

News & Updates from Scripture Union Ireland

2018 ISSUE 6

Inspire

Scripture Union

15  years



Ovoca Manor



CSSM 1860s



Global Assembly. Malaysia 2017

Welcome **New**
Team Members

Volunteering "has given me so many valuable skills ..."

SU Volunteer James Carey

Stories from CSSM

nua

Film Series Update



SCRIPTURE
UNION IRELAND



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MANOR**

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Schools & Groups
Retreats
Faith Talks
Outdoor Activities
Team Building



Contents



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Welcome

Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand'.

Zechariah 4:10

The thing I love about Scripture Union is the whole concept of small beginnings, even from its early history. This Year Scripture Union worldwide celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the founding of the organisation and a special gathering took place in Malaysia, with representatives from 130 movements and over 120 countries.

Almost 150 years ago in late August 1867 a 31-year-old office worker called Josiah Spiers was on his holidays in Llandudno in North Wales. A rather insignificant event you might think! But as Spiers was simply strolling along the beach, as you would on holidays, he watched a group of children making a garden with pebbles and seaweed in the sand. He had one of those Holy Spirit moments and wondered, 'Why shouldn't these children make a Bible text with these pebbles in the sand?'

So, the story goes he rushes to the local shop to buy some string and pegs and calls to the children 'Who will help me write a text in the sand? A dozen or so children volunteer and Josiah proceeds to trace the text from 1 John 4:8: GOD IS LOVE!

The amazing thing is that this simple, life transforming message of God's Love, continues to be communicated to children and young people from all over Ireland today through the ministry of Scripture Union, through camps, retreats, in schools and mid-week retreats at Ovoca Manor as well as parishes and communities by our 20 staff and over 250 Volunteers. 2017 was possibly the busiest year for ministry in my 18 years as General Director. Some 1559 attended our Camps and Missions, over 1600 participated in in-school and mid-week retreats, over 10,000 people viewed the NUA Film series and several hundred participated in our Primary age ministry. Behind all these facts is the amazing impact that the same life changing message of Jesus Christ is having in the hearts of these children and young people.

Throughout this Inspire Magazine you will read uplifting stories of the diversity of this ministry and especially of the many ways God is at work by His Spirit.

I wish therefore to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all the SU Staff team, Board and Council members, all our Volunteers and to each of you our Supporters, without whom this ministry would not be possible

Yours in Christ



Jim Donnan
General Director



Global Assembly in Malaysia. Celebrating 150 years of SU

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Our Experience...



Laryssa

Moving to Ireland from Canada meant picking up my life and dropping it half a world away. It meant leaving everything behind - job, home, friends and starting fresh, with no backup plan. Full immersion. I like to think that I've made the most of my time here, that I've been able to embrace the culture and every challenging opportunity. Through heartfelt conversations with strangers, to giving talks to groups, to the hands-on training of climbing qualifications; there was always something new happening to push us further out of our comfort zones and keep us learning and growing. When I return home, people will look for differences in me.

They'll comment when I use words like "grand" and "footpath" and remark upon the slightest change of accent. Then I'll be among my own for a short time and all the phrases I picked up here will fade away and I'll sound just like every other Canadian. But the changes that matter aren't the ones you can hear, and I look forward to the moment when a friend says "you're different".

Because that will mean that God has been working, through stretching experiences and beautiful people (you know who you are), to make me into someone better, and someone better able to do his work. I talk about God a lot while I'm here. It's the camps, the community, the place. God is clearly so present and at work here and we love to comment on it. But when I leave back to a life where God is not a word mentioned daily, will I still say it? Will I still see him, in the beauty of a different landscape and in the friends I didn't have to go far to find? When I am no longer leading camps nearly every week, and no longer have the same motivation, will I still praise him so openly? I've learned that no matter the experience, no matter the country, no matter the friends made or the jobs undertaken or the hardships endured, that God is the only constant. And I cannot wait to continue getting to know him better through whatever comes next for me.

Ruairí

Throughout the year one of Jasper's most used phrases to Laryssa and I was "Yeah I'm kind of throwing you in the deep end here." It was usually in relation to doing something out of our comfort zone but it also turned into a perfect metaphor for my year.

In almost every aspect of my life I was entering uncharted waters. I'd never lived so far away from home for such an extended amount of time. I'd never lived with someone I hadn't previously met. More significantly, I'd never been so completely immersed in a Christian setting.

At the time of writing it's been roughly a year since I first heard of the internship. I had little idea as to what I was going to be doing come September, my mum got an email one day from SU advertising the internship. It felt like a light bulb dinged above my head as she read out what it involved, working with young people of various ages and backgrounds, plenty of outdoor activities and excursions, and all at a location that I'd grown up attending and loving.

At family week later that summer I got chatting to Jasper and the energy and excitement he had for the internship went

a long way to convincing me that it was what I wanted to do.

I have always had a tendency of getting quite homesick away from home but I never once felt it this year due the SU staff being such a family to each other.

Laryssa started off as my flatmate and fellow intern but became my best friend during the year, we are as close to polar opposites as you can get but we got on so well. I think I learned more from her than anyone I met.

Something I had to learn quite quickly this year was being able to talk about my faith and why I believe what I believe which I have rarely had to do before. I was so often in situations where young people would ask about issues which they struggled with in their faith and I would have to answer and make up my own mind as to what I believed. It was really tough at times but I learned a lot about myself.

As a kid at the swimming pool before I could even swim I used to look at the deep end and want to just dive in. Full immersion. Sink or swim. I feel like I did that this year and it was so worth it.

Are you **LOOKING** for something
NEW, different and EXCITING?

DO YOU WANT
TO DEVELOP AS
A LEADER?

Do you want first
hand experience in a
dynamic youth ministry
across the diverse
ministries of
Scripture Union
Ireland?

Are you willing
to step outside your
comfort zone and
untap and develop
your own personal
gifts and talents?

If so, we are looking for you!

For more information log onto scriptureunion.ie
or email internship@scriptureunion.ie





Paxton

Ashleigh

Kate

I'm Paxton McCartney from Michigan, U.S. I'm 22 and just graduated from Bowling Green State University with a degree in Human Development and Family Studies. I came to be an SU intern through working with a different SU in the past and wanting to work and serve in another country. Throughout this internship I am hoping to grow spiritually, personally and professionally. I want to be able to effectively communicate my faith to others.

I'm looking forward to building relationships, making friendships and just living in a new culture. My most memorable moment so far would be doing the Bray to Greystones Cliff Walk the first week of the internship. It was a great bonding day with the internship team!

Paxton

Meet our new Interns

G'day mate! My name is Ash, I'm 19 years old and I'm from Melbourne, Australia. After graduating high school in November 2016, I decided to take a step of faith and apply for this internship with Scripture Union Ireland. It has definitely been a wild ride moving across the world for a year at such a young age, but I am excited about the things I have to offer this year and where this internship will lead me.

This internship offers such a large range of opportunities everyday and I hope to make the most of all of these as the year goes on. In particular, I am incredibly pumped to work with teens in schools and at Ovoca Manor, especially when it comes to getting to share my story and talking about faith with the people I come across. I am hoping that God will speak to me throughout this year and that I may gain a greater understanding of my purpose within this internship and in the seasons that follow.

Already, I have been blown away by the kindness of my workmates, mentors, and fellow interns, and how perfect the environment is for the pursuit of self-discovery and learning new skills.

So far, I've thoroughly enjoyed getting to meet and form relationships with the people I work with, speaking in schools, and leading various activities on retreats at the Manor. But what is most exciting to me, is how much I have seen myself grow in such a short period of time, and I cannot wait to see how that progress continues throughout the rest of this year. As for right now, I'm going to keep sharing laughs with my incredible fellow interns, and trusting God in all things.



Hey I'm Kate, I'm 18 years old and I'm from Greystones in Co. Wicklow. I graduated from secondary school in May 2017 and did my Leaving Cert in June. In August 2016 I was at family week in Ovoca Manor and saw signs for the internship. I thought 'oh that looks cool, but I'll never actually do it'.

I always wanted to go straight into college and the idea of a gap year had never really crossed my mind. As time went on during 6th year and I realised that I was unsure what I wanted to do, the idea of taking a year to focus on me and my relationship with God became a lot more appealing. After a lot of prayer and discussions with people, I decided to put my trust in God, take a leap of faith and apply for the internship. I was told during my leaving cert that I had got a place. Throughout the summer I still questioned whether it was the right thing for me to do

but as soon as I moved into the Manor I knew I was exactly where God wanted me to be.

Throughout the Internship I hope to be able to grow confidently in my faith. I also hope to be able to encourage young people in their walk with God through spending time with them on retreats and sharing my faith with them. I'm looking forward to having open and honest chats with young people while also growing in my own confidence in speaking in front of groups. A memorable moment was actually seeing how my story had had an impact on one of the youth.

I'm looking forward to seeing where the internship will lead me and to see what plans God has for me this year!



Meet Shiromi

Hi my name is Shiromi and I joined the SU team in June 2017 as a part-time Accounts/Administrative worker. I am originally from Sri Lanka and came to Ireland in 2003 with my husband who works in IT. We came for just two years but to the disappointment of both our families we are still here 14 years later!

My own work background is in banking/finance, however when my daughter was born in 2006, I became a full time stay at home mum. I've never looked back and have never regretted that decision. Our kids are now 11 and 9, meaning they are that bit older and although I took on many projects to keep myself occupied in the more recent years, there was a restlessness in me & a longing for something more - although I was not sure what this "more" was. Going back to work after such a long break seemed scary and impossible. So when I came across this vacancy at SU totally out of the blue & though it all seemed impossible, I sent in an application - and the rest is history!

God surely knew the desires of my heart and His timing was perfect. He has given me far more than I could have ever hoped for - to be present with a group of people with whom I share my faith & beliefs has been amazing and has enriched my own spiritual life greatly.

Everyone has been so welcoming, helpful and friendly and my routine has beautifully fallen into place around my family. I am also exposed to a whole new realm of ministry where the team around me is involved in taking the Word of God in a fresh & fun way to the children and youth in Ireland which is very exciting. It is beautiful to see young people themselves leading and teaching from their own experience and making an impact in other young people's lives. As a parent myself I am very grateful to and encouraged by all the work SU is doing to spread the Word of God and of His love to the new generation, and I am delighted to a part of this team!

Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.
Psalm 37:4



Thank You

We are deeply thankful to Cheryl Williams for her hard work and dedication to the Ministry of Scripture Union Ireland over the past 26 years. In the summer of 2017 Cheryl accepted a new job as a Schools Administrator in Co. Wicklow. We wish her every success and blessing in her new role and look forward to seeing her at various SU events throughout the year.

My name is Liana Forsyth and I recently started work at the Scripture Union office in Bray.

I'm married to Mark, a part-time Methodist minister/ part-time actuary. We have three lovely children, Hannah (10), John (6) and Rebekah (4) and are currently living in Bray, Co. Wicklow.

My background is in secondary school teaching, but I took a few years out of the workplace to be at home with the kids. When my youngest child began playschool, I prayed that God would lead me to a flexible part-time job in the locality, and the rest is history!

I've been warmly welcomed into the SU family and am kept busy day to day with the Garda vetting of our many volunteers, reference checking, organising prayer letters for camps and general camp administration.

Scripture Union has always had a special place in my heart. I loved attending camps at Ovoca Manor throughout my teens and these camps really helped me grow as a Christian.

Serving as a leader at SU Adventure Club weekends, Family Week and on the CSSM team also provided me with amazing opportunities to live out my faith. My own children are now benefiting from the ministry of Scripture Union, with CSSM in Greystones being one of the highlights of the summer! It is a privilege to be a part of the ministry here at Scripture Union and to see God at work in the lives of so many children, teenagers and families.

Meet
Liana



Hi everyone, My name is Darren and I am the new Retreat Coordinator at Ovoca Manor.

I'm a man from the West, son of a Dairy Farmer so no stranger to the fresh air in Ovoca. I have been involved in youth work for 5 years in both a paid and voluntary capacity, working with young people from all walks of life. I love getting to share Jesus with young people and communicate that God is real and cares about each aspect of our lives however small. I was introduced to SU Ireland by my fiancé Debs and I was immediately intrigued by SU's work. When the position of Retreat Coordinator came up I couldn't believe this was a real job it sounded so exciting.

I believe God wants me here and I can't wait to see what he has planned. I am looking forward to developing relationships with schools and seeing how this will grow over time. We have students come in with various grasps on faith and contrasting views on it. From testimonies to prayer spaces, talks to high ropes, from debates to building fires and from small group scenarios to team challenges, we are looking forward to working alongside schools to tackle issues that are ongoing in their lives and communities.

We also want the retreats to be fun, engaging and a place they feel accepted and safe.

I have the pleasure of working with various volunteers who give up evenings and whole days to share their stories with students. This humbles me that SU has so many young people open and willing to share what their faith means to them. We hope to be able to support them too in developing their faith.

God has placed the scripture '**Be still and know that I am God**' on my heart and I think this is something we would love students to take from our retreats.

Meet
Darren



What Impact is nua making?

After 3 years of hard yet exhilarating work we finally launched NUA!!! It was one of the highlights of the year having the theatre in Gonzaga College full for the premier of Episode One. That was back in March and a lot has happened since.

For those of you who are stumbling across NUA for the first time it is a high-quality production with 8 episodes covering the core questions that young people are grappling with regarding the Christian Faith. It is a very exciting and ambitious project with the potential to reach 'a generation of Irish young people and beyond' with the gospel message, primarily through the 700+ secondary schools all over Ireland.

Since the launch over 700 resource packs have been distributed and over 200 secondary schools are using the resource as part of their RE curriculum. This represents approx. 10,600 people who will engage with NUA, including 150 parish/church based groups. This autumn we have had over 20 opportunities to present NUA to RE Teachers & Chaplains around Ireland and the response has been amazing, highlighting the need for such a faith based resource for Irish youth.

We are also working on translating the resource into Spanish & French for an international impact. Already NUA has been launched through Scripture Union in America and Scripture Union Canada are preparing to launch NUA there in early 2018.

It's been so encouraging to see others excited about using NUA both here in Ireland and around the world. We are only getting started!!

We were hoping for NUA to equip young people with the ability to intelligently explore and understand the Christian message and beliefs. We wanted to encourage viewers to wrestle with the things that just don't seem to make sense. At the end of the day, we wanted NUA to have an impact—immediate and personal, as well as the long-term, life-changing experience of working out faith in Jesus. The feedback we have received has been so encouraging. **Check out some of the reports on the next page from teachers, youth workers and young people!**

I so appreciate all the support for this new resource, please keep spreading the word!

Jonny Somerville
www.nuafilmseries.ie





NUA Film Series Update - Testimonials

6th Year Students

"NUA really made me think deeper about my faith." Lydia

"It was great to have a 'NUA LOOK' on religion." Amelia

"Without 'NUA' I'd have so many thoughts on Jesus and religion?" Maeve

"I had very concrete ideas about my faith, but NUA made me look at religion from a different perspective."

"NUA helped me develop the link between science and religion and how they work together."
Saoirse

"NUA really encouraged me to question what I have always been told and had previously just accepted." Iseult



Hear Sean Mallon's story of using NUA with 6th years in Mt Anville...

When I heard about NUA I was absolutely ecstatic! I've been saying for years "We need something current, interesting & engaging if we are going to hold the interest of students in religion classes." When I saw the final product I knew it was exactly what we needed. My students are fully engaged with the various videos in each segment, they are so well presented and a nice mix of where our faith began and how it fits into today's world.

The stories, examples & visuals are amazing! All of this encourages sharing in the small groups and, to my delight, each student is "listening" to the other and respecting their opinion. My favourite part is when it's time to "Journal" – As they are writing I can see in every single face a sense of "wonder" and deep, reflective thought...

Youth Groups/Teens

"I think it is very visually appealing and that makes you want to keep watching also I love how the stories that I've heard so many times can be applied to my life as a teen in Ireland"

"NUA is an interesting fresh new way to learn about God in this day and age, it's relevant for teens and super encouraging. The questions we discussed really made me think, and helped me explore the Bible and more about my faith. I would recommend it to every teen out there, christian or not."

"I love NUA, I feel it really breaks down the Bible to make it easy for us to take in and use it in our day to day lives. It changed my view on a few things for good which I liked. I've grown up in a christian family but it still helped me so much. NUA is really good, thank you."

"NUA is an excellent resource for Youth Groups, I love that it's Irish and up to date. I have loved using it with one of our youth groups called 'IMPACT' and the teens seem to respond really well to it. I'd highly recommend it." - Hazel, Youth Worker

Assistant Pastor Jonny from Swords shares how NUA has impacted their youth ministry...

We started running the NUA series with our teen group a couple of months ago and have found it to be really excellent. Since we started using it the numbers of teens coming has grown to the point where we have 40 young people every week from all sorts of backgrounds – from our Church family, from the local housing estates and even some who are friends of friends living miles away and have heard through the grape-vine that we are doing it. I think the fact that there is an Irish accent delivering such high quality content is very appealing and also the sensitive way that difficult topics are addressed and questions posed for us to consider as small groups is brilliant. The teens even asked for an extra day to do a review of it. Please can we have more similar courses!!!

Paxton, our very own Scripture Union Intern shares her experience of using NUA on retreats in Ovoca Manor...

Running NUA at Ovoca Manor retreats is a unique experience. Every school and student are different in their life experiences and spiritual backgrounds. Typically, throughout the retreat two to three episodes are shown. The students are split into small groups, which stay consistent with leaders and students. The leaders also run outdoor activities throughout the day providing consistency to help build relationship with the students during the short amount of time. NUA asks and answers many of the questions that young people are curious about. Having a safe neutral space to talk about these questions is valuable.

It is rewarding to hear what each young person is wrestling with at the beginning, through the content of each episode and the discussion during the small groups and see how they have been challenged by the end of the episode.



Memories

from the
3 Wise Men

It was Josiah Spiers who, in 1867, started “Special Services” for children in Islington, London. “Special Services” had an informal, friendly atmosphere, lively chorus singing and exciting talks with visual aids. This was a completely new approach to working with children. This idea grew rapidly to become the Children’s Special Service Mission (or C.S.S.M.).

And so it was that this new approach of youth ministry made it’s way to the Irish shores of Greystones, Co Wicklow, and with it the beginning of Scripture Union in Ireland, in the year 1896!

At that time Scripture Union in Ireland was managed from Scripture Union England and Wales and this arrangement nearly lasted a whole century right up until 1980 when SU Ireland was established as an autonomous movement.

But something special had happened 4 years previous to that. In 1976 SU Ireland had hired it’s very first General Director, none other than the legendary Kingsley Prescott.

One of the biggest developments in SU Ireland’s history happened during the time of Kingsley. At that time they were searching for an ideal plot of land to run activities from. Kingsley said that ‘After a 4 year search for a premises to cater for groups of students for residential retreats, SU was given Ovoca Manor for just £1! The goodwill of so many Christians amazed me and allowed SU to slowly develop the Manor and the grounds so that over the years, since the late nineteen seventies, thousands of young people have been challenged to become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.’



So many of us have lasting memories of our time spent in Ovoca Manor, for some it has been like a spiritual home. It was Kingsley who was responsible for hiring the Harpers, namely Herbert and Jean, who will go down in Ovoca Manor history as absolute heroes. For over 25 years Herbert and Jean sustained and developed OM facilitating the faith development of thousands.

Kingsley's time was not without a few memorable incidents. There was a very unfortunate incident which led to a brighter future. Kingsley recalling this time explains that 'following the dramatic fire that destroyed all the stock in our first shop at Northumberland Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, the SU Council agreed to purchase 87 Lr. Georges Street, Dun Laoghaire. This was a significant change being on the main street of Dun Laoghaire which helped SU relate better to the general public. At that time (before Amazon!) there was an important ministry for Christian Bookshops to supply helpful literature both for children and adults.'

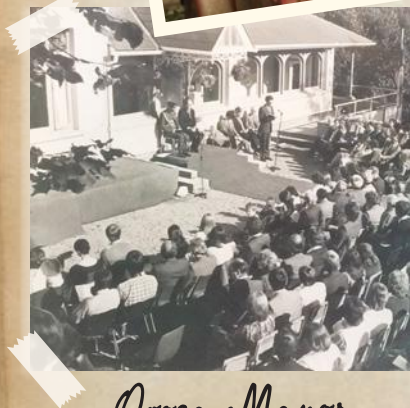
Kingsley has always been known for his love of God's word which is why SU was such a good fit for him. On reflecting about what SU means to him he explained that 'in this day and age when the Bible is ignored by some and criticised by others, the verse from Psalm 119 verse 105 highlighted by SU is what SU means to me 'God's Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path '. I am thrilled that Christians from all different backgrounds and churches can work together at SU to emphasise basic Christian truths from the Bible and leave the difficult questions till we arrive in heaven!

"I am thrilled that Christians from all different backgrounds and churches can work together at SU"

Kingsley



Herbert & Kingsley



Ovoca Manor

Celebrating 150 Years of Scripture Union

After 20 fine years of Kingsley's leading the reigns of SU Ireland was passed to a Northern Irish fellow, his name was Robert McMullan. Many will remember Robert for his multiple decades of leading the CSSM team in Greystones and for the unique way he said the word 'cake' but many might not be aware that he led SU for 3 years. Rob said of his time with SU that he loved 'the sense of being part of a worldwide family especially having the opportunity to attend an International Conference and meet with colleagues from around the world, who shared their stories of how God was using Scripture Union to build his kingdom in their country'.

Rob was also at the helm when yet another significant development happened down at Ovoca Manor. Rob was delighted to meet at that time the President of Ireland. He said 'the opportunity to have Uachtaran Mary McAleese to open Densmore Lodge in 1998 was very memorable. Michael Hews in his book *A Tale of Two Visions*, writes, "There can't be many countries in the world where a national President has come to open a Scripture Union Building. But at Ovoca Manor in the Republic of Ireland it happened twice!"

Rob also really enjoyed his travels when he worked for SU. He travelled to some wonderful places around Ireland running Sunday School Teacher Training events with the one and only Elva Byrne. They brought what they now call pop up book shops to churches around the country as well.

Rob recalls these trips as highly adventurous and sometimes treacherous, he said, 'in the days before sat nav and mobile phones we got lost, very lost!'. Rob also wanted to give a shout out to Olive Nicols and the 'two legendary Seans' (Mullarkey and Kelly) as significant SU people who helped and journeyed alongside his spell at the top.

So what does SU mean to Rob? He said that 'you don't serve on a CSSM team for 32 years and be on staff for three and not have a passion for the ministry of SU! The first thing I did as a teacher when I arrived at The King's Hospital School in 1980 was to start an SU group. When I was in Uganda recently, the largest group in the school which I visited was the Scripture Union Group. They even had the SU logo on their school sign!

Now, leading a church in Coleraine we have the privilege of being an SU partner with the local schools worker in our area. **As we keep saying, not every child goes to church but every child goes to school and therefore the ministry of Scripture Union is even more important now.'**



Then came our very own Jim Donnan. It was the year that Manchester United won the treble (1999) that the SU Council decided in faith, that Jim Donnan (a council member at the time), would guide SU into the future. Bearing in mind that Jim was in full time public service work, you can imagine what a significant life change this was, and so, his new role as General Director of SU wasn't official until the turn of the millennium! In Jim's 17 years in charge there has been amazing developments. If you know Jim well, you'll know that he loves to passionately share what God has done, so keeping highlights to a few was hard for him to choose.

As has been a common theme through all of the 3 Irish Directors, the development of Ovoca Manor was also a key project for Jim. The Manor had been such a blessing but it was getting a bit tired and a new vision had been cast to use the Manor mid-week for school's ministry. The funds needed to upgrade and extend the Manor were major.

Funding appeals started as early as 2005 but Jim says that in 2009 when the design was out to tender, 'that the recession hit in Ireland and the planning permission was due to expire in 2010. To be totally honest my faith in seeing the project happen was at a low ebb despite having raised almost €700,000 euro!

***“But how great
and faithful is
our God”***

Jeremiah 3:23



Celebrating 150 Years of Scripture Union

In October 2010 I was sitting in the office in Dun Laoghaire and received a call from the Chairperson of SU Council who said we had received a significant gift from a totally anonymous donor. Like all General Directors of Charities my head started to race with anticipation and sums like €50,000 or even €100,000 came into my mind. No, this incredibly generous donor wanted to give €1,000,000 yes one million euro to undertake this project. I sat there and simply wept with joy!

It is simply amazing that the funds would be supplied during a recession. God works in amazing ways and through all sorts of people. The upgrade, not only of the manor house but also the addition of high rope activities, has been a major highlight for Jim but the real amazement has been the incredible up take of mid-week school retreats at Ovoca Manor. Jim explains that the development of this ministry is due in part to the kindness of one individual.

Jim loves telling this story... 'Around the same time of the extension project we were reflecting on the passage in Luke 10: 5-9 where Jesus sends his disciples out to evangelise and gives them what seems like rather odd instructions. He tells them "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him. ... Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you. ... Do not move around from house to house. ... Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you,'"

Over the years I have been amazed at how the Lord has advanced the mission of SU through us finding this 'Person of Peace'. One such person was a very random encounter with the then Head of RE in Gonzaga College Dublin Mr Daniel Mc Neillis.

***“God works in
amazing ways
and through all
sorts of people”***

I was in the office at the photocopier when Danny called in to see Jonny Somerville and asked about a possible school retreats in Gonzaga. I overheard the conversation and subsequently contacted Danny and we started building a relationship where he shared his heart for reaching his students with the message of Jesus and wanted them to experience going to Ovoca Manor.

So, we came up with this Ignatian concept of 'Finding God in All Things' with the idea of taking these young people on an outward and inward journey of encounter with God. Combining the outdoor activities at the Manor with scripture based talks and reflection.

The first year he brought his students for a week and it was an amazing time of blessing and they have come every year since during the first two weeks in September. But this concept and mid-week retreat experience has just flourished by God's grace and now we have some 50 schools, 90% of them with a Catholic ethos, and almost 1600 young people coming from late August into the following April each year. Such is the demand for this retreat ministry that this year we made the decision to employ a full time Retreat Coordinator to run this work and provide solid spiritual content. Danny was certainly one of these Persons of Peace and he is now enjoying the Lords presence having passed away in 2015. But what a legacy he has left.'

Jim would honestly admit that a part of him thought he made the biggest mistake of his life back in January 2000 but looking back now he has no regrets, yet extremely grateful to the patience and support of his better half Barbara!! Jim simply loves SU, he says he loves how SU 'is Scripture based, it is relational, and volunteer based. It is ecumenical and how we have seen the impact of that through working with all the churches and especially the Catholic Diocese and developing initiatives like Luke the Book, Ember Leadership and Faith programme, Pentecost project, NUA Film series etc.

Through all this I have been privileged to meet and have fellowship with people from all backgrounds and share the joy of seeing hundreds of young people experiencing a personal encounter with Jesus.'

The SU team has grown over the years and Jim has worked tirelessly to get the most out of the resources that we have. His ecumenical heart and team focus has helped steer SU down new exciting paths but at the heart of it all is the SU volunteers. As current director Jim should of course have the final word and his final word is one of thanks,

'a heartfelt thanks to all our volunteers, prayer partners and financial donors without whom this ministry could not have happened.'



Celebrating 150 Years of Scripture Union



Global Assembly

10th - 14th November 2017
Putrajaya, Malaysia

In 1867 Josiah Spiers spoke to 15 children in a drawing room in Islington, London, and began the work of sharing the Christian message with children in a way that related to their real needs. This led to the founding of the Children's Special Service Mission (CSSM) which was later to become "Scripture Union". 150 years later, on the 9th November, two of our managers, Emma and Jonny, boarded a plane heading towards Scripture Union's Global Assembly and 150th Celebration in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

This was always going to be an exciting conference to be part of and a chance to gain a better understanding of this global organisation we are a small part of (staff and volunteers). Jonny and Emma did not expect to be so humbled to be seated in a room with SU representatives from 120 countries and to share in the common vision, and struggle, of faithfully sharing God's word with the communities they are placed in. It was inspiring to be seated in a room and sharing meals with representatives from the larger movements in Australia who have over 800 staff, to sharing lunch with men from South Sudan with hearts breaking for the political situations in their Country: both movements recognising that Christ is the hope for their nation.

Jonny was offered the amazing opportunity to be able to share NUA and his vision for the film series and how it can be a blessing to other SU movements. He was able to show a full episode simultaneously in English, Spanish and French and over 30 countries seem keen to use NUA, from as far east as Japan who want to dub the material, African countries, nations in South America, around Europe and down under, in Australia. Jonny was also afforded the opportunity to speak at one of the workshops which gave the time needed to explore in detail how other movements could roll NUA out in their context.

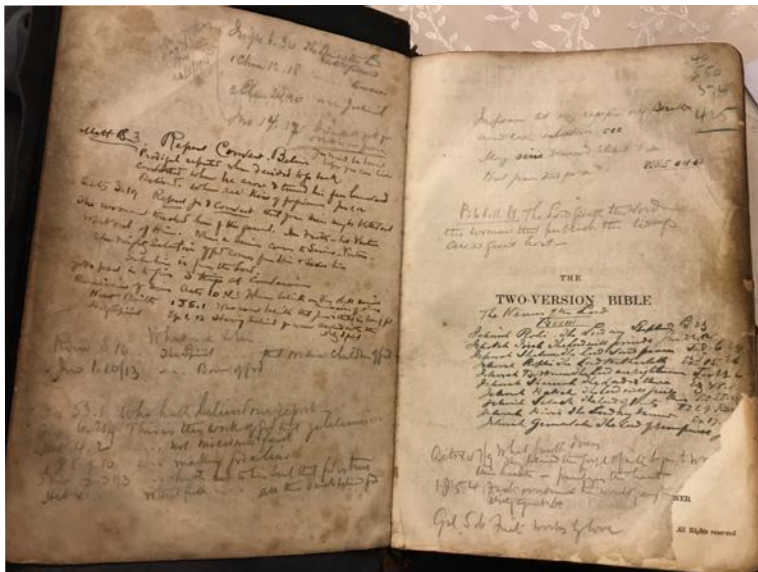
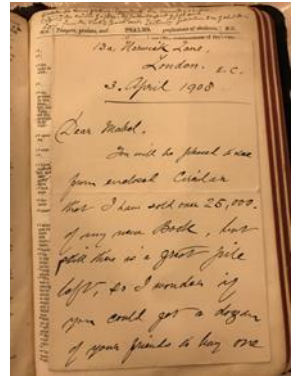
We are Scripture Union and the leadership team ensured that the conference attendees were focused on how the Bible is the centre of SU's ministry. They were reminded how Josiah Spiers studied the Bible, how that in the 1880's children who were part of SU had a membership card (with Psalm 118 on it) and how on the 50 year anniversary in 1929, SU adopted Psalm 119 as a central verse to minister from. Wendy Strachan asked "How can we imagine fresh ways to help people hear God speak through His word into their context?" Terry Williams challenged all movements to think whether they are creating a space where children can connect with the creator of the universe. "Are we coming to our children with an agenda or are we creating space?". Joe Kapolyo asked which groups are being excluded from hearing the gospel and CB Samuel questioned whether we teach "the Jesus of the Bible" or "the Jesus we created".

An important part of the conference was the general assembly and the election of global board members. Monika Kuschmierz was elected the new Director for Scripture Union International and Christian Hellwig as the new Chairman. Once the official business was taken care of the 150 year celebrations began in the form of a Malaysian wedding feast.

It was a real inspiration to see some of the work other colleagues and SU movements are doing and the creativity behind it.

Jonny and Emma had brilliant opportunities to connect with people, to attend seminars, to see how other movements run similar ministries, to share resources and time to share in prayer and worship. These relationships have already started to open doors to ministry opportunities which is very exciting.

Josiah Spiers inspiration and motivation was clear and so as the conference attendees were challenged on the opening evening: let us read the Bible thoroughly, frequently, prayerfully, personally, together and obediently and let us adopt Josiah Spier's attitude of **"I read it through, I pray it in, I pass it on"**.



Celebrating 150 Years: Camps & Missions

2017 has been a great year in our camps ministry. We've been able to run **20** residential camps at our adventure centre, Ovoca Manor. We had a great time at Greystones C.S.S.M. sharing the gospel with over **400** children and young people. The most exciting thing was seeing the demand for our camps increase with **1559** attendees and all of our Easter, Summer and Parenting camps were fully booked with waiting lists. This can only be testimony to the faithful leaders who spend weeks, if not months, planning and preparing for these camps and to our prayer teams who ensure that every element of running a camp is covered in prayer.

While there are many 2017 highlights there are a few that stood out for me. During one of our camps this year I was giving a quick briefing talk to a team before the children arrived and I noticed that out of 18 leaders, 15 of them had either been through SU camps that I led on and they were a camper, or I personally had been their youth group leader/been a leader at their school Christian Union. This emphasises the importance of continual ministry and how when we pass on the gospel to a younger generation we need to allow them the opportunity and give them the support they need, to stand up and pass on that same gospel to the next generation.

Another highlight this year was when one of my leaders from our Weekend Adventure camps came to me and said "Emma, we run this camp every year for 5th & 6th class pupils in their school. We want the opportunity to tell these children about Jesus for four consecutive years so can we please run another camp for 3rd & 4th class?" This leader and their family saw an opportunity to work with these children on a continual basis and decided they should run a second camp.

It is through Volunteers' creativity and response to God's calling that any of our camps happen at all and I'm so appreciative of each and every one of them. As a result of this volunteer led vision, we were so excited to have been able to offer two Family Week camps this year which were both fully booked and enabled us to be able to connect with new families and hopefully, the next generation of this family based ministry.

Our longest running camp is Greystones C.S.S.M. and in this 150th year we decided to mark that occasion by gathering groups of people to form the numbers 1-5-0. We used a drone video to take footage of that from a birds-eye view and you can see this video on our website (and maybe even spot yourself if you were at the beach that day). When Scripture Union started in 1867, it started with Children Special Service Missions, or as we know it; C.S.S.M. This first small beach mission started by Josiah Spiers had a global effect so it would only be fitting that we looked at Greystones C.S.S.M. and the impact it has had over the past 121 years. I have chatted to 5 people, all from different stages of life and all with a different story to tell about Greystones C.S.S.M.

In 2018 I am so pleased to say that we are able to offer three more new camps. We are delighted to work in partnership with Youth for Christ to offer a new Sports Camp based in Mullingar. We've recognised that hill walking and hiking is a growing hobby in Ireland and we cannot wait for our new "Dads and Lads" hiking trip for those with sons aged between 16 and 21. After many years of praying and planning, our C.S.S.M. ministry is expanding with a week launching in Dun Laoghaire in August. If you're interested in finding out more about these, or any of our regular camps, please see our camps brochure or our website for more details.

So thank you to all the people who have prayed for our camps, to all the volunteers who have led weekends and week-long residential and worked at Greystones C.S.S.M, to all the parents who entrust their children to us and finally to all of you campers for making each camp as unique and special as they are.

Emma Fawcett
Camps & Missions Manager



Isaac Harris

How many years have you been attending C.S.S.M.?

I have been attending C.S.S.M. for sixteen years on and off. For thirteen as a camper and three as a worker.

What was your favourite memory as a child?

My favourite memory is either winning a gnome at a talent show (thanks Ian Horner) or learning a strange dance the leaders taught us when I was in Sprats. That second one is imprinted on my brain somehow.

What did you decide to become a C.S.S.M. worker?

I was chatting to a friend recently and we came to the conclusion that, as great as camps like C.S.S.M. are as a kid for your faith, and they really are, the real growth in my faith has been during my time as a leader. You are completely surrounded by Christians of varying faith journeys and have the chance to wrestle through all this stuff with them. Also, you can wake up at 7am for a cove swim for the fourth time that week, and be absolutely ready to pull a sick day, (I've never done that I swear) and then some eight-year-old kid will say something mind-blowing about who Jesus is to them and you'll be left floored. Or Ken "go-go Gadget" Gibson will share another unique story of what C.S.S.M. does and continues to do. I think each C.S.S.M. worker experiences the two weeks in their own unique way, but I'm positive that each worker appreciates it the same.

What advice would you give anyone who wanted to be a C.S.S.M. worker?

Never trust a Tennant with a peg.

John Stories from CSSM

How many years have you been going to CSSM?

I am 6 and have been going to C.S.S.M. for three years. I am going into 1st class in September

What is your favourite thing about CSSM?

I was in Shrimps and had fun making paper planes and playing games on the tennis court.

Can you tell us one thing that you learned this year at CSSM?

We sang lots of songs and my favourite song was "Our God is a great Big God".

What are you looking forward to next year?

Being in Sprats

Rebekah

What age are you?

4

Are you going to CSSM next year? Do you know what group you will be in?

I'll be going to Shrimps next year

What are you looking forward to at C.S.S.M.?

I am looking forward to all the games, crafts and Bible stories in Shrimps and I hope to make lots of new friends.



CSSM 'Hunt the Worker'



Family Week



Messy Games at RAW

Ruth Stephens

How many years have you been part of Greystones C.S.S.M?

I've been going to Greystones C.S.S.M. since 1948 when our family was on holiday in Greystones. C.S.S.M. was on and my friend was going to it so I went with her. My attendance was a bit hit and miss between 1948 and 1966 but since then we've maybe missed one year. I've been involved as a camper and as a parent/grandparent, never as a leader. However, the most important thing is that I made a commitment to God in 1948 as a 6 year old at Greystones C.S.S.M.

Could you tell us about the impact it has had on your family?

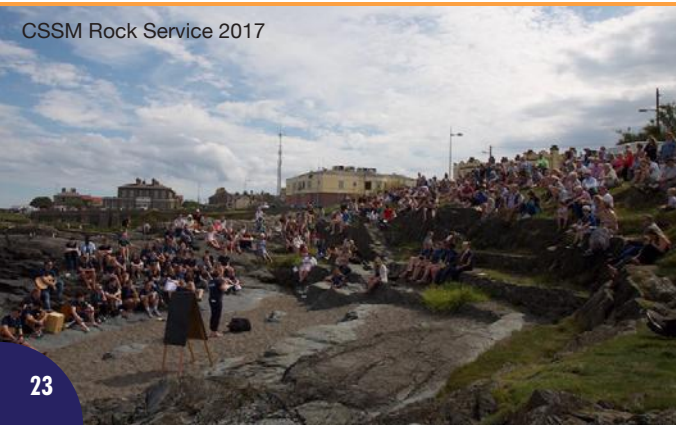
In 1967 when we started to go with the kids, we were very involved and we brought all the kids there. There was one stage they had no musicians and Arlene, Rob and I played the accordion. I couldn't really play it but I still did it as there was nothing else providing music. Even when we gave just one note it was better than nothing! Several families used to picnic on the beach; rain, hail or snow for the whole fortnight which meant we were nearby to get the kids to the afternoon activities without having to go home all the time. The people who came down from Dublin for the day would join us for those picnics. The biggest impact for our own kids would have been that what they were learning at C.S.S.M.

was exactly the same as what they were learning at church and at home but from a different group of people, which confirmed the teachings. The children just loved it and they were ready every morning for the 10am Bible study (in the early days). Each of our girls (all three of them) in turn became leaders and when they started working they helped in the evenings when they could. Cheryl became very involved when she started working for Scripture Union and now our grandson is a leader.

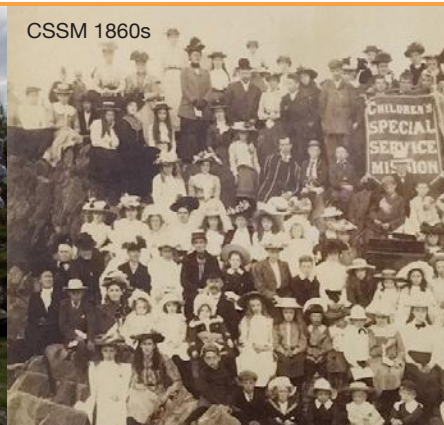
Would you say that C.S.S.M. has had an impact on the Greystones community?

I'd say it has had a big impact and from our point of view we got to know lots of people that we wouldn't necessarily have met. We got to know a lot of parents who would come to the BBQs, parents evenings and the birthday service, and we still chat to them when we meet them today. Some of those parents started coming to church, maybe not as a direct result of C.S.S.M. but it was around that time when all of our children attended the mission. More recently, when the parent's evening is on and there might be around 500 people in the one place at the one time, I've noticed that a lot of those are Greystones people and maybe some of them don't go to church except perhaps for that one service during C.S.S.M.

CSSM Rock Service 2017



CSSM 1860s



How many years have you been involved in Greystones C.S.S.M?

I have been involved with Greystones C.S.S.M. since I was first on the team in 1993. I was on the team for about 5 years and then took a break until 2006 when I changed job and I was available to help out again. During those intervening years my brother was on the team and my Mum cooked for the team so I still felt I had a connection to the mission. In 2010 I was given the great privilege of being asked to be the overall leader and I have been doing that role ever since!

Why do you run this mission?

There are many reasons why I run Greystones C.S.S.M, firstly and most importantly, children and teenagers need to hear about the love that Jesus has for each one of them; a love so great that He rescued them by dying on the cross and they also need to hear that He wants to have a day by day, year by year relationship with them. The best way to hear this amazing message of love and rescue is to listen to God's word from the Bible and C.S.S.M. gives us the opportunity to do that. We read and learn from His word on the beach in the mornings as a family community and in the afternoons and evenings as each child and teenager goes to their different groups, there again they will hear God speak through teachings from the Bible. This helps them to come to know Jesus maybe for the first time and also to grow in their faith in Him

I also run C.S.S.M. because it is one way that I can serve God and be obedient to His command to share the Good News of His love with other people. God has given me so many gifts and blessings and it is good to be able give back to Him in some small way through volunteering with Scripture Union at C.S.S.M. Lastly, I run C.S.S.M. because it is great fun and a really enjoyable two weeks where I get to hang out with some fabulous children and teenagers, their amazing parents and a brilliant team!

How have you seen God at work over the years through Greystones C.S.S.M?

As the main leader of C.S.S.M, people of all ages often tell me something of their story of being a follower of Jesus and how God used the work of C.S.S.M. as part of that story. I can think of the Sprat who went home from their afternoon activity and told their Mum and Dad that they had asked Jesus into their heart, and the group of teens who continued to meet together to do Bible studies after C.S.S.M. ended for the year and even a past team member who is now working in full time church ministry. I had a letter from someone recently in their 90s who wrote about the influence C.S.S.M. had on their faith journey. So it is with each one of those individual stories that confirms to me that God has been at work over the past 121 years. Of course He could do this without us but in His goodness to us He chooses to let us be part of His work, a work that holds up the light of His word to a world that needs to know His love.



Alison Gill speaking during the Beach Service



Ovoca Manor Update

It is hard to believe that 2017 is behind us and we are here at the start of a new year. It was a busy year for all of us here at Ovoca Manor and it went by in a flash of Groups, Retreats, Camps and great fun. In personal news, it was a special year for us as we welcomed baby Jethro into our family in November and we give thanks to the Lord for his safe arrival. To us this new little life mirrors a refreshing of our ministry as we seek to impact our local community more and further diversify and strengthen our in-house ministry.

In 2016 we saw a need for a dedicated facilitator to run our mid-week retreat programme. In July 2017, this role was filled with the employment of Darren Bourke as Retreat Coordinator. Under his leadership we are already seeing how a more relational approach to these retreats is having a positive impact. We have some exciting plans in the pipeline for this area of our ministry.

In last year's Inspire we spoke of a desire to reach out to our community and be a 'light on the hill.' We have made some great connections and this year we will have lots of opportunities for cooperation with the local parish and community groups. These connections has been a real encouragement to us.

A main highlight for us last year was being on the team for Family week. We so enjoyed being part of the leadership team and being ministered to over the week. Also we had the opportunity to spend time with a gentleman who had been here as an orphan 70 years ago, he travelled all the way from the UK alone just to visit the Manor. Over several hours he reminisced of his time here and his life since. He had a tour of the Manor and described how things had changed. It was an unexpected visit but one that truly surprised and blessed us.

We would like to thank all the Volunteers, Interns and Staff for their dedication this year. Ovoca Manor wouldn't be able to function without all these parts working in unison. A big thanks must also go to Donald Malcolm our TUS worker for a year who did Trojan work on improving many parts of our infrastructure.

We at Ovoca Manor and indeed Scripture Union are merely tools at God's disposal to fulfil his plans for our lives and the ministry. It has been an exciting and challenging year yet it was not by our strength that we surmounted the challenges, it was only God enabling us.

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it."

Psalm 24:1

Gareth and Sharon Lynch
www.ovocamanor.ie



A facility like Ovoca Manor that gets a lot of use can get worn and tired very quickly. This year we would like you to get involved and if possible commit a group to come and help us do some refreshing of the Manor.

We are particularly keen to have volunteer trades people, carpenters, plumbers or those who are good with a paint brush if you are woeful with emulsion we still have plenty of areas you could help with.

If you can't commit time perhaps you or your group could commit to financially supporting a project.

Please contact gareth.lynch@scriptureunion.ie for details about volunteering at Ovoca Manor.

Thank you

80%+
average
occupancy
from February
to November

150+
national school children
experienced the
nativity story
during
Follow the Star

50+
schools & 1600
students directly impacted
at Ovoca Manor
faith based
school retreats

20
SU camps at
Ovoca Manor



Ovoca Manor Facilities Update

Ovoca Manor is a beautiful house and place and we have heard many people refer to it as their 'spiritual home'. This year we will continue to work towards transforming this building into a place that will feel like home to our guests, for a night or a longer stay.

Next year I hope to see the modernisation of some old toilets and shower blocks and the building of two new toilets on the ground floor level. The redecoration of some old parts of the Manor is on the map as well. The land should get a bit of a tidy up as well. We will always try to improve the place to welcome you better. Please come and visit us soon.

We are trying to create 'sacred spaces' in the building where our visitors could have a time away from the busy activities of a camp and find a haven for prayer and reflection. We now have a space called the Prayer Room at the top of the house with fantastic views over the Avoca Vale.

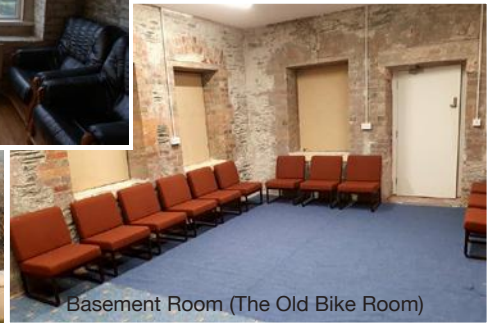
The room in the basement which once was called "The Bike Room" has been transformed as well. It is now a comfortable area for a group up to 30 people and it's ready to welcome a crèche, a youth group or a small conference.

An effort has been made for the winter months by replacing the outdated heating system with a modern gas one. As we are missing flat ground in The Manor, we decided to create some and build a platform over the car park. This is a place to enjoy the view and the sun or to have a coffee when keeping an eye on little ones using the new playground.

Christophe Borel
Ovoca Manor
Facilities Manager



The Prayer Room



Basement Room (The Old Bike Room)



All Abilities

This year has seen a fantastic resource added to our work here in Ovoca Manor. Being rooted in our Christian ethos it was our wish to be as inclusive as possible to our guests and so the planning began...

With support we have been able to develop a number of exciting adventure activities for those who are differently abled. It is our hope to use these developments for all ability school retreats or small activity groups.

We fully believe that it is of great benefit to those who take part in our outdoor activities, as we often see personal growth in self-esteem, confidence, teamwork and a deeper understanding of their faith. We wish to further this impact by reaching more people and offering a safe space to explore these elements.

Jasper Chisnall
Ovoca Manor
Activities Manager



The activities we can now offer are:

Abseiling available to those who have limited ability with their limbs, some use of one arm and one leg & those with an intellectual disability.

Climbing available to those who have an intellectual disability, or limited ability with their limbs.

Crate Climbing available to those who are confined to a wheelchair, with or without an intellectual disability. This is also available to those who have limited ability with their limbs.

Rope Climbing available to those who are confined to a wheelchair with or without an intellectual disability.

Zipline available to those who are confined to a wheelchair. This is also available to those who have limited ability with their limbs.

If you are interested in learning more about these programmes please get in contact with me and I will be delighted to give you more information and discuss your groups particular needs.

Email: jasper.chisnall@scritpureunion.ie
Ph: 040235368

Youth & Schools Update

As I write this I am fast approaching one full year working with SU. I am in awe of the amazing opportunities God has given me to meet young people where they are, and share with them the hope that is in knowing Jesus.

The most unique of these opportunities is our in-school retreats. Over the past year I have had the pleasure of hosting retreats for many schools all over Dublin and elsewhere. These days are unparalleled ministry experiences, as I get to meet young people on their turf so to speak. It is amazing to see young students engage in their faith, and discover it for the first time in many cases.

During these days students have the opportunity to question and discuss many topics relating to faith, which is an opportunity they rarely have. It can be amazing to see the change in attitude in young people throughout the day. As one student wrote in an end of day reflection; 'I came to the retreat today with an idea in my mind that God was most likely not real. However now I have doubts about my idea, and I feel like I have more of an understanding about the world that involves Jesus and God'. There are many more students who have related similar things and I am thankful for the small role I get to play in the faith development of these young lives.



sh's Story



I have also had the amazing opportunity to partner with parish pastoral workers from the archdioceses of Dublin to help run their Faithfest events.

“These events bring together young people from all over Dublin for a night where they can explore faith more, while still being fun and entertaining for them”.

Faithfest takes the form of large gatherings twice a year but also includes a weekend retreat in Ovoca Manor. These retreats in the manor are amazing, and gives young people who might not normally have the chance, the opportunity to visit the beautiful surroundings of Ovoca and further explore faith.

This partnership with the archdioceses also includes the Ember program, a faith leadership training program which seeks to build up young leaders in secondary schools. I am able to help with the running of the Ember residential in Ovoca, and starting soon we are looking to expand Ember into church of Ireland schools as well.

I am often overwhelmed by the amazing things God is doing across our country and I am humbled to be even a small part of that work.

Eric Hughes
Youth and Schools
Manager



Children & Community Update



There have been so many highlights over the past few months working with Scripture Union, from working with 5th class students to produce the Pentecost Project, working on a draft for a new Confirmation Preparation Programme entitled Dynamite, running Cairde Retreats, helping with Family Week and engaging in Godly Play with a group of 5-11 year olds throughout the Year not to mention the Summer Kids Camp.

Summer Kids Camp

One of the most recent highlights of 2017 for me was co-leading the Summer Kids Camp with my Co-Lead Ms. Gracemarie Kelly. In total, we had 20 amazing young leaders along with 64 vibrant young campers. The theme for the week was Transformers, and having read the testimonies of our campers and some of our team, I think I can say it was just that. For me as a Leader, I got to see the fruits of Scripture Union's Ministry to families over the years, as I watched many young leaders rise to put their gifts and talents to serve their younger peers. For me it was a very enriching experience watching every leader bring something unique and special to the team.

It wasn't without its surprises and learning curves but all taken into the mix it was a great experience. Please see the adjoining page to read the Glory Story Board with testimonies from our campers and our Junior Leader Ms. Emma Bowie.

Follow The Star

In December 2017 we welcomed over 150 Junior and Senior Infants who attended our biennial colourful, interactive retelling of the Nativity Story, 'Follow The Star' at our very own Ovoca Manor. It was a great success, thanks to all the Team and Volunteers who took part. The next series will be run in December 2019.

Dynamite

Over the past few months, I have been working on a draft for a new Confirmation Preparation Programme entitled Dynamite. Last semester, it was run in two separate schools with a total of 67 or so pupils taking part in the programme. It is with great excitement that the first draft has been sent out to the Advisory Board for recommendations, additions and constructive feedback etc. to be given.

The students of St. Attractas in Ballinteer, having completed the Dynamite overnight retreat in Ovoca, were eager to continue this new journey that they had begun. A new Youth Group has recently been formed in Ballinteer under the guidance and co-ordination of Mrs. Maria Broderick, all the wonderful team of mothers who have rallied around to join in helping and serving these young people along with the Parish Pastoral Team and last but not least our very own Mr. Eric Hughes. This team have invited and facilitated a space for local young Youth Ministers to serve these now 1st Years. Most of these local Youth Ministers have grown up through Scripture Union or Youth 2000.

Claire Devaney
Children & Community
Manager



Childrens Camp Testimonials

“God taught me that I am special and I should not be embarrassed to raise my hands for worship.”

“At the start of the week I felt disconnected, I feel more connected to God now. This camp has helped so much. I know so much more about God now.”

“God helped me this week by helping me to learn more about him. We learned about God’s love and healing. I loved hearing about God and I felt that God was with me for the week.”



Emma's Testimony

This year was my first experience of being a camp leader on the Ovoca Kids' Summer camp. Being one of the youngest members on the team, I was initially quite nervous but quickly learned that there was no reason to be! I was extremely encouraged throughout the week by the leaders' daily prayer meetings and seeing our prayers answered. The theme of the week was 'Transformers', and I saw this to be true in the way kids' hearts were transformed, and in the way God was ministering to me: I learned time and time again how He takes all my shortcomings, failures and inadequacies; that by His strength I can do all things – He puts His "treasures in jars of clay".



The worship night was a particular highlight of the week. I loved being involved in the worship team, and seeing the kids' desire to worship wholeheartedly. Everyday I was blown away by the insightful questions asked by the girls in my discussion group, as well as the way they supported and uplifted each other. The week was fun-filled as well as spiritually rewarding! From bathing in baked beans in 'messy games', to playing sports and copious games of Mafia, to early morning dips in the 'plunge pool' there was never a dull moment for kids and leaders alike!

SU Volunteer Testimony

'Family Week' was my first experience of a camp, and boy did it set the bar high! My brothers, sister and I see 'Family Week' as something you just don't miss, it's like Christmas, you just have to be there. This year we brought the tally up to 13 years attended and once I literally stayed the whole year! But that's another story, what I want to tell you is why, for 13 years, I keep coming back.

Not only has volunteering developed and challenged my views and understanding of faith, but it has given me so many valuable skills that are difficult to get as a young adult in today's world. Public speaking, working in a team, real life responsibility, planning, adapting plans, thinking fast and learning to slow down. Perfect for the CV! These skills don't just help you lead a camp but they spill out into the world you go back into after camp. They empower you to be better equipped leaders in your every day lives. Whether it be in how you approach (or start) your Bible study or how you deal with difficult situations, the experience you gain from leading camps will affect all areas of your life, not to mention how it will affect others! So for those of you who may be considering volunteering I say go for it, I haven't looked back and you won't either.

For you teens or younger; be brave and try out a camp! I only went to one camp each year as a camper and I wish I had known about more! Seeing how much kids and teens enjoy camps makes me want everyone to know about them and have the chance to experience them! It was way back 13 years ago that I began to build the real faith and the real, strong group of friends that I have today. It's in a big way thanks to those friends, and to the volunteers, and to Scripture Union for making me who I am today! It could be the same for you too. But what really makes Scripture Union and its stories so special is that God is at the centre of them all, and to have the chance to be a part of some of those stories is amazing. So that's why I go back and that's why you should go too, for the first time or the hundredth time. Maybe I'll see you there!

James Carey



Word from the Chairman



What a very encouraging year we have had in Scripture Union! It's been wonderful to see the opportunities for ministry growth and to hear of the impact that is being made with the young people that we have the privilege to interact with.

The Council are most grateful to God for the opportunities and the grace and courage to take advantage of them in a timely manner. Much appreciation goes to Jim Donnan, all our staff and our many volunteers for their tireless efforts. There have been many challenges in the last year, particularly with the finances, but God has been ever faithful. As we head into 2018 it's good to reflect on how we are doing;

How do you measure or discern the growth or fruitfulness of ministry such as ours or even how are we as individuals are doing?

our state of readiness to be used by God in the year ahead. In the light of this I feel challenged to ask:

- 1. Do I detect within myself a greater desire to Seek, Find and Do Gods will?**
- 2. Do I detect within myself a growing readiness to be changed by the Lord?**

I look forward to this challenging year ahead for Scripture Union as we endeavor to Seek, Find and Do God's will for us, and to be ready to be changed by Him so as best to serve our Lord and Saviour.

Dirk van der Flier
Scripture Union Ireland
Chairman



Appeal for Financial Support

Dear Scripture Union Supporter,

The year 2017 has been a year of much growth in ministry with large attendances at SU Camps, many full and including a second Family Week. We have had continued increase in the mid-week retreats to over 50 schools with approx. 1600 students. We launched the NUA Film series in March and in the space of seven months we have distributed over 700 NUA packs with approx. 10,000 participants. Most exciting has been the take up by over 200 secondary schools, so we are over quarter of the way to our target of reaching the 800 schools throughout Ireland. We are in the process of developing a major new Scripture based resource called Dynamite for 6th class students preparing for confirmation and this has significant potential.

Staff wise we recruited an Admin person for our Volunteer Management and Garda Vetting, which is now a legal requirement under Child Protection and created a new role of Retreat Coordinator at Ovoca Manor and before the year end we will recruit a part time Admin/ Marketing role on a one-year contract for the NUA project to support all the admin, data gathering and follow up with schools and groups using the resource with an added element of finding new sources of income for the project.

The total turnover in 2017 exceeds a million euro and was €1,083,013 with estimated expenditure of 1,041,817. This reflects the significant amount of ministry activity and with a current staff of 23 which includes part time cleaning and catering staff at Ovoca Manor as well as three full time Interns and over 300 Volunteers.

While certain activities of the ministry generate income, some do not. We have also sought grant funding from some Trusts to support the salaries of staff working on major projects. However, the reality despite our best efforts is we have a very low regular monthly donor base in relation to the scale of our ministry, which generates less than €25,000 per year and we receive approx. €10,000 Tax on donations from the Revenue Commissioners.

So, we are dependant and indeed indebted to the very small number of amazingly generous Trusts and Individual Donors to fund projects like NUA and support Primary School Ministry and Capital Works at Ovoca Manor.

Thankfully during 2017 we managed to lease some properties and we will benefit from this rental income going into 2018. However, we still have some loan repayments, rental on our offices and, our monthly cash flow is at times challenging, but the reality with the scale and impact of such a ministry to thousands of children and young people significant staff and financial resources are necessary to make this possible.

It is difficult, but I feel we have little choice but to make our need known and to APPEAL to each of our supporters to consider, if possible, making even a small financial contribution and ideally a regular monthly contribution to Scripture Union Ireland. We have therefore included in this Inspire Magazine a **Giving Form** with all our Bank Details to enable you to make a one off or ideally a more regular donation.

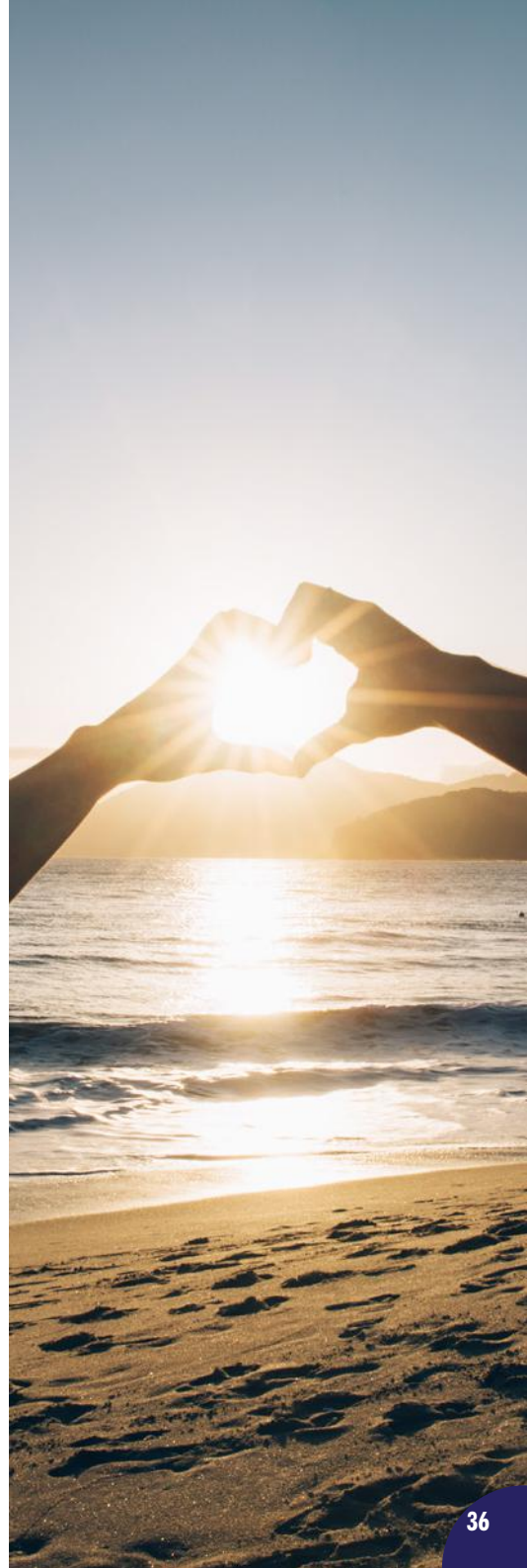
*Thank you
for your support.*

We constantly give thanks to God for His wonderful provision for the ministry of Scripture Union, through the great generosity of so many and for the impact this work is having in the faith and lives of thousands of children and young people across Ireland. We must also acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the staff team and the significant contribution of all our Volunteers as well as our Board and Council members.

Yours sincerely

Jim Donnan

Jim Donnan
General Director



Scripture Union has been getting ready for changes in Data Protection Regulation.

If you no longer wish to receive the annual Inspire Magazine please let us know and we will remove you from our mailing list. We can be contacted by emailing

info@scriptureunion.ie or by writing to us at:

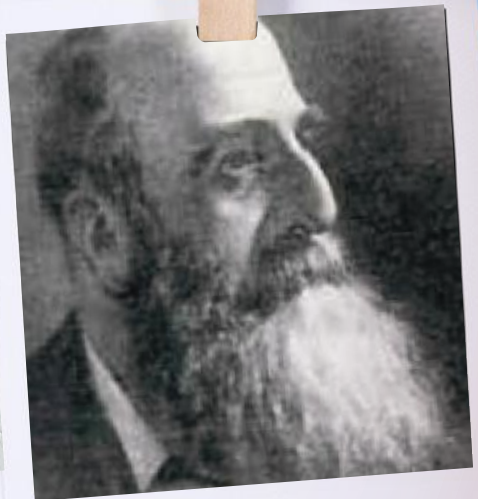
Unit 4, Idea House, Killarney Road Business Park, Killarney Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow



Herbert & Kingsley



150 in the sand
CSSM Greystones 2017



Josiah Spiers

Your word is a lamp
for my feet, a light on my path

Psalm 119 v 105

www.scriptureunion.ie