

Ecumenical Report

Diocese of Killaloe 2020-2021

The theme of ecumenical activity for this year has been built around the question 'How can we be together, whilst staying apart?'

The appointment of a new Ecumenical Director coincided almost exactly with the lockdown restrictions – to the extent that the appointment was given over the telephone rather than face to face as planned. As the pandemic progressed, and sadly claimed the lives of so many of our citizens, there was a growing feeling that something should be done to mark the loss of those lives and the sadness and privations of people around the country and in the wider world.

Day of Remembrance 20th November 2020

The Day of Remembrance for those lives lost during the pandemic was held on 20th November 2020, when the Diocese of Killaloe came together with the Church of Ireland Diocese of Limerick and Killaloe to pray together, whilst staying apart. The churches aimed to reach out to those who had suffered the loss of loved ones as a result of COVID 19 as well as those who had lost loved ones through unrelated illness or conditions during the past year. Both churches encouraged their members and parish communities to keep the memory of those who have died and pray for them and those who mourn their loss during this Day of Remembrance.

At that time nearly 2,000 people had died directly as a result of COVID. Both Churches felt it appropriate to mark their passing by keeping a time of remembrance to pray for them. COVID restrictions and protocols in hospitals and nursing homes have, for many, meant that they have not had the comfort of the presence of family and loved ones around them. This is true whether people have died through COVID or from other unrelated conditions. Those left behind have also been denied the normal community support that accompanies funerals in Ireland and is such a source of strength to many.

Since, it was impossible to gather for prayer in community due to COVID restrictions, the focus of the Day of Remembrance was on short moments of prayer in which everyone could participate at home. The two bishops, Bishop Fintan Monahan of the Diocese of Killaloe and Bishop Kenneth Kearon of the Church of Ireland Diocese of Limerick and Killaloe came together, socially distanced, to pray together and to make a joint address.

People were encouraged to plant crocuses and to tie yellow ribbons to their churches railings or trees as a sign of their participation in this Day of Remembrance.

This short service of commemoration was broadcast on Clare FM and Tipp FM.

Christmas Miscellany

As we acknowledged the fact that Christmas had to be celebrated in a different way in 2020 the two Dioceses built on their collaborative relationship to put together a Christmas offering. The Christmas Miscellany was a collection of carols, prayers, reflections and music gathered from the churches of the Catholic Diocese of Killaloe and the Church of Ireland Diocese of Limerick and Killaloe. The film was hosted and edited by Revd Kevin O'Brien at St Columba's Church, Ennis and again the two bishops came together in prayer to sustain us and bless us.

It is particularly heart-warming to reflect that, at this time of Covid, the reaction of churches has been to collaborate and unite in a shared programme of celebration and thanksgiving.

In time we may find that Covid 19, much as we deplore it, has taught us many things. Not least among those lessons will be the knowledge that what unites us, what brings us together, what we share, what we love, what holds us together, is so much more than what divides us.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Again as our churches were unable to mix together in person a video of prayer, with visual images of churches and religious communities both Catholic and Anglican was put up on the diocesan websites with the reflection from the Corrymeela community that ecumenical endeavor is a work of courage. We were encouraged to pray and reflect on the following words:

Courage comes from the heart
and we are always welcomed by God,
the Croí of all being.

We bear witness to our faith,
knowing that we are called to live lives of courage,
love and reconciliation in the ordinary and extraordinary
moments of each day.

We bear witness, too, to our failures
and our complicity in the fractures of our world.

May we be courageous today.
May we learn today.
May we love today.

Amen.

Lent 2021

As we were unable again to gather to celebrate Holy week and Easter in our churches and parish communities, many had been thinking creatively on how we could mark this important time of year in a safe way. The 'Way of the Heart,' was a trail highlighting the Stations on the Cross on the streets of Ennis. The Stations were in situ from Palm Sunday, through Holy Week and for the first few days of the season of Easter.

14 shops/businesses had generously given their shop fronts and windows around the streets of the town to display contemporary images of Stations of the Cross which acknowledged the suffering of people during this time. A map indicated the route to follow and anyone who wished could walk the trail in their own time.

A contemporary image or artwork and a very short reflection was placed at each station. This was an ecumenical project between the Church of Ireland and the Roman Catholic church. For those who could not make it to Ennis, photographs of each station and the accompanying reflections were on www.killaloe-diocese.ie

