

Keeping the main thing the main thing



Sharon Heron

Deaconess serving in International Meeting Point (IMP)

I don't think Carnfunnock Country Park knew what had hit it when three coaches with 170 people arrived with families from all around the world. This was our English class outing, something that was very special for all the families as most of them live within the confines of one hotel room. For many, this was the first time they had left Belfast since they arrived here. The glee was felt by all and we experienced the excitement in the centre for the days leading up to the outing.

The most beautiful memory I have from the day was when the bus came down towards the sea, a little Ethiopian boy, with bulging eyes, said to his friend from Namibia, "Look, it's the ocean!" His little Muslim friend asked, "Who made that?" The boy said, "God made the ocean". I could feel the tears of joy running down my face and I was reminded very clearly of the tremendous privilege and opportunity we have to share more of God with people from all over the world with different faiths and cultural backgrounds.

After the families had finished 300 halal burgers, crisps and drinks, many of the young families headed down towards the beach to swim in the 'ocean'. Although the water was freezing at the end of May it was still a wonderful experience for our friends. There was a great buzz in the centre after the outing with many so grateful for another happy memory made for many families as they adjust to life in Belfast.

Our goal in IMP is to share the good news about Jesus. Keith Preston (Irish mission worker at IMP) always reminds us to "Keep the main thing the main thing". Day after day, as we beaver away in the background, helping people practically, giving support, filling out forms, providing food, teaching English, sharing in Bible

studies, we look for the nuggets of opportunity to share the good news of Jesus and the salvation that he offers.

Northern Ireland is seeing asylum seekers arrive every day, with over 1,500 presently staying in hotels in Belfast. We are thankful

to see many more churches getting involved in trying to help those who are fleeing wars in many countries like Ukraine, Sudan, Eritrea etc. The need is huge and we are so grateful for the many volunteers who work alongside us from different

church backgrounds. We could not do it without them.

There are many painful stories of trauma, death, abuse and torture. People arrive and we try to navigate through the mess and turmoil that they have experienced to help practically, provide a safe place, a warm welcoming home and through it all to share Jesus. We value your prayer support so much and cry out to God on their behalf that their wounds will be healed and their hearts drawn to God.

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from Namibia, "Look, it's the ocean!" His little
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Please pray:

- For wisdom and discernment as we navigate the challenging and painful circumstances of people's lives.
- For new converts – that they will grow and mature and we can continue to disciple them through teaching more of God's Word and get families settled into churches where they will grow.
- Thank God for these amazing opportunities, where we have seen God at work in miraculous ways.
- Thank God for the strength he has given us to be involved in his mission and for his incredible provision.