressive rainbow flag at Cork

City Hall on Sunday 16th May to mark the start of Cork LGBTI+ Awareness Week 2021. Cork City is part of the Rainbow Cities Network: a global response to homophobia and transphobia.

Also on Sunday 16th May, now an established part of the LGBTI+ Awareness Week calendar in Cork, the Annual Service for International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia took place in St Anne's Church, Shandon. Due to the current restrictions and the large numbers who usually attend, the Service was pre-recorded by members of the parish and the Cork City LGBTI+ Interagency Group.



"We are delighted to be able to play our part in Cork LGBTI+ Awareness week. Inclusion is a very important part of who we are in St Anne's and we are reminded of this each week when we say 'whoever you are, and wherever you are in your journey in faith, your are welcome here."

The speaker this year was Jayne Ozanne of the Ozanne Foundation a campaigner for LGBTI+ plus people within the Church as well as being an advocate for the banning of conversion therapy. Jayne recently resigned as member of the UK Government's LGBT Advisory Panel due to the lack

of progress on the banning of this therapy. Jayne spoke of her work and how members of the church can do their part to support inclusion in our churches.

The service can be viewed on youtube here - [[] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dINu3mNCv\_g\_]

The parish is looking forward to being back in church in person for Pentecost.

# Laws against gay conversion therapy 'could stop people from seeking pastoral care'

An internal DUP row about an Assembly motion seeking to ban 'gay conversion therapy' was one of the reasons leading to the departure of Arlene Foster. Claire Simpson hears that while the main churches are opposed to conversion therapy, some concerns remain, Claire Simpson writes in the Irish News.

Laws against gay conversion therapy could stop people from seeking pastoral care about their sexuality, some of the main Christian churches have warned.

The Department for Communities is drafting legislation against the practice after MLAs voted in the assembly last month to pass an Ulster Unionist motion calling on Communities Minister Deirdre Hargey to introduce a ban before the end of the assembly mandate.

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The DUP voted against the motion after its amendment, which supported a ban on conversion therapy but sought to include protections for "legitimate religious activities such as preaching, prayer and pastoral support", was defeated.

Party leader Arlene Foster and four other DUP MLAs abstained.

Some churches have raised concerns about a lack of clear definition on what constitutes conversion therapy.

A spokesman for the Methodist Church in Ireland said while it is opposed to coercive practices, conversion therapy is a broad term.

"While the Methodist Church in Ireland has not made an official statement on the matter, it does not endorse Conversion Therapy," he said.

"The Methodist Church in Ireland clearly states that everyone is unconditionally loved by God and that homosexual orientation itself is not a sin.

"As a church we are concerned for all and would not want anyone to be subject to harmful or unethical practices, including infliction of shame, pain or emotional trauma.

"On the other hand, we are also aware that the term 'conversion therapy' has been used to undermine some legitimate pastoral care and caution against inaccurate, blanket use of the term for pastoral care of those with unwanted same sex attraction or gender dysphoria."

A ban against conversion therapy in England and Wales was announced in the Queen's Speech on Tuesday.

It will be preceded by a consultation.

Head of Evangelical Alliance, David Smyth, said his group was opposed to any kind of coercive therapy.

But he said it wanted protection for churches and faith groups, similar to the same-sex marriage legislation introduced last year which included exemptions for religious bodies.

"Unfortunately the public debate on this has become so polarised it's hard to have a discussion," he said.

He said the group's main concern is the definition of conversion therapy.

"Someone offering to pray or walk with someone, or if someone says I want to understand what our church believes on this issue and I feel very different to that and I want to see if I can resolve this... how can I live with this tension... If someone was to do that completely appropriately we would be concerned that that could be seen as conversion therapy," he said.

Mr Smyth highlighted that the motion proposed by UUP MLAs Doug Beattie and John Stewart called for a ban on gay conversion therapy "in all its forms".

"There was some motion in the wording which definitely caused us concern," he said.



"There was a core area that people agreed on and once it got down to that catch-all 'all its forms', that piece of wording would cause us to ask what does that actually mean?"

A spokesman for the Catholic Church said: "I am not aware of so-called 'conversion therapy' in dioceses and it has not been endorsed by the Irish Bishops' Conference."

Presbyterian moderator Dr David Bruce has already said his church is opposed to any kind of coercive therapy and supports legislation to ban it.

"We also recognise that not everyone struggles with their sexuality, yet for those Christians who do, and ask their minister, or youth leader, to walk alongside them pastorally and prayerfully as they talk about this area of their lives, any future legislation should not criminalise either for fulfilling their pastoral duties responsibly," he said.

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A spokesman for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland said it hopes to engage with DfC around any legislation, especially the lack of any clear definition.

A Church of Ireland spokesman said its General Synod "has neither expressed an opinion on, nor has it promoted, any particular therapies".

"In its resolution on human sexuality in the context of Christian belief, in 2012, the General Synod affirmed its teaching on marriage and acknowledged that members of the Church have at times hurt and wounded people by words and actions, in relation to human sexuality," he said.

"It also affirmed a continuing commitment to love our neighbour and a determination to welcome and to make disciples of all people.

"Members of the Church of Ireland are, as with other matters, free to express and discuss their views on the issues involved."

A spokeswoman for DfC said Ms Hargey has already stated that conversion therapy is "a cruel and inhumane practice and it should be ended now".

She said departmental officials are drafting legislation "in the context of the work the Department is doing on the wider LGBTQI + Strategy".

"Officials are working with stakeholders and colleagues in other departments and jurisdictions to learn from experience and to consider where there are gaps in the law and, importantly, what powers we already have to end this practice," she said.

"This process takes time and all necessary steps will be taken to ensure that any legislation would be fit for purpose and sufficiently robust."

Courtesy the Irish News. 17.05.2021.

# Biggest Protestant church in NI backs DUP bill on disabled abortions

The Presbyterian Church has said the current law on abortion serves to "perpetuate stereotypes" of disabled people, as it set out in detail its support for a new DUP bill, Adam Kula writes in the News Letter.

The church argues that the present rules effectively give people a wide scope to decide that a disabled child's life is not worth living.

The comments are to be found in a submission the church sent to Stormont's health committee last week.

It is signed by Rev Daniel Kane (convener of the Council for Public Affairs) and Rev Trevor Gribben (clerk of the General Assembly).

The bill they are backing is the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill, which it nicknames the "Givan Bill" – after DUP MLA Paul Givan, who is sponsoring it.

The bill seeks to remove "severe fetal impairment" as a ground for abortion.

The church's submission begins by pointing out the size of its following – 217,000 members in 535 congregations (by far the biggest Protestant denomination in the Province) – and restates its credo that life begins at conception.

It says that the way the rules on abortion are written right now, "severe fetal impairment" could be stretched to cover "a range of minor conditions".

It thus "allows for a subjective judgment to be made on the quality of life of a baby with a severe impairment and perpetuate[s] stereotypes toward persons with disabilities".

Letting disabled foetuses be legally terminated risks fostering a "significant negative societal and cultural change in attitude towards people with disabilities".

"This is not simply a theological or academic exercise for the church," the clerics said.

"Many of our ministers, and others in congregations, have journeyed alongside women and families who have experienced a pregnancy crisis ... and been presented with difficult decisions. That continues as they support those who care for loved ones born with a disability."

Up to 2019, abortion was legal in Northern Ireland, but only if the wellbeing of the mother was at risk.

That year, the Westminster government repealed the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, the old law governing abortion in Northern Ireland.

Despite running a public consultation in which 79% of respondents opposed relaxing the abortion laws further, in March 2020 the Westminster government unveiled details of the new abortion regime.

+It allows terminations for any reason up to 12 weeks;



- +Up to 24 weeks in case of "risk of injury to the physical or mental health" of the mother;
- +And with no time limit in cases £to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or girl", in cases of "severe fetal impairment".

When it comes to defining "severe fetal impairment", the government said it includes "a mental or physical disability which is likely to significantly limit either the length or quality of the child's life".

Courtesy the News Letter. 18.05.2021

# Africa's debt crisis is slowing Covid-19 vaccination, Christian Aid warns

- +Charity calls for 'solidarity package' to tackle Covid-19 and the climate crisis
- +Africa has accounted for about 2% of vaccine doses, despite being home to 14% of the world's population

Africa's debt crisis is slowing Covid-19 vaccination with vaccine costs adding to the debt burden, Christian Aid has warned as it calls for a 'solidarity package' to tackle the virus and the climate crisis.

A new research paper launched today by the charity shows how developing countries need 'a comprehensive debt cancellation deal' to help ensure they can rapidly roll out Covid-19 vaccines and build universal health coverage, and how private creditors should be mandated to be part of a comprehensive debt deal agreed by the G20.

In the paper, 'Vaccine Debts', the NGO calls for vaccine patents to be waived, so developing countries with generic medicine production capacity can boost production, lower prices, and help to save lives. It argues we need a 'solidarity package' so we all have the means to help tackle the common challenges of Covid-19 and the climate crisis.

The paper comes against the backdrop of millions around the world having had Covid-19, and three million people having died from the virus. The pandemic is also pushing an estimated 150 million people into extreme poverty, whilst deepening poverty for many more people who were already unable to meet their basic needs. A two-speed vaccination rollout risks a two-speed recovery, with stark warnings of a 'lost decade' for Africa.

The document points out that so far, Africa has accounted for about 2% of vaccine doses, despite being home to 14% of the world's population. The slow roll-out of vaccines in Africa, and in other poorer regions is due to inadequate global supply and hoarding of doses by rich countries. Supply is artificially limited due to pharmaceutical companies' monopoly on technology and intellectual property protection.

Meanwhile, the paper shows that a spiralling debt crisis is making an already difficult situation worse, in three key ways: First, an unsustainable debt burden has shrunk the fiscal space countries need to procure vaccines, and made them heavily reliant on the UN's COVAX initiative which only promises 20% vaccine coverage by the end of this year.

Secondly, rising indebtedness has starved health systems of the resources they need to roll out vaccines efficiently once they're procured.

Thirdly, there is a risk that vaccine procurement outside of COVAX and corresponding capacity to administer vaccines effectively, including via the African Union, which aims to secure vaccines for another 25% of Africa's population, will add to the debt burden facing the poorest countries.

It describes the 'triple whammy' facing the poorest countries: of rising needs arising from the pandemic, falling revenues, and a mushrooming debt burden.

Outlining the 'solidarity package' being called for by Christian Aid, the charity's head of global advocacy and policy, Fionna Smyth, said: "Covid-19 and climate change are complex crises requiring globally coordinated action. Wealthier countries have a responsibility both to support crisis prevention measures - Covid-19 vaccines, and climate mitigation and renewable energy - and curative measures, such as health systems or climate adaptation. A solidarity approach is in the self-interest of rich, as well as poor – decisive action and adequate investment now will reduce long-term costs, whilst saving lives and livelihoods."

She added: "A just recovery from this crisis depends on G20 countries and the International Financial Institutions living up

to their global responsibilities, and resolving the debt crisis in a decisive and durable way."

### Tributes paid after popular teacher Amanda McManus dies in her 30s

Tributes have been paid to a popular Co Fermanagh teacher following her sudden death, Lauren Harte writes in the Belfast Telegraph

Amanda McManus (nee Hall) from Derryree Wood in Lisnaskea, who was aged in her 30s, passed away in hospital last Wednesday.

The mother-of-two taught IT at Ballyclare High School and later at Enniskillen Royal Grammar School.

Mrs McManus was laid to rest on Sunday afternoon following a funeral service in Aghavea Parish Church, Brookeborough, which she attended all her life.

Rev Johnny McLoughlin told mourners that her "sudden and untimely death has robbed the parish of one of its brightest lights".

He said Mrs McManus was an integral part of the church community in Aghavea and her death will be felt by all who knew and loved her.

"She was a Christian, a kind person who gave herself freely, a caring person who wouldn't pass someone in need, an organiser, a devoted colleague, a fantastic friend and someone who would never not be there when you needed her," he added.

Mrs McManus was also involved in The Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme, alongside volunteering with Lisnaskea Scout Group and working part-time at the Share Discovery Village.

She is survived by her husband Frainc, daughters Katie and Charlotte, parents Kenneth and Linda, sisters Wendy and Susan and wider family.

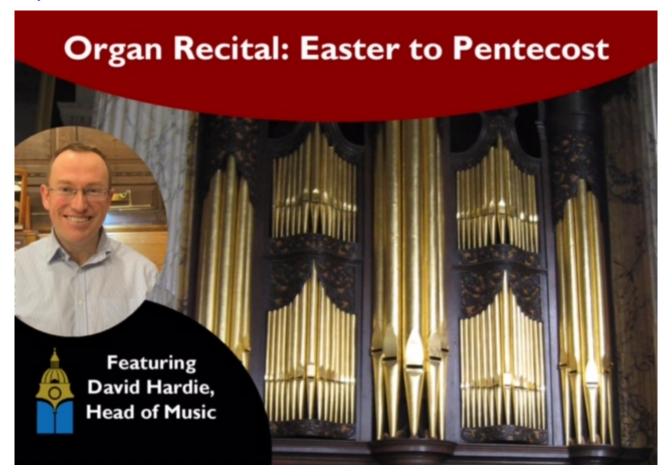
Paying tribute to a much loved and highly respected colleague, teacher and friend, Elizabeth Armstrong, principal of Enniskillen Royal Grammar School, said: "Her commitment, enthusiasm, energy and positivity brought so much to our whole school."

Courtesy the Belfast Telegraph 18.05.2021

# **Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars**

### **Methodist Church in Ireland online Prayer event**

We are looking forward to our Connexional Prayer event May 20th at 8pm. Have you signed up yet? Let's take the opportunity to come together and lift up in prayer our local and global partners. Will you join us? Pushpin Sign up here: [https://buff.ly/3bcEX90]



### **Organ recital for Easter to Pentecost**

Listen to a beautiful organ recital for Easter to Pentecost performed by Birmingham Cathedral Head of Music, David Hardie at

[ youtu.be/CVFdVdg7Fe0. ]

### **Ascensiontide reflection**

During the time between Ascension (May 12) and Pentecost (May 23) we bring you a series of reflections and hymns from Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin and St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.

The Dean's Vicar at St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin (the National Cathedral), Canon Charles Mullen offers today's reflection (Tuesday May 18). His thoughts on 'serving the Lord with all humility and tears' are based on Acts 20: 17.

The Cathedral Choir sings the beautiful hymn 'Drop, drop slow tears'.

[[] https://dublin.anglican.org/news/2021/05/18/a-short-reflection-for-ascensiontide]

### **Down & Dromore events online this week**

Wednesday 19 May at 7.30 pm: Minds Matter

Tim Burns will host an evening with Patrick Reagan and Sara Allen from the mental wellbeing charity Kintsugi Hope. Patrick will share Kintsugi's vision and purpose and encourage parishes in supporting those in our midst who struggle with mental wellbeing.

Thursday 20 May at 7.30 pm: The Challenges of Community Engagement

Gareth Brown from Cinnamon Network will explore some of the challenges that churches face when working with their local communities and provide some practical hints and tips on how we can engage more effectively. Gareth will also give us access to resources that can help churches take practical steps towards community transformation.

Saturday 22 May from 10.00 am: How much more?

We're thrilled that John and Anne Coles have agreed to lead a day of retreat that will take place over four, hour-long sessions (with breaks) in the morning and afternoon. The theme for the day will be the refreshment, rest and the refilling of the Holy Spirit. John and Anne led New Wine England for many years. John is a canon in St Paul's Cathedral and now in retirement both are sought after speakers.

To register go to

[[] https://www.downanddromore.org/news/2021/05/our-week-of-online-events-is-underway ]

### **Media review**

### Northern Ireland's marine carbon stores help fight climate change

**BBC News** 

[[] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-57152059 ]

### Climate change: Ban all gas boilers from 2025 to reach net-zero

**BBC News** 

[[] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-57149059 ]

### Just 20 firms behind more than half of single-use plastic waste - study

**BBC News** 

[[] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-57149741 ]

### NI fishermen say incomes lost over licence delays

**BBC News** 

[[] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-57148905 ]

## Former President Mary McAleese regrets sending children to Catholic school over homosexuality ...

Irish Mirror

"We need to have the discussion that insists that Church teaching is up for ... Ms McAleese, who was President of Ireland from 1997 to 2011, said it ...

[[] https://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/former-president-mary-mcaleese-regrets-24128207 ]

### Calls For Education Minister To Address School Need In Westmeath

Midlands103

That's despite the latest CSO data detailing that around 1 in 8 people in the county are of a religion other than Roman Catholic or Church of Ireland.

[[] https://www.midlands103.com/news/midlands-news/calls-for-education-minister-to-address-school-need-in-westmeath/]

### Church of England - updates to coronavirus guidance

**Church Times** 

Coverage of latest updates to coronavirus guidance for churches following the latest easing in Government restrictions. Quotes Revd Dr Brendan McCarthy, the Church of England's adviser on medical ethics and health policy. <a href="https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/21-may/news/uk/wakes-weddings-and-outdoor-singing-what-are-the-latest-covid-safe-rules-for-churches-in-england">https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/21-may/news/uk/wakes-weddings-and-outdoor-singing-what-are-the-latest-covid-safe-rules-for-churches-in-england</a>

### Faith leaders endorse tree planting scheme

**Evening Standard** 

Report of endorsement by faith leaders, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, for a tree planting scheme

launched by the Royal Family to celebrate the Queen's 70 year reign.

https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/queen-katherinegrainger-justin-welby-prince-of-wales-people-b935675.html



### **Pointers for prayer**

Mighty God, in whom we know the power of redemption, you stand among us in the shadows of our time. As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life, uphold us with knowledge of the final morning when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son, we will share in his resurrection, redeemed and restored to the fullness of life and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God, long ago, faithful women proclaimed the good news

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of Jesus' resurrection, and the world was changed forever. Teach us to keep faith with them, that our witness may be as bold, our love as deep, and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe, you made the world in beauty, and restore all things in glory through the victory of Jesus Christ.

We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed, the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love, and peace, to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his resurrection, teaching them to love all people as neighbours. As his disciples in this age, we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe in which we are privileged to live and our neighbours with whom we share it. Open our hearts to your power moving around us and between us and within us, until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy, in communities transformed by justice and compassion, and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Holy God, you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son, <a href="mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.org">churchnewsireland@gmail.org</a>
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and to care for those who are our companions, not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love. Seeking to be true friends of all, we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world. Guide us in the path of discipleship, so that, as you have blessed us, we may be a blessing for others,

### Speaking to the Soul - Never Forget

### A Reading from Deuteronomy 8:11-20

11 Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. 12 When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, 13 and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, 14 then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, 15 who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid waste-land with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, 16 and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. 17 Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth." 18 But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today. 19 If you do forget the Lord your God and follow other gods to serve and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. 20

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Like the nations that the Lord is destroying before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God.

### **Meditation**

In Greek, the word "deuteronomy" means "repetition." In the Bible, the book of Deuteronomy is a repetition or rehearsal of the story of God's people — where they had been, how far they had come, what God had taught them and brought them through.

They would need the reminder. Life was about to get so much better than it had been, and it would be so easy for them to forget all the lessons they had learned. It would be easy for them to forget just how desperately they had needed God's help — how they depended on him for his deliverance, his salvation, his protection and provision. How he had been there for them, every step of the way, throughout their journey. And if they forgot, they would fall away from him, and fall into sin. They would rewrite their history, with themselves as the heroes, themselves as their own saviors — and it would lead to their ruin.

So they told the old stories again and again — told them over and over to themselves and to their children and their children's children. Reliving the highs and the lows, the failures and the victories. Remembering — through it all — God's steadfast love, his enduring faithfulness, his unending mercy and grace.

Thousands of years later, we, too, remember. We repeat and rehearse their stories, as well as our own, so that we,

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too, will never forget how good God has been to us, how good he continues to be.

