

Store St Centre

The English Classes at the Centre continues four mornings a week. Sr Monica Kelly and Sr Lucia So are the backbone of this outreach. There is a strong commitment to the classes by the volunteer teachers and a steady flow of students from countries like Lithuania, Latvia, China, Poland, Albania, Afghanistan, Kurdistan, Iraq, and this term there was even a student from North Korea. It is a very life giving experience - sharing stories, hearing their situations as well as trying to explain the finer points of grammar!

We've learned from students that this is not just a place to learn - it is a welcoming and supportive place in a strange city.

There is a plan to start an afternoon class for the intermediate group next term and we have linked up with the local Community Welcome Café in Smithfield which offers a welcoming space for new arrivals to the city.

Through our connection to the Interfaith Forum we are linked to a wide variety of events and meetings and the many migrants and asylum seekers that come through our door see evidence of interfaith integration and diversity. Representatives of the faith communities visit the Centre and share in hospitality. We are connected to the Lantern Intercultural Centre on the south side of the city and join regularly in their International Woman's Day and other celebrations .



Interfaith

Our presence in the heart of the city has allowed us to engage in Interfaith work in a much more dynamic way. Columban support for and interest in this work has already contributed to the strengthening and impact of the work of the Dublin City Interfaith Forum (DCIF). The DCIF brings together people from seven major world faiths, and from groups within those communities. There are a variety of Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Baha'i, and Jewish representatives on the forum, including the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Michael Jackson. Michael O'Sullivan is the chair of the Dublin City



Interfaith Forum

The forum works at a number of different levels. It runs a regular programme called Faith in the City, which invites people to a particular place of worship in order to learn about a particular faith community and experience their hospitality. Recent events have included a visit to a Sunni Mosque, a Sikh Gudwara, an Indian Orthodox Church, a Sufi Mosque, and a Buddhist temple.

These events help to build understanding between members of the forum, but also bring members of the wider community into the place of worship to meet their new neighbours and dispel some of the misconceptions many of the host community may have.

The Forum also hosts other public events including recent seminar celebrating Irish links with India and Hinduism, an academic seminars in association with TCD on Religion and Violence, and Religion and Education and a full day seminar on Curriculum and Interfaith was also held in 'Mary Immaculate College' in Limerick in collaboration with DCIF and the Chester Beatty Museum.

The Forum has established good links with a range of public services including the HSE (health) and the Gardai (policing and safety). With the HSE the Forum is developing new best practice for sensitivity to patients religious needs, and with chaplains about developing interfaith chaplaincies. This is also being done with chaplains at 3rd level institutions.

The Forum recently helped a local Catholic parish, St Michael's in Inchicore, to put on a significant interfaith commemoration service for the national 1916 celebrations and it was a big success. Both Archbishops of Dublin attended, as did the British Ambassador. There was participation by all seven faith communities. It suggests a model that we here in the Columban Centre might develop for other parishes.

**Ecology
Creation Time**

We continue to promote Eco Congregation's Creation Time which offers opportunities and activities for a parish to engage in and to foster care of the earth and creation. Claire Carey worked with the parish of Cabra West over the past 6/7 years so we were delighted last year that they received the Eco Congregation Award this year.

We will be working with the Parish Council in Ballymun to introduce Creation Time to their parish this September.



Advocacy

Working with other Networks and Agencies

Our advocacy work is focused at the local and national.

By participating in the Public Participation Network in County Meath we are taking the opportunity to help influence and guide the development of public policy in the creation of the Local Government Development Plan. The Meath Environmental Network Board is another group we have representation on.

As part of the network a Natural History Field Club was founded. This organises 8 field trips around the county each year and we have held 2 of them in Dalgan so far. Meetings and seminars are also held in Dalgan.

As a Board member of Crann, the national tree organisation, Ger Clarke has contributed articles to its magazine on Eco issues. Crann also inform and influence Government policy through their presence on the IEN (the Irish Environmental Network) an agency that is part of the formal Government structure to develop environmental policy.



Education

We continue our longstanding engagement with many schools in the Meath area. In recent years our most frequent visitors to Dalgan are from primary schools , and Ger keeps up contact by visiting schools and doing further work there with teachers.

A key element in this work is the two in-service courses provided by Ger Clarke in Dalgan for Primary School teachers, with 25 teachers on each course. These courses last a week and as well as imparting skills, teachers get the opportunity to learn more about the Columban world and ethos and are encouraged to deepen the contacts with us.



New Resource on Extractive Industries

We work in collaboration with members of other congregations on issues of ecology and justice. This year the group produced a resource on the justice and ecological issues related to the global mining industry called "Digging at our Conscience".

This 'Mining Toolkit', through a series of 12 case studies, is designed to provide information about the impact of mining on local communities worldwide. It also serves to challenge us to take responsibility for what we buy!



Dalغان Walks

Thousands of people visit Dalغان every year to use the walks.

On one section we place short reflections on issues relating to justice and ecology as well as reflecting the different liturgical seasons.

They have proved to be very popular with visitors.



Pilgrimage

The invitation of Pope Francis in the year of Mercy to open doors has moved us to look at the development a "Seven Step Pilgrim Walk" around the Dublin inner city. This pilgrim walk takes in sites in the inner city such as the Famine Monument, Drug Memorial, Monaghan/Dublin Bombings Monument and other centres in the locality.

We are exploring opportunities offered by social media. An example has been the Lenten reflections on a daily basis that invited people to walk through the days of Lent as part of their pilgrim journey through life.

As part of the promotion of Columban pilgrimage we have organised "In the Footsteps of Saint Columban" from Ireland to continental Europe. We have also got involved with the Australian/New Zealand Region in planning their pilgrimages.

In Ireland in order to get the Columban Way (Turas Columbanus) up and running, we have been involved in organizing pilgrim walks both in the North and South of Ireland. The most recent was the Pilgrim Walk from "Nine Stones" in Mt. Leinster to Myshall, Co. Carlow on 23rd April.



Returned Lay Missionaries

The Centre in Dublin continues to be a place of contact and welcome to returned Columban Lay Missionaries who often drop in when in the city or visiting Dublin.

Recently the Centre has been the venue for the newly formed Returned Lay Missionary Union, a group for lay missionaries from a wide variety of organizations with a coordinator under the IMU/CORI umbrella.

Angie Escarsa is a core member of this new group and she keeps us informed of meetings and events. The group are very pleased to have a city centre location for their meetings.



