

Please Pray

That God would draw suitable people to fill the vacancies that have emerged in our staff teams over the past few months.

That the return to post-COVID activities would be able to be sustained.

For camp & mission organisations who are trying to pick up after the absence of normal events over the past two summers.

Those in our staff teams coping with bereavement, illness and hospitalisation, as well as the many challenges that exist behind every front door.

Churches who are passionately following the Great Commission in constantly changing environments.

Give Thanks

For a useful meeting with the DAERA Minister in NI regarding the Castle lease.

That the list of groups returning to our centres over coming months is growing daily.

The generosity of God, manifest through supporters, has sustained our ministry through the leanness of the past 18 months.

Jesus is Risen!

Intersection Ahead!

A few months ago, one of my managers sent me a book. It was written by Dr Dan Bolin, a man with a lifetime of experience in Christian camp centres.

The opening quote alone, was worth the price of the book (had I had to pay for it!).

“Retreats, camps, conferences, and adventure experiences are the places where the people of God, the love of God, the truth of God, and the grace of God intersect. And at that convergence—within the beauty of God’s majestic creation—lives are changed forever and ever.”

Christian Residential Centres are not a new concept. But they are beginning to be discovered by a new church. Someone has said that Covid didn’t destroy the church, it revealed it!

Some churches are struggling to recover the attendances they experienced before the pandemic, others are finding themselves in new ministries and encountering new people. And some are realising the key part that a residential experience can play in both recovery and new engagements.



So, why a Centre? Whether we like it or not, our fellowships have hierarchies of belonging, and associated cliques. Often it can be as simple as how long someone has been involved, and it can be associated with our buildings and facilities.

Taking a group away from the (over) familiar can level the playing field and enable the newer folk to engage on an equal footing.

Additionally, many church buildings are found in populous areas. The associated light pollution has masked the glory of God in creation. Getting away to a place where a clear view of lakes and trees and stars combine to amplify the Still Small Voice lifts the soul to heaven.

Okay, but why Residential? After 25 years of leading camps, and another 9 leading a group of residential centres,

my view hasn’t changed. The most effective teaching follow-up, the most profitable conversations, the most open hearts, have been those found late at night sitting around a camp-fire or a cup of coffee.

It’s not that the preaching and the praise and the Bible study isn’t vital, but rather that the time spent without an agenda, is the time that most benefit is gained from these instruments of worship.

Well, why Christian then? Put simply, it’s the sporting equivalent of playing at home! You’re surrounded by folk who want you to win. We’ve been looking forward to your coming, and asking all our supporters to pray for you in your ministry. This could be the most important experience of your church year—why would you choose to engage on opposition territory?

“Centre Ministries advances the Biblical Christian faith by providing good quality, cost-effective and flexible residential centres to enable Christian mission and growth.”

(Aims & Objectives Statement)

For us, it’s not about a purchase, it’s about a partnership.

Changing of the Guard at The Castle

Castlewellan Castle has been at the heart of Christian residential in Northern Ireland for almost 50 years. It is known throughout the Province as simply, The Castle.

Almost as widely known and synonymous with residential work is the couple who have been at the helm in Castlewellan for more than half the time of our ministry there.

Andrew & Lorna Forson have decided that now is the right time to move on from managing the Castle, and they plan to leave towards the end of this summer.

There will be further opportunity to recognise their service for God in this place, but for now I simply record my thanks for the work they have carried out over the past 28 years.

As we look to the future, we are cognisant of the many changes that have taken place since Andrew & Lorna’s appointment, and we will take this opportunity to review the structure and management model. As we do this, we would covet your prayers and your promotion of the resultant vacancies.

Please join us in praying for Andrew & Lorna and their family as they embark on the next chapter of God’s plan for their lives.

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www.quinta.org

www.cloverleyhall.org

www.castlewellancastle.org

space to grow

The Proof of the Pudding

It's all very well my writing how we want to partner with visiting groups and make their stay and ministry as effective as possible. What do real guests think?

Recently Cloverley Hall hosted a church family group from north of Liverpool. This is what one of the guests wrote in a follow-up e-mail:

'To all staff at your beautiful hall I would just like to say a massive thank you for a most fabulous weekend. Trying to think what stood out but impossible to pin point any particular moment....it was all just amazing. From the welcome at the beginning to the farewell at the end....and all the bits in between. Gotta say the standard of food was fab. Well prepared, well served, dietary requirements observed, lovely and hot (oh that was a blessing) ALWAYS served with a smile and for me the best bit....the roast dinner!!!. Can't tell you how often I've seen roast on

the menu and my 'veggie' alternative was a broccoli bake! Us veggies like roasts as well and you got it spot on. Nobody asked me what have you got???' as my plate was no different from everyone else's...wonderful. We as a church community came together as one last weekend and you have all helped that to happen. We will go on now, renewed and refreshed in the Holy Spirit to encourage others. And hope the next time we enjoy your hospitality, we will bring even more Christ Church members. So....watch this space.'



The vicar from the church wrote separately to say that the weekend was just what the church needed; the congregation returned home enthusiastic and renewed.

I pray that your church is flourishing again following Covid. If it's not, what's the plan? Let us help you - contact one of our Centre managers and ask their advice on how to organise a weekend.

The Emerging Church

There's a bit of a theme going on in this newsletter. We keep pointing to how some churches are emerging from the pandemic. This isn't supposed to be a discouragement to those who are finding things more difficult.

There is no 'one size fits all' in ministry. But there is a 'one spirit fills all' and we each have the potential to live and love and shine wherever God has placed us. I want to encourage those still in the early stage of the journey out of lockdown to press on. Don't wait for everyone to wake up before you go to war - the noise of battle will rouse the slumberers.

We have felt the pain of faithful folk over the past two years who have been unable to hold their camps, weekends and training events. We share their concern for the generation of young people who have missed out on a stage of life and spiritual development. We have witnessed the cancellation of plans and arrangements and the disappointment amongst those who worked hard to assemble them.

There is a time for weeping and a time for joy. In recent weeks and months, we have rejoiced with those who have reassembled or reimagined plans, events and ministries,

and are excitedly looking forward to a summer of activity to glorify God.

A particular joy has been the number of new groups contacting our Centres over this period. Across our three Centres, we have taken bookings from over 70 groups who have never stayed with us before.

Groups are smaller and, whilst larger groups and maximised occupancy helps our viability, we want to encourage groups to try and get away even if you feel that confidence hasn't fully returned. We have found that many groups have seen their numbers rise as their date approaches - the noise of battle...

*"So Spirit come put strength in every stride
Give grace for every hurdle
That we may run with faith to win the prize
Of a servant good and faithful
As saints of old still line the way
Retelling triumphs of His grace
We hear their calls and hunger for the day
When with Christ we stand in glory"*

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"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."