

ISSUE 35

CHRISTMAS 2018



DRUMALIS

Christmas Newsletter

With the sounds of Christmas ringing in our ears, we gather the news and reports of yet another interesting year at Drumalis. Who would believe that we have just passed the ten year anniversary of the opening of our new building? One year ago, we launched the project “Walking together with hope into the future.” Building up the wider community of Drumalis has been a positive and energising process.

One of the most encouraging things to emerge from the “Walking Together with Hope into the Future” process was the great enthusiasm, affection and strong sense of connection with Drumalis and its mission many of the participants expressed. Our priority now is to sustain and grow that in order to support Drumalis into the future.

As well as meetings exploring the ethos and values of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion in general and Drumalis in particular, we have had a number of gatherings for volunteers who in various combinations, have stayed overnight, generally being part of the face of welcome for people staying and praying here, being on call if any retreatant needs assistance, and assuming responsibility for practicalities. Another group have had training in various aspects of work at reception, ensuring that there is a welcoming presence there in the evenings and at weekends.

A number of the volunteers have commented about their personal transition from being on the receiving end in Drumalis and wanting to be on the giving end. Our hope is that they would continue to receive, but in a different way.

The concept of community had been a recurring theme in the consultation process. In the new year, we plan to invite anyone who feels that s/he would like to explore community to a series of five community gatherings - the first of which will take place in Drumalis on **Friday, 11 January 2019 at 4:00 pm**

Programme Development

Thursday evenings in Drumalis now offer a varied programme of events, which are in keeping with some of the issues raised during the consultation process. They include a Film night when a group explore contemporary issues through film, “Broken” - an exploration of life in all its grittiness based on the TV series Broken and the challenge to Christians in the modern world and also the continuation of the Men’s Spirituality group

In addition, we offer a 9 session course on Public Theology by Dr Johnston McMaster which is supported by the Community Relations Council. This has attracted a diverse range of participants from across the Christian churches. An offshoot from that is the setting up of a meeting with the Interfaith Forum to explore ways in which we can address problems facing humanity on an interfaith basis.

Publicity

During the consultation process, it became clear that there was a need to focus on publicising what is already happening in Drumalis, as well as new developments. A volunteer with a background in journalism has conducted interviews with people associated with Drumalis. We have posted some of the interviews on Facebook, reaching more than 1,200 people. Posts about Broken reached over 2,000 people. We plan to extend this kind of regular information about Drumalis. A web development company has also refreshed the existing Drumalis website with a vibrant new look too - <http://www.drumalis.co.uk>

This is but a flavour of what has been happening in 2018 and with a calendar of national and international events already booked for 2019, we are excited about the possibilities the new year will bring.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY

18-20 Down & Connor Charismatic Prayer Groups. Contact Margaret Vernon - 028 9032 6349 for further information

FEBRUARY

3 Parish Retreat Promoters Day
22-24 Beginning Experience - weekend programme for separated, divorced and widowed people. For further details, please contact Phil- 028 9020 7645 or Marie - 07896119669

APRIL

Mon, 22 Easter Monday Open Day (12 noon-4 pm). House and grounds will be open, guided tours available. Free admission.

JUNE

Sat, 15 - Preached Retreat with Fr Mike Serrage
Sat, 22
Sat, 15 - Guided Retreat with Sr Joann Heinritz
Sat, 22

JUNE (CONTINUED)

Mon, 24 - “The Universe is a Revelatory Experience”
Sat, 29 Creation Spirituality retreat with Sr Margaret Rose McSparran, Sr Anne Harnett & Team

JUNE -JULY

Sat, 29 June 3 day Individually Guided Retreat with Drumalis Team & ISC, Glasgow - Wed, 3 July
Sat, 29 June 6 day Individually Guided Retreat with Drumalis Team & ISC, Glasgow - Sat, 6 July
Sat, 29 June 8 day Individually Guided Retreat with Drumalis Team & ISC, Glasgow - Mon, 8 July
Wed, 3 4 day Individually Guided Retreat with Drumalis Team & ISC, Glasgow - Mon, 8 July

AUGUST

Tues, 13/Thurs, 15 - Thurs, 22 8 day/6 day Directed Retreat

SEPTEMBER

Sat, 14 European Heritage Open Day from 12 noon - 4 pm. Guided Tours available. Free admission

Following on from her enlightening interviews for the Summer Newsletter, Sharon Campbell Clarke (pictured right) has met with others, for whom their association with Drumalis has had a profound effect on their lives. We are grateful to Sharon for her time and effort in engaging in these conversations as well as to Linda, Suzanne and Henry for sharing their experiences so openly.



“Smiling faces, friendly welcomes...”

Linda Mellon is a nurse and part-time lecturer. Linda is a small group facilitator on the Pathways Adult Faith Development course and she has also completed the Certificate in Christian Thought and the Diploma in Pastoral Theology. She values the relationships forged at Drumalis: **'It's also about community. You're not just coming to be educated in the faith, there is a great sense of community and belonging at Drumalis - and the Pathways course also embraces a sharing of the lived experience that everyone brings.'**



Linda (pictured left) came to Drumalis as a non-Catholic seeking education in the Catholic faith. 'Drumalis gave me a lovely view of Catholicism that is relaxed and guilt-free. The presenters are very pastorally-oriented, so there is a great sense of honesty, and of being in touch. The course gave me the knowledge and confidence to be able to have conversations and to explore the richness of the Catholic faith - and I just kept coming back – currently as a facilitator. Each day is different, offering a wide range of topics that are relevant to our lives and faith. Pathways in Drumalis offers a safe, gentle and relaxing space both to learn and to share faith.

In the past, Linda has found theology difficult but she now has the confidence to have conversations about it and she feels it 'gears her up' for evangelism. She also feels that the beautiful setting for the course brings a sense of welcome, peace and relaxation. Linda shared this verse of a poem she wrote in response to her experience of welcome at Drumalis.

**'Relaxation,
Smiling faces.
Friendly welcomes,
Warm embraces...
As open arms reach
out to greet me.
No judgement.
Only love.'**

Suzanne King (pictured right) is a mum and mother of five. Ten years ago Suzanne was a reluctant participant in Pathways. She was very uncertain after the first day and hesitated about returning. However, she did return and there, like Linda, she found a community in which she could participate fully.



As a woman, she tells me, she found a place where she could have a voice. Her universe expanded with the experience: **'My faith exploded and I broadened my horizons. It made me more accepting of myself and other people. I found empathy, love and friendship.'**

Another benefit of the course for Suzanne was the opportunity to further her education and qualifications: 'I had a limited educational background and now I have a Diploma in the Ministry of Spiritual Direction. I have received more from Drumalis than anything else in my life, it's a great gift. Here, you can be yourself. There is depth as the courses cover real issues, and there's a wide range of people mixing together. It has made me appreciate how blessed I am. There's craic, community, tears and laughter. It's real. I always want more.'

As well as completing the Pathways course and the Diploma in the Ministry of Spiritual Direction, Suzanne is also a small group facilitator: 'As a facilitator the "caterpillar to butterfly" journey is fantastic to see.'

Participating at Drumalis Suzanne has found new confidence and a spiritual home: 'At Drumalis I feel loved. I have found my church here and my Christian family.'

An Explosion of Faith



Henry O'Loan (pictured left) is a farmer and a vet. He came to Drumalis about 15 years ago, having gone through three levels of education, and he was also a member of the Pastoral Council. At the time, the church had a very bad press. Henry was given food for thought by his parish priest, who had said that perhaps the shortage of priests at that time was God-given, and it was a time for lay people to stand and be counted. 'I felt that the church's teaching was sound,' Henry explains, 'but how it was operationalised was faulty.'

Henry describes his old self as a 'pay, pray and obey' Catholic. 'There's no joy in that,' he says. He also felt at this stage in his life that he was very childlike in terms of his faith. At the time, Maura Burns was asking for suggestions for courses to run at Drumalis and Henry responded, believing that he would benefit from an adult faith development programme.

The course came about and Henry ended up as a facilitator, in spite of feeling he might be better placed to deal with animals than humans!! 'The learning environment was a wonderful experience, the quality of input and conversations was so liberating.' Like Suzanne, Henry's faith 'exploded'. He also found that the level of education didn't matter: 'At Drumalis there is an eclectic mix, sharing honestly, there's a realness and an ability to critically question in a safe environment. It got to my heart. There's a sense of community and playing your part.'

Through the Drumalis experience, Henry was able to discern what was life-giving and what was life-draining. 'The quality of people and of teaching is second to none,' he says, and there is no corner of life where faith does not apply. 'The discarded plastic bottles became part of my faith journey,' says Henry, reflecting on Drumalis' environmental ethos.

Henry acknowledges that there's no doubt on the first day of a course like Pathways it's normal to feel a bit anxious, but after that there's a buzz and energy once you get started. After 12 years he still finds tremendous fellowship on his ongoing journey, as well as great openness: 'There are no unasked questions. People who have questions about faith, spirituality and the church will find their questions welcomed at Drumalis. In getting their questions answered, people start to blossom and grow.'

Remembering John (30th April 1983 - 7th November 2018)



On Monday, 10 December, the Drumalis Staff joined with John's mother, Marie and brother, Patrick in a short service in the Oratory to remember their friend and colleague who died suddenly on 7 November.

John's loss has been felt by all. Although he worked mainly in the grounds, he was always willing to lend a hand wherever the need arose - whether in the kitchen, setting up conference rooms, carrying out DIY jobs or even putting up the Christmas decorations.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this time.

**Colleagues, family members
and friends join in the Oratory
to remember John →**



Parish Retreats

Love was in the air in 2018 on the Drumalis Parish Retreats! This year's theme was inspired by Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia: the Joy of Love*; "a serene and peaceful reflection on the beauty of love". The weekends flowed easily as there was no difficulty in connecting with Pope Francis' prayer that 'all would feel called to love and cherish family life.' What he was talking about was our own lived experience of family.

Whatever shape our families take, they can give witness to the great gift of love that God offers to all. "The joyful and life-giving love of the family arises from the experience of the joyful and life-giving love of God...the 'Gospel of the Family'; the simple, yet profound truth that God loves all persons in and through family."

During the weekend we had an opportunity to reflect on the joys and trials of loving and relating – the people close to us whom we call family, our relationship with a loving God, the wider 'families' of parish, society, the world at large and, of course, our relationship with planet earth itself which sustains and connects us all. Many of the retreatants spoke also of the *Drumalis Family* that they have been part of and welcomed into over the years. One of the most moving parts of the weekend was the 'Circle of Gratitude' where we all sat round and gave thanks for the many blessings of love we have received in and through our families. At the same time we acknowledged the challenge of choosing to love and to keep on loving each day of our lives. We would like to express our gratitude to the clergy, promoters and retreatants who continue to support the Parish Retreats at Drumalis. Parish Retreat weekends are foundational aspects of the ministry at Drumalis. Long may they continue!



Fr Malachy Hanratty, Columban Father
with Parish Retreatants

Friends of Drumalis

We promised in our May letter to the Friends that there would be "an added report on income and expenditure" after the Garden Party, when the Accounts for the year were finalised. This is to keep everyone informed of how their generous donations are being used and just how crucial these funds are for the ongoing work of Drumalis.

For the year ending 31 March 2018, the total income from Friends was £26,714. This breaks down as:

Gift Aided Donations from Members	£15,845.00	
Sundry donations/collections/gifts	£5365.00	Total £26,714.00
Tax Refund	£5504.00	

Having considered the needs of the Retreat Centre, and the plans for development the Friends' Committee agreed to transfer £58,000 to the retreat centre to support the charitable activities of Drumalis. This amount represents the "Friends'" contributions accumulated over the past few years. These funds went towards subsidizing the Adult Faith programmes, Retreats and some major maintenance expenses. Retreat centres never "break even" and, as a Charity, Drumalis relies on the Sisters of the Cross and Passion, and the Friends of Drumalis to "keep afloat". Your contributions are therefore **essential** and we can only encourage you all to keep up your membership, enrol more Friends and take credit for your contribution to the ministry of Drumalis. A BIG THANK YOU to all the Friends of Drumalis for their generosity and also to Damien, Sandra and E&M Associates for keeping the records and accounting procedures with diligence and care.

A Final Word...

Many readers of the Newsletter will recognise the Drumalis crib on the front page. Yes, it has appeared in the Newsletter before. But we chose to use it again as it was donated to Drumalis by Peggy O'Neill, who sadly died in November. Peggy, in a sense, was an iconic figure within the Drumalis Community. She was a typical example of the women, living and dead, who have made Drumalis what it is today. They have been loyal, generous, hardworking women of faith and energy, always ready to help, suggest and encourage. We are standing on the shoulders of the women and men who went before us. Our appreciation of such people, including our own staff, is boundless. At this special time of Christmas, we assure everyone of our prayers and good wishes for this wonderful, festive season.



- Sr Margaret Rose, Sr Anna, Maura, Josephine, Irene, Sandra and Katrina