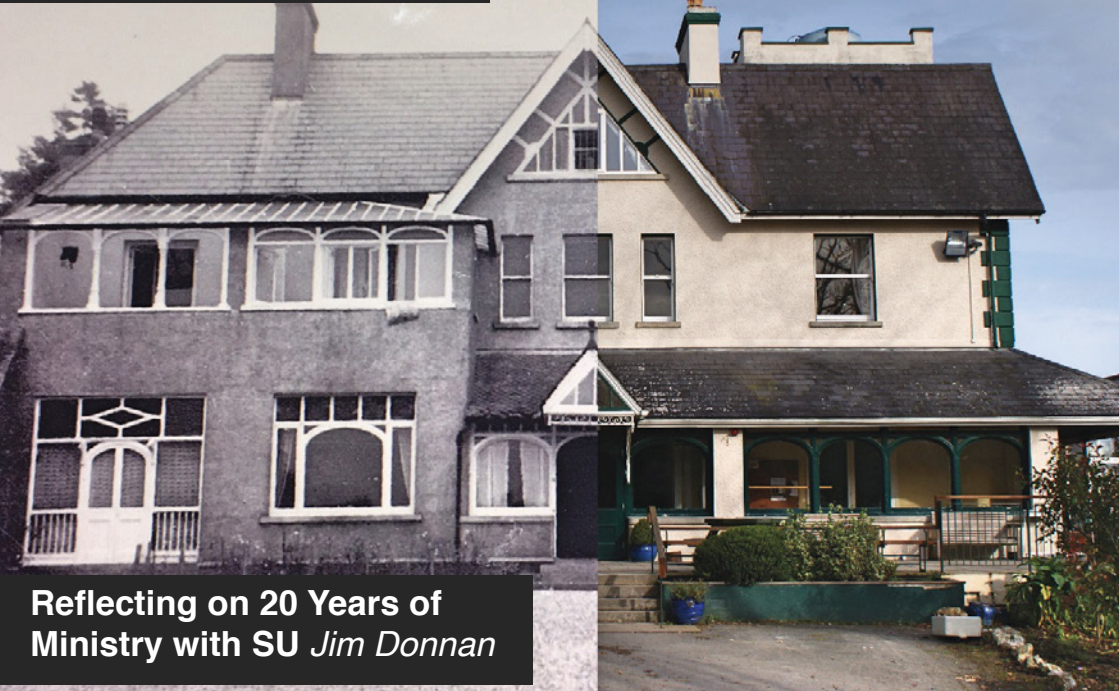


inspire

News & Updates
from Scripture Union Ireland

100 Years of Ovoca Manor
1919 - 2019 *Gods Provision*



Reflecting on 20 Years of
Ministry with SU *Jim Donnan*

Scripture Union & Alpha Ireland

NUA Film Series
News & Updates

Inspiring Testimony
Kathleen Johnson



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REFLECTION ON 20 YEARS OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY WITH SCRIPTURE UNION IRELAND

JIM DONNAN

‘GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS’ (Jeremiah 3:23)

There is an old hymn by Johnson Oatman Jr (1856-1926) with that wonderful chorus that reminds us to ‘Count your blessings, name them one by one, Count your blessings, see what God has done’. It is good to reflect on God’s goodness and faithfulness and remind ourselves of His blessings and what He has done! As I reach the milestone of having served in leadership with Scripture Union, just short of 20 years, and start planning for my successor and ‘handing on the baton’ in mid-2019 I just want to acknowledge some of the wonderful things God has done in and through the ministry of Scripture Union. Space forces me to be short and concise as the ‘blessings’ are indeed many and I have therefore just chosen a few.

OVOCA MANOR

Without doubt one of the greatest blessings and gifts to the ministry was the provision of Ovoca Manor. The transfer to the Trust cost the large sum of one pound in old money! The condition at that time may have been described as being a ‘shambles’ but it was developed with sacrificial love and tireless hard work through people like Herbert and Jean Harper, Kingsley and Dorothy Prescott and the countless volunteers who gave of their talents and time to transform it into a special ‘sacred’ place for ministering the love of Jesus Christ

to hundreds of thousands of children, young people and families. In fact, I heard one young person several years ago describe it as their ‘spiritual home’. For over 30 years with much generosity Ovoca Manor became the focal point for Scripture Union camps ministry ranging from Adventure Weekends, Summer and Easter camps for children and teens and Family Weeks. Literally hundreds of thousands of children, young people and families have been impacted by attending these camps and many have experienced a personal encounter with Jesus.

It is a joy to see a new generation of young people experience the same blessing. We recently received these encouraging words from a young person who attended an SU camp:

‘Thank you for teaching me about God and his son the Lord Jesus, the amazing sacrifice he made for me by dying on the cross and his love for all of us. You also made it lots of fun and it is probably my favourite part of the whole summer’

In October 2010 a miracle happened. Our plans to refurbish and extend the Manor House were blessed with an incredible gift from an anonymous donor of €1,000,000 euro! What glorious provision and generosity, I simply wept and thanked God the day I heard this remarkable news!

The upgraded facilities paved the way for a significant development in mid-week ministry through our secondary schools' retreats. Starting with just 5 schools we have seen this grow to almost 50 annually and some 1800 students having a residential faith-based experience. We recently received these encouraging words from a young person who attended a retreat at Ovoca Manor: 'The retreat has been life-changing, eye opening and one of the most exceptional trips I have ever been on.'

God has done amazing things through the ministry of Ovoca Manor over the past twenty five years and more. For those you, a family member or friend have experienced the love of Christ during a Scripture Union Summer or Easter camp, an Intensive Club weekend or a young people camp or at a special retreat event. You have good memories of meeting new friends, sleeping on the long silos, being in the plunge pool or scaling the walling.

Each Spring, North Island and West of Ireland are blessed with the opportunity to attend a retreat at Ovoca Manor, some in droves. The morning ways there are too too quickly written.

Ovoca Manor is both a beautiful and a special place, a place to connect with our Creator and encounter the Lord Jesus Christ. We want to ensure that you and your children can share the same experience and we will do this by partner sharing our facilities with you and your family and open your support to contribute to a fine dining experience in the Manor House.

General Director

North Elevation

HAPPY MEMORIES AND LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCES

It is inevitable that the completion of the new Ovoca Manor building, some twenty five years ago, has been a landmark event in the lives of those who have been involved in the project.

During the summer, the new building has been a source of pride and joy for all those who have been involved in the project. It has been a place where many of our young people have had their first experience of living in a community, where they have met and become friends with others from other parts of the country. It has been a place where many of our young people have had their first experience of living in a community, where they have met and become friends with others from other parts of the country.

History & God's Provision

The construction of Ovoca Manor continued on the next day to the present through the wonderful provision of God and the vision of the people who were involved in the building.

The Ovoca Manor project has been a source of pride and joy for all those who have been involved in the project. It has been a place where many of our young people have had their first experience of living in a community, where they have met and become friends with others from other parts of the country.

Lower Ground Floor plan

Ground Floor plan

Momentum etc. But a major highlight for me was the ambitious project to provide every primary age child in Ireland with a copy of a colourful and readable version of the gospel of Luke called 'Luke the Book'. In 2003 in partnership with the National Bible Society, having jointly raised over €100,000 euro, we distributed in excess of 140,000 copies of this gospel to all 1900 primary schools throughout Ireland. We subsequently produced a DVD of 21 animated lessons from Luke which was generously funded by the RC Diocese of Dublin to the sum of €20,000 and distributed to primary age children during their 'Year of Evangelisation'.

LUKE
the book

Following the success of a project during the Millennium year in Northern Ireland, the National Bible Society of Ireland and Scripture Union have decided to initiate a similar project in the Republic of Ireland. Luke the Book is a special edition of Luke's gospel which will engage the minds and imaginations of a new generation. This special gift will be offered, through the schools, to every child at senior primary level in the Republic of Ireland.

Designed and produced with local young people in mind, it will be distributed entirely free of charge to schools throughout the country. Using one of the latest Bible translations (The Contemporary English Version) and incorporating art work by Marie Jones of Spring Graphics, Luke the Book will be a high quality production designed

LUKE THE BOOK

Over the past 20 years we have undertaken several collaborations, partnerships and projects like Border Counties Holiday Clubs, Greystones Christian Youth Worker, Building Blocks Conferences, Alpha Youth Ministry, Jesus Film in Irish Language, Ecumenical Bible Week, Ember Faith and Leadership Programme,

DIOCESAN LINKS

The Luke the Book Project also opened a door to start developing a relationship over a 5-year period with key people in the Catholic Diocese of Dublin and this lined up with the generosity of a donor who wanted to support the salary of a full time Primary Schools Worker. We launched the **It's Your Move** programme for young people making the transition

from Primary to Secondary school and several parishes began using this scripture-based resource. In addition, we ran a number of **Cairde Retreats** for primary schools working with the Pastoral Workers, Faith Fest which provided the opportunity for our Youth Worker to speak into the lives of hundreds of young people from around Dublin and for the past five years we have worked with the RC and Cofi Diocese promoting the annual Ecumenical Bible Week.

NUA FILM SERIES

Without doubt one of the most exciting and successful youth outreach resources we have developed was the NUA Film series. Jonny Somerville with his youth ministry experience had the vision and saw the potential for this film-based series which connected with young people and their search for meaning and allowing them explore the truths of Christianity and the person of Jesus. We know that some 25,000 people have viewed the series and some 340 secondary schools in Ireland are using it as part of their RE curriculum, what an amazing blessing!

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Over the years I have had the privilege of working with many staff and their dedication, creativity and heart for sharing the gospel with the youth of Ireland has kept me going. In addition, I have seen the incredible generosity of so many volunteers, some who year after year would use their holidays and talents to

serve God through the ministry of SU. They too have inspired and encouraged me. I have also had the privilege of serving God with some wonderful Christian men and women and especially Council members and Chairs (Basil Good and Dirk van der Flier) and have valued their wisdom and support. But very much behind the scenes have been my family and especially my wife Barbara. She, with much concern I am sure, allowed me to leave my secure pensionable employment with Dublin City Council at the end of 1999 and take a major step of faith to enter full time Christian ministry. To be honest, like most things in life, it has not been all plain sailing and there were times when I wondered had I really heard the 'call of God'. Barbara has patiently and graciously stood by me and supported me and for that I am forever grateful. Finally, I take this opportunity to sincerely thank all the staff, volunteers, council members, donors and supporters who have in so many ways helped to grow and develop the ministry of SU over many decades to what it is today. Since I joined SU the World has changed, Ireland has changed but there is one constant and one certainty, and His name is Jesus. He is our rock and refuge as we move on to the next chapter. To God be the Glory.



Jim Donnan

Jim Donnan General Director

CONNECT

To keep in touch with all of our latest News and Events, log onto www.scriptureunion.ie and Subscribe to our regular e-newsletters and prayer diary. You can also follow us on our facebook page **Scripture Union Ireland**.

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SUPPORT US

You can support us in many ways through Prayer, Volunteering and Donations. For more information log onto www.scriptureunion.ie

JOB OPPORTUNITY

NATIONAL LEADER



Scripture Union Ireland are seeking to recruit a National Leader

Do you have...

- The Calling of God and a heart to reach Irish young people with the life changing message of Jesus Christ.
- The necessary Leadership and Management experience and qualifications to inspire a diverse team of staff and volunteers, to strive for excellence in mission with over 6000 children and young people annually.
- The ability to work collaboratively in an ecumenical and interdenominational context to build networks with compatible Christian agencies and Churches.
- A high level of relational people management skills and be an effective communicator with excellent organisational skills.
- The ability to think strategically and bring creativity, innovation to this role ensuring that the mission and ministry of Scripture Union will flourish and bear fruit into the future.

Email your Expression of Interest and CV to
Scripture Union Ireland
Email: recruitment@scriptureunion.ie

If successful, you will be invited by email to submit a formal Job Application and receive a Job and Person Profile. The Summary, Terms and Conditions of the National Leader role will be made available. www.scriptureunion.ie

MEET JACK

OUR NEW INTERN



My name is Jack and I'm 18 Years young, originally from Ballinteer in Dublin. I have been attending SU camps since I was 14 and as you can probably tell I enjoyed every single one since I am the Intern for the 2018/19 Internship programme.

Fortunately for me I am doing this internship on my own which I would be used to since I am an only child. The main reason I wanted to do this internship programme is because I wanted to learn more about myself and more about what God has planned for me.

I also want to learn some social skills like the ability to talk in front of people without hesitation and awkward silences. I want to

come out of this internship with much more understanding about my own faith and more confidence to make new relationships with people I am yet to meet. I also want to learn more about the meaning of the Bible not to only have the knowledge but so I can have that ability to answer more questions that are asked of me and fellow team members.

The best moment of my internship so far would be meeting a load of new people that I wouldn't get the chance to meet outside of the Christian community. Although I have only been doing this internship for 4 months I really wish this was my full time job for the future.

Thank you Scripture Union!

OUR EXPERIENCE

2017/18 INTERNS



PAXTON

Packing up my life and moving to the other side of the world was not an easy step. Honestly, I didn't know what to expect. I had limited knowledge about Scripture Union Ireland and Ovoca Manor. I didn't know about all of the amazing people I was going to work alongside or about all of the friends I was going to make. I also didn't know all of the hardship I was going to go through and all of the lessons that God was going to teach me. However, it's a decision I will never regret.

Throughout the year myself and Ash were given the opportunity to work with so many students in many different capacities. We were able to go into schools and share our faith with them. Eric gave us the space to grow, be vulnerable and share our testimony to so many young people. We also had fun and were able to lead games, retreats and camps at Ovoca Manor

which was always an exciting experience. The students or the campers are disconnected from their lives to spend either a day or a week at the most beautiful place in the world. It was great to see God work in so many lives. I think what is important about these days was knowing that our work wasn't just leading activities or having conversations with students but it was also finishing up the dishes or hoovering the bedrooms to get ready for the next group.

Looking back, I love reflecting on how I grew throughout the year. I went from not knowing anything about camps and retreats to planning and leading both a retreat and a weekend camp. I went from not knowing anyone to having lifelong friends (shout out to Ash!). I'm thankful that God gave me the opportunity to move to Ireland. I cannot wait to see what is next for me!

ASHLEIGH

My internship with Scripture Union Ireland was by far the best thing that God has led me into so far. The people I met, the students I had the pleasure to work with, and the things God taught me along the way all made my experience so worthwhile and something I will never forget.

I took a huge risk moving to Ireland at 18 years old, especially since I knew nobody there and had no idea what to expect from the internship. It was terrifying to think about but as soon as I arrived at Ovoca Manor, I was greeted by the most amazing staff who proceeded to care for me and love me as if I was part of their family. And for the next year I truly felt at home and at peace in Ovoca.

There were certainly challenges along the way as learning often comes with failures and mistakes. However, the internship provided me with incredible mentors who always picked me up and encouraged me to try again. Through this, I was able to improve

my public speaking, building relationships with people, running programs and camps, and even making a better cup of tea! There was so much to gain from every aspect of the internship; new friends, opportunities to enhance my skills, and enjoyable moments were around every corner. Since finishing the internship, I've taken my newly learned skills into helping to lead a youth group back home in Australia. I've truly seen a great improvement in the way I lead and interact with youth and my passion for them has grown immensely.

I am so grateful for everybody at Ovoca Manor and Bray Office who I had the pleasure of working alongside for this season of my life. Giving young people an opportunity to discover more about themselves and the calling that God has on their lives is such an important thing and I have Scripture Union Ireland to thank for giving that opportunity to a young redhead girl from Melbourne.

Are you looking for something
NEW, DIFFERENT & EXCITING?
Would you like to **grow** in your
personal skills and develop as a Leader?

Log onto www.scriptureunion.ie to find
out more about the Scripture Union
Ireland Internship



SCRIPTURE UNION & ALPHA IRELAND

PARTNERSHIP



Over 8 years ago SU and Alpha began a collaborative approach to youth ministry. SU agreed to second our Youth Worker Jonny Somerville to take on the role of Youth Alpha Coordinator and develop the Youth Alpha ministry in schools and parishes around Ireland. We started with around 5 Youth Alpha courses but within a two-year period Jonny made significant in-roads and this grew significantly to over 20 and now there are some 40 courses.

As we experienced more growth in schools, we worked together on the employment of a Midlands Youth Alpha worker and Annette Evans was appointed and later Teresa Cronin in Cork.

We have also continued this collaboration where both the Youth Alpha and NUA Film series are promoted as excellent tools for evangelization among youth and in schools.

Also, an exciting part of this collaboration has been the use of Ovoca Manor for Youth Alpha Holy Spirit Days and overnights and we have heard wonderful testimonies of young people

coming into a personal encounter with Jesus at these events, here is an example below;

Anticipation mounts as the students board the bus and talk excitedly to each other about what to expect on the Alpha Retreat in Ovoca Manor.

“I was expecting to be met with older people on this retreat who were going to try and prove to us that we should have faith. I was also expecting to have activities exercising trust. I am very happy that my expectations were wrong and the people talking to us about faith were around our age and they didn’t force anything upon us but just talked to us about their experiences. The main thing I’m taking away is that I want to actively and openly search for the Holy Spirit. I also found that I do really enjoy the outdoors and outdoor activities which I didn’t think I did before.”

4th Year Student

Alpha Ireland and Scripture Union have been fast friends and close partners in the work of inviting young people to explore faith and discover the amazing truth that God is interested in the story of their lives.

One such conversation was with a 16 yr old young woman who had felt she truly loved God after her Confirmation, but her best friend had died that summer, and this rocked her faith. She began to question God and wasn't sure she wanted to follow him anymore. Then she did Alpha in her school in the Autumn, and on the Holy Spirit Retreat in Ovoca Manor, she shared with me (in floods of tears) how, after doing Alpha and going through the prayer journey, she felt close to God again and that she wanted to trust him again.

I had the privilege of talking to a young man on his Holy Spirit Retreat in Ovoca Manor where he was bursting with excitement. I asked him, building on his Confirmation, did he want to follow Jesus? He exclaimed "Yes! How do I do that?" He said he had not taken confirmation seriously, but after doing Alpha, now realized what it all meant: that Jesus is real and wants a relationship with him. Alpha runs for 8 to 10 weeks in secondary

schools all over Ireland. On week 7, we bring these students away on a "Holy Spirit Retreat" where they encounter the living God, a gentle healer, burden lifter and a beautiful rescue ensues. We are so thrilled to be working with our friends in Ovoca Manor and at SU with whom it becomes possible.

If you want to learn more about the work of Alpha Ireland, you can get in touch with us at:

www.alphayouth.ie

Amanda O'Shea
National Alpha Youth Coordinator for Ireland



NUA FILM SERIES

UPDATE & NEWS



in Manchester and we raised €3070 for further translating work. With these funds we are translating NUA into Russian & Korean. South Korea is one of SU's strongest movements and there are many Russian speaking SU movements also, so we're excited about the potential. Huge thanks again to all of you who donated, it was really encouraging to have so much support. This year we also welcomed Sarah Campbell to the NUA team. Sarah has been heading up the marketing and administration of NUA. You'll have to follow NUA on social media to see her wonderful work!

NUA WORLDWIDE

Since launching Scripture Union's NUA Film Series in March 2017, we have had an incredibly successful 18 months both here in Ireland and around the world. NUA has now launched in the USA, Canada, UK, Finland, Malaysia, Singapore and New Zealand. It has been translated into French, Spanish and is soon to be completed in Portuguese and Slovakian. We had our first NUA fundraiser through participating in the 50km Trekfest challenge

'In my 30 years of youth ministry, NUA is the best resource I have ever used!'

Irish Youth Minister

'I used NUA at a bunch of our school programmes and it's an amazing resource that has led to some incredible conversations with kids all over the country'

Youth Minister Roscommon

'I think it is, quite simply, the best video apologetics resource I have seen in a very long time'. Andy Bannister: Director, Solas Centre for

Public Christianity

1,000
NUA Packs
distributed in
Ireland

approx 320
Number of Irish
Churches & Youth
Groups using NUA

approx 340
Irish Schools
using NUA

approx 25,000
Irish teenagers have
engaged with NUA



NUA BY NAME, NUA BY NATURE

We're excited to announce that in 2019 we will be producing a brand new film series, called 'NUA: Odyssey'.

The success of the NUA Film Series has generated conversations across the denominations to create more accessible, relevant, engaging resources for 11 to 14 year olds. The consensus is that, given our success with NUA, and the strength, depth and reach of our networks and relationships, Scripture Union Ireland is well placed as an organisation to develop a film based resource to enable others to engage more effectively with this target age group. Embedded in the schools, church and youth group networks, this new project seeks to engage 15000 young people per year: 45000 over the initial 3 year shelf life of the material.

NUA: Odyssey aims to challenge young people today on the core matters of the Christian Faith and to help them decide how their faith applies to their own situations. Our research shows that "confirmation age" across the main denominations offers a unique opportunity to take the time to explore Christianity. Yet, Confirmation has often been described and experienced as the graduation out of the Church. Church leaders, teachers and youth workers feed back to us that the emphasis on preparing for the practical arrangements around confirmation can often overshadow preparation for the spiritual.

NUA: Odyssey will provide a learning environment that empowers young people to engage with Jesus and assess His call on their lives. It will enable them to remain in the faith community at a crucial juncture in their lives. We have budgeted this project at €110,000, which represents excellent value, equating to €7.30 per engagement over 3 years.

The project will involve 8 episodes looking at the nature of God and His Creation 'Made For More', the meaning of Jesus's death 'Worth', Jesus's Resurrection 'New Beginnings', Prayer 'Connection', The Bible 'Story', The work of the Holy Spirit 'Charged', Jesus's Church 'Belonging' and living as a Christian 'One Epic Journey'. All these are working titles!

The content of this new project has already been tested with 70 students in a live pilot programme. Feedback from students has been more than encouraging. Every single participant expressed their desire for more material and opportunity to engage, evidencing the need and appetite for this material.

"I think that because of this experience my faith is stronger."

"Exciting, before I thought confirmation was just a thing you had to do, but no, you've made it more exciting."

This project, although intentionally designed for use as a confirmation supplement will by no means be limited to that purpose only. We are excited for how NUA: Odyssey will be a blessing to all youth ministry in schools, churches and parishes who seek to engage with 11-14 year olds.

We're delighted that we have already received €35,000 for this new project and a further €60,000 has been committed. We would ask that you would consider giving a one off gift to help us obtain the remaining €15,000. You can make a donation on our funding website: www.gofundme.com/nua-odyssey

Thank you so much!

Jonny Somerville & Sarah Campbell

CAMPS & VOLUNTEERS

UPDATE & NEWS



We have had another brilliant year in our camps ministry in SU. It has been a lot of fun working alongside leaders and children and exploring what God has in store for them. The most exciting thing was that we were able to run some new camps alongside some great organisations, churches and parishes.

EASTER SPORTS CAMP

During the Easter holidays, while we had two residential camps running at Ovoca Manor, I headed to Mullingar to join up with the Youth for Christ (YFC) Team and the Parish of Ballynacargy and Sonna to run two sports camps for the local children. We had a great week playing various sports and learning about being part of

Jesus' team. We finished the week with a Family Fun Day where YFC brought out their soccer cage and the parish hall was open for games and refreshments. It was lovely being involved in the local communities in Mullingar and each child who attended was gifted with a Bible or faith book of their choice.



DUNLAOGHAIRE CSSM

A few years ago at Greystones CSSM Rev Chris Kennedy approached me and said “This is brilliant, we need to start one of these in Dun Laoghaire”. Like every good new venture, I ignored him for a while so he came back again a year later and said “We need to start a CSSM in Dun Laoghaire”. It took over a year of conversations, meetings, prayer, research and networking. Letters were written to the local council and a number of the Dun Laoghaire church communities got on board and at every juncture we were completely reliant on God’s provision.

It was a step of faith for everyone involved and on Sunday 12th August we launched a brand new CSSM in Dun Laoghaire. Each morning of the 13th - 17th August, a family service was held in Dun Laoghaire Methodist Church, children’s groups were held in Dun Laoghaire Evangelical Church and The Harold School in Glashule, in addition there were family events in various locations each evening. We ran treasure hunts on the pier and hosted

Leprosy Mission talks in Bailey & Pim. Over 100 children attended the afternoon groups and a team of local volunteers from different churches came together to run it all, this has had a positive impact on relations in the local community. We hope that you will join us in praying for the impact this new CSSM has already had and for the next few years as it develops.

VOLUNTEERS

Our camps ministry is 100% led by volunteers. Without their passion, drive, desire to share Jesus and sacrifice of time, energy(sleep), none of our camps could run. So a huge thank you to everyone who has been part of our camps ministry; you are our most valuable resource.

You can find out more about our 2019 camps on our website or in our camps brochure.

Emma Fawcett

Camps & Volunteer Ministry



Would **YOU** like to become an SU Volunteer?
Log onto www.scriptureunion.ie to find out more



OVOCA MANOR GODS PROVISION

100 YEARS: 1919 - 2019



A dip in the Plunge Pool



Jack and Mary Densmore



Residential children 1960's



Play time



OvoCa Manor 1960's

*THE HOUSE OVERLOOKS
THE VALE OF AVOCA*

and, facing South, enjoys the full benefits of all available sunshine.

The rooms are all spacious and airy, and so arranged as to afford the maximum of comfort.

There are three bathrooms with a constant supply of hot & cold water.

At "The Manor" visitors are assured of finding
"A HOME FROM HOME."

No one cared for me like **J**esus,
No one ever loved me so;
No one ever cared for me like **J**esus,
That is why I love **H**im so.

No one ever died for me but **J**esus.
No one ever loved me so;
No one ever died for me but **J**esus,
That is why I love **H**im so.

No one ever lives for me but **J**esus,
No one ever loved me so;
No one lives for me but **J**esus,
That is why I love **H**im so.

No one else will come for me but **J**esus,
No one ever loved me so;
No one else will come for me but **J**esus,
That is why I love **H**im so.

*J. W. Densmore,
OvoCa Manor,
Avoca,
Co. Wicklow.*

“I will give thanks to You, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds” Psalm 9:1

This year Ovoca Manor our Christian Retreat and Adventure Centre in Co. Wicklow will hit the important milestone of 100 years since construction of the main manor building was completed. Built in 1919 in the preceding century Ovoca Manor has served as a private residence, a home for those without one, and since the 1980's a place where young people can come and encounter the person of Jesus Christ through the work of Scripture Union.

Originally Ovoca Manor was built as a private residence for the Reverend Robinson and in 1940 was purchased by Jack and Mary Densmore, who were called by the Lord to run a home for young boys who through circumstance didn't have one. After the Densmore's time, the purpose remained the same but now under the World Mission to Children, when this ended Ovoca Manor was given to Scripture Union for £1 by the trust setup by Mr Densmore to ensure the Manor was used for the purpose of furthering the gospel to young people.

As part of our preparations for the 100th Year event in the Autumn 2019, we sat down with amongst others, Audrey Glover (grand-daughter of Jack & Mary Densmore) and Herbert Harper (warden of Ovoca Manor along with his wife Jean for 28 years). These conversations were of course fascinating for the historical content but what was really highlighted was 'Faith in God' and the provision from God to His people serving in Ovoca Manor. Some testimonies of provision in particular stood out to us, during the time of the Densmore family and during the time of Scripture Union.

The history of Ovoca Manor could have been very different, Jack Densmore gave up a career and comfortable life to follow a call from God to run a home for young boys who didn't have a home of their own. Initially the Densmores were given a property in Limerick called Portland Park, on the eve of the first intake of children some men who had issues with the new purpose of the property came in the night, ordered the family out of the house and burnt it to the ground. As they stood on the lawn looking at the building being ravaged in front of them Mr Densmores response was 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away'. This must have been a deeply traumatic time for the family however they persevered and God provided them with Ovoca Manor. Without the faith and perseverance of Mr Densmore and the Lord allowing the family to endure this testing time Scripture Union would not have benefitted from the wonderful asset that Ovoca Manor has become and all the lives that have been impacted over these many years may have had quite a different story to tell.

Mr Densmore was a man of deep faith and endeavoured to impart this to those in his care. From time to time food was scarce and naturally for a man of faith like Mr Densmore this was lifted up in prayer during daily prayer time, he, Mr Densmore was a man who demonstrated a faith that God would provide. On one particular occasion when there was little or no food they sought the Lord for provision and soon after a man came up the driveway and opened his boot which was full of potatoes. The man had no idea why he had come up and could only say he felt an irresistible urge to come up the driveway! We love this story of God's goodness in action.

In the late 70's Scripture Union purchased Ovoca Manor for £1 under the guidance of Kingsley Prescott. In 1984 the first extension was built which served at the time as the conference room (now the main dining room) 2/3rds of the money for the project had been raised and it was completed. President Dr Patrick Hillary was invited to open Ovoca Manor on the day he accepted the invitation a call was received asking how much was outstanding on the development, the answer being £11,000, the caller said he would take care of it. At the opening ceremony Scripture Union were able to announce in front of the President that all the costs of the development had been covered. A wonderful testimony of God's provision and timing.

Prior to the recession Scripture Union were making efforts to raise money to build an extension onto the Manor building that had become tired and was not functioning adequately for the needs of the groups using it and changing expectations. Alas the recession came and plans ground to a halt, there was still faith however and one day a phone call came and the person on the end of the phone informed the General Director that there was a gift of €1 million towards the work. Not only was this miraculous but due to the fact that Ireland was in recession and construction work was less prevalent the builder was able to do the project at a lower cost than had originally been laid out. Another incredible story of God's provision and timing.

These are just some of hundreds even thousands of testimonies of what God has done in and through Ovoca Manor. Each depicts

the goodness of God, his plans and perfect timing. God has used Ovoca Manor to impact tens of thousands of young people over the last 40 years, His provision of an opportunity to encounter with Jesus. In her 1998 speech at the inauguration of Densmore Lodge then president of Ireland Mary McAleese said the following

“The outdoor pursuits centre at Avoca Manor is at first a place where people of all ages, youth groups, families and individuals can participate in healthy and rewarding adventure activities – to take a welcome break from the stresses and pressures of modern living. In so doing, they are afforded the opportunity to get the peace of mind, the renewal of spirit, which lets them come to terms with themselves and their maker and allows them to further develop their relationship with God through building bridges. In today's world that facility is especially welcome, and I commend the Scripture Union on what they have achieved here in Avoca.”

As we look to the next 100 years from our vantage point today in 2019 we are unsure whether many in this nation would agree with these words from 20 years ago that this facility is 'particularly welcome' but we know that God has ordained Ovoca Manor as a place where all may encounter Him. We thank God as we look back and give thanks for all He has done and will continue to do.

Gareth Lynch

Log on to www.scriptureunion.ie
where we will keep you posted on the
100th Year Ovoca Manor Celebration
event in the Autumn of 2019



The original garage



President Mary Mcleese & The Harpers



Building the side extension



Ovoca Manor in the 1980's



1998 Densmore Lodge official opening (President Mary Mcleese)

OVOCA MANOR

MINISTRY UPDATE

Reflecting on 2018 it has to be said that God has turned Ovoca Manor on its head. In last year's Inspire magazine our Chairman laid down two challenges, firstly, Do I detect within myself a greater desire to seek, find and do God's will, and secondly, do I detect within myself a growing readiness to be changed by the Lord?

The answer was and is yes, as surely we must always live in this state of seeking and have a readiness to act upon what we find, be that as individuals or a ministry. We spent many months looking inwardly to see what the Lord was asking of us and ultimately this culminated in a decision to restructure the staffing team at Ovoca Manor which very regrettably involved making two core staff roles redundant.

God's will for us remains unchanging, we as always seek to create opportunities for children and young people to have an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ and grow in that faith, through engagement with the Scriptures, so that they may serve their community and influence their world', this is our constant. We must also have the wisdom to be vigilant to the changes our nation has and is undergoing and be malleable to God's refinement of us so we can be the most effective disciples and ministry in this season.

Aside from the challenges we faced it was again an extremely busy year. January to November of 2018 saw an occupancy rate of 80% and 100% occupancy for weekends in the same period. Our school retreats program continued to go from strength to strength and we have learned some valuable lessons along the way that will ensure

we continue to develop and become more effective in this aspect of our ministry. We have continued to catch up on improvements to the facilities including upgrading heating systems, electrics and improving our quality of cleaning. In addition, there are works in progress to upgrade the blue bathrooms, add additional toilets on the ground floor as well as developing a coffee area in the basement, the intention is for these to be completed in the first quarter of this year.

We are so uplifted and encouraged by all the amazing work that God does in the lives of people particularly young people through the work of Scripture Union at Ovoca Manor and continue to be encouraged by the knowledge that God is sovereign. We are very thankful to be part of a very hard working team of Staff and Volunteers. We appreciate your continued prayer for us, the team and volunteers and all those who come seeking Christ at Ovoca Manor.

God bless
**Gareth and
Sharon Lynch**



Ovoca Manor 2018

7000 Residential individuals

38 School Retreats

3 Ember Groups (12 Schools)

25 Returning Schools

13 New Schools

OVOCA MANOR RETREATS

RETREAT MINISTRY UPDATE

Busy, exciting and challenging is three words I could describe how retreats have been the last year. With retreats in Ovoca Manor taking shape such as Day retreats, Overnight retreats, Alpha retreats, Cairde Retreats and Ember programs. Ovoca Manor squeezes all these student based ministries (approx. 1,300 Students) in a short window from September to the start of December and late January to the end of May. We have been working with schools from across Dublin, Wicklow and places as far afield as Tipperary! This ministry is so exciting because we get an opportunity to share faith with students who would never usually get an opportunity to hear about God. This can happen in a many ways through Workshops, Nua Film Series, Small groups, Prayer spaces and Christian meditation.

The strongest asset that Scripture Union has is its volunteers. For me the volunteers have been the highlight of running retreats at Ovoca Manor. We have a team of people who continuously support us and help facilitate retreats, sharing testimonies, leading small groups and cleaning dishes.

Another highlight during the year was journeying with young people through the retreat. Teens often arrive sceptical of what they may experience on retreat, yet its brilliant to see God work in their lives and see their interpretations of faith and God change over their stay. It is also really exciting to see students return to Ovoca Manor year on year. Some come for an Alpha retreat and then a year later return for Ember training while others come in primary school and end up doing a school retreat years later. The continuity is super exciting. Feedback from one TY student who was on retreat in the manor: ***“This retreat has been a life-changing, eye-opening and one of the most exceptional trips I have ever been on”.*** We are excited here at Ovoca Manor to see where God takes us in this ministry in the upcoming months and years to come.

Massive Congrats to Ovoca Manor for its whopping 100th Birthday!

Not many places in Ireland have had such an impact on so many peoples lives than Ovoca Manor. My ministry could not happen without it! The memories this place has created for students, staff and facilitators are priceless. Ovoca Manor has seen people come to faith in Christ and peoples lives changed.

Darren Bourke
Ovoca Manor Retreat Ministry



YOUTH & SCHOOLS

UPDATE & NEWS



The new school term is well underway and with a new term comes new challenges, opportunities, and surprises. We give thanks to God for the year that's passed, and for the year to come, look forward to all He has in store for us here in the Youth & Schools ministry of SU Ireland.

As I travel around the country hosting retreats in schools we often end the day by asking the students to write a small bit about their experience during the day. We ask them what is the one thing they will remember from their retreat. At the end of a retreat in Dublin a student wrote 'There is always hope, God can help everything work out in the end'.

This sums up everything I love about in-school retreats. While our world is full of so much bad news, and teenagers today are one of the most stressed and anxious generations in history, we here in SU Ireland have the joy of bringing Good News into schools all over this Island.

One standout event was the interschools faithfest retreat in Tallaght. This event saw six schools over two days gather in the Solas centre in Tallaght for a day of fun, discussion, and to hear three inspiring speakers. One of which was the returning Jason and Jessica Maupin. They have been coming to Ireland for ten years, and always inspire, particularly reaching those on the fringes.

This event holds great significance as this area of Dublin is one steeped in gangland crime, drug and alcohol abuse, and has one of the highest suicide rates in Ireland. The interschool retreat gave us here in SU the unparalleled opportunity to speak hope into this sometimes bleak part of the city.

This year the Youth & Schools ministry of Scripture Union Ireland had the opportunity to interact with over **5,000** young people from all over Ireland. Including many different denominations, cultures, and economic backgrounds. We meet young people at school retreats, assemblies, residential retreats in Ovoca Manor, at Christian unions, conferences, musical events, worship nights, camps, and anywhere else we get the invitation to go. As we meet all these young people many so different from each other the one common thing is the need to hear the Good News. The Good News that there is always hope and that hope has a name, Jesus.

In addition to our in schools program we again partnered with parish workers in Dublin City working in the Faithfest program. Reaching out to youth in parishes all over the city centre at regular events in Clonliffe and a residential retreats in Ovoca Manor. We also work with a Faithfest team in Tallaght which runs a regular event in the Priory Institute. Both these endeavours see dozens of young people coming out to learn more about their faith and how Jesus can impact their every day real life. We also continue our work with the Ember program helping to train up and develop young christian leaders in their schools

As I look to the coming year I can't help but be excited for all that God is going to do, and give him all the thanks that we get to bring Good News to young people from all over Ireland.

Eric Hughes
Youth & Schools Ministry



CHILDREN & COMMUNITY

UPDATE & NEWS



2018 World Meeting of Families



Children's Crafts at Ovoca Manor

At the end of August 2018 Claire Devaney resigned from SU to take up a career and studies to become a Primary School Teacher. In just over two years Claire led the Primary age ministry for SU and her heart for sharing the love of Christ with these children was always evident. We thank Claire for all her work and all she achieved in a relatively short time while on the Scripture Union Ireland Team. Here are some of the ministry highlights over the past few years and we thank Claire for her contribution to the ministry of SU.

Jim Donnan

As I begin to finish up my last week's work with Scripture Union I am remembering all of the great highlights from the past 12 months.

WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

Since April 2018 I was seconded out to the World Meeting of Families to oversee the Children's Arena for the largest International Family Gathering with 3,600 children registered between the ages of 4-12. This certainly wouldn't have been possible without the great troupe of Scripture Union Volunteers and Staff who came in to rally around and give generously of their time and resources. Over the three days we ministered to 1,817 children not including parents who joined us too.

ITS YOUR MOVE (IYM) & PENTECOST PROJECT

Throughout the year we had It's Your Move in several schools running in Dublin. As part of Ecumenical Bible Week for the fifth year we ran another Pentecost Project which was run as an interactive **Godly Play Session** in partnership with Jane Mellett the Parish Pastoral Worker in Ballyfermot. It was a real joy having a new Special Educational Need school St. Michaels Queen of the Angels join us, and to finish this project with our Ovoca Manor Staff Team, along with Pastoral Workers, teachers and parents joining in a day retreat at Ovoca Manor.

At Ovoca Manor in December (2017) 162 Junior and Senior Infants from schools in the Avoca Wicklow locality joined us for the **Follow the Star** dramatized version of the Nativity. Ovoca Manor turned into a recreation of the Nativity Story and our own staffs hidden drama skills came to the fore including our very own Mary and Joseph aka Mr. and Mrs. Bourke. The next Follow The Star will be in December 2019.

We ran several **Confirmation retreats** in new schools and new Parishes which was exciting as it was a very positive experience for all involved including our team of Scripture Union Volunteers and our very own 2018 Interns Ashleigh and Paxton.

I also want to thank everyone in Scripture Union who has greeted and welcomed me into the organization with such warmth and hospitality. I have met a lot of truly amazing people and I look forward to crossing paths in the future. I would also like to give a big shout out to Cáit Cummins, who was able to motivate and inspire us on the journey of continuing the new confirmation resource (NUA: Odyssey) script writing process. I would like to also thank Eric Hughes and Jonny Somerville who have been amazing in helping to bring this great project to life. I'm certain that none of our efforts in building the kingdom of God will go to waste. Please keep me in your prayers as I move on from Scripture Union Ireland.

Claire Devaney



INSPIRING TESTIMONY

KATHLEEN JOHNSON



Hi im Kathleen. I am married to Will and we live with our two dogs in Dublin. I would like to share with you a bit of my story. I hope that it will inspire young adults as they face career challenges after the Leaving Cert.

I have tried my hand at many different things in my short life. I've been the 'theatre girl' who was always singing and dancing around school. I've been the techie, doing the sound and lights for shows. I've been an engineer who rocked up to factories to help fix their noise problems and I'm now a crafter. I've changed a lot since leaving school 5 years ago and God has been with me through it all! Leaving school, I had no idea what I wanted to do as a career. My leaving cert subjects were super varied so there was no clear way to go. My friends were high achievers (now accountants and doctors) which made me feel a bit lost in comparison. I decided to go to England to study Sound, Light Technology, seemed as good an option as any. It was basically the technical aspects of shows and concerts. I didn't love it, but I loved the town I was in, especially my church, so I stuck it out. I decided not

to work in the industry as you need to put in really long hours, you basically have to live and breathe tech which I just didn't. Upon graduation I moved back to Ireland and became an 'Acoustic Technician'. This involved running various tests to determine the sound qualities of machinery and vehicles. It was fine, but the role wasn't really leading anywhere, and I was cold and dirty all the time, so I left.

I had no plan and no idea where I was going to go next, but I knew it had to be something completely different. I took two months off to just rest, reconnect with Jesus and hibernate through winter. It was bliss! I picked up an old hobby of embroidery and found that I really loved it. I then tried my hand at needle-felting which I loved even more and in January 2018 I decided I would sell my work. The plan that God has for us is open wide, with lots of choices for us to make. His promise is to be with us every day and I've found that to be so true! Don't stress about choosing a career. Nothing is set in stone and you can always try something new. **The only thing that is 100% secure is that you can rely on God to guide you and love you as you try to be the best you can!**

WORD FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

DIRK VAN DER FLIER



Change can be a challenging and exciting time, but also brings uncertainty! But we should be encouraged that “God’s Faithfulness, is new every morning”.

Lets start by thanking Jim and his wife Barbara and the Donnan family for their wonderful contribution to Scripture Union over the last 20 years - their efforts are greatly appreciated. Jim has carried his responsibility with sincerity, care and spiritual insight and has led SU to places we could have only dreamed of in times past. For this we are very thankful.

Many times God has brought his people to;

1. A review of what has gone before
2. A time to take a fresh view
3. Receive a clear call / challenge for the future

We in Scripture Union are in one of those times - grateful for how we see God at work in and through the work of our staff and volunteers, thankful for the past faithfulness

of God, and looking toward the future, with a search for a new National leader in 2019 to carry on the vision and work of those who have given so much in the past. Council have started this review and search for the next leader, and ask you to join with us in praying that the right individual will hear God’s call and step forward into this role, with a sense of vigor and excitement for the road ahead (*see job advertisement on page 4*). I would also like to thank those who have contributed financially to support the work, it has been quite a challenge to meet the costs of the expanding ministry, and yet a desire to go through the open doors of ministry we see before us.

Thank you for supporting us!

Dirk van der Flier
Scripture Union Ireland
Chairperson





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A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON FAITH

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