

John McCandless, Community Outreach Worker

Report – October-November 2015

Mountpottinger, Mersey Street, Movilla... & Mzuzu

Holiday Bible clubs and summer schemes are fun no matter where you are – whether you're in east Belfast or Rathcoole, Ards or Malawi. Well, that's exactly the summer work I enjoyed this year! It started early July in Mzuzu and Livingstonia, Malawi; dozens of kids in the suburbs and on the dusty roads enjoyed fun, games, worksheets and a Bible time, with children so eager to take part that they swamped our small work party. Other work at hospitals and prayer houses was also done, with support from individuals and congregations too numerous to mention here. *Taonga Chemane* (thank you so much everyone).

Returning to Mountpottinger and Mersey Street, we looked forward to a visiting team from the USA, namely Teen Mission International. The team of 19, teenagers and leaders, were hosted at Mountpottinger for almost four weeks. We also had three of our own teenagers involved for that period, Edward, Zara and Corey. What a time we had of fellowship and outings! We presented four holiday clubs with 'Heroes of the Bible', and a summer scheme at Mountpottinger and Mersey Street Presbyterian churches, Rathcoole City Mission and Island Street City Mission.

In the short time we had to prepare together, one would have thought we had been working together for some time. Karis Baker, our family and school worker, puts so much preparation into these events year after year. The team and us ate together, laughed and cried together, and learned from each other. Our loving God bonded us together through His Spirit as we presented His love in a different way to kids and young people. I once heard the expression from a Bible teacher of mine, "Live so as to be missed." Since the team has returned to USA, we have missed each other's ministry together.

On to Movilla Church in Newtownards, where I have been part of the team for five years now. 'All messed up' was the theme, looking and learning from characters of the Bible whose lives were messed up by their own choices and how God came searching to deal with the mess they were in. It was such fun watching the young leaders get the kids actually 'all messed up' in the challenges. As with the others, I learned so much from the young leaders who we have watched develop and use their own talent and leadership.

Behind each of these opportunities are the people who put in so much work, that it's unbelievable, and without them it would never be the success that it is. We thank everyone for their time, enthusiasm, catering, laundry and loan of equipment. But also for their heartfelt love for people and burden to share the Gospel!

I look forward to the winter's work starting again, as I wait to see what treats our God has in store for us.