

# St Oliver Plunkett Parish gears up for a busy Christmas

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**GIVING BACK:** Fr Aidan Brankin is joined by Cathy Megahey, Winnie Dougherty and Deirdre Doherty to launch the parish Christmas appeals

SAINT Oliver Plunkett Parish in Lenadoon is gearing up for a busy Christmas of helping others with the launch of a number of festive appeals.

Trócaire's Gifts of Love campaign is currently running at the church, where parishioners can purchase a much-needed gift for someone in the developing world, from the parish office from now until Christmas. The gifts will also be on sale in the parish hall over two weekends, before and after Masses on Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 November and also Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 December.

Thanking the parish for their involvement in the appeal, Mark McMahon, Fundraising and Engagement Officer at Trócaire said: "On behalf of Trócaire, I would like to thank everyone in St Oliver Plunkett's Parish for their continued and very generous support of our work which is helping to make a difference to the lives of the world's poorest people.

"Our range of 21 Gifts of Love are another great way to support those communities. They are ethical and sustainable and make a great Christmas gift for any family member or friend that also make a real difference to help relieve poverty and fight injustice around the world."

Discussing the range of appeals that the parish are involved in this Christmas, Parish Priest Father Aidan Brankin said that it is a great opportunity for people in the parish to help others.

"Last year the church was closed most of the time with Covid," he said. "We would normally have over £11,000 going to the appeals. Last year it was down to around £8,500 but I expect it to be way up this year.

"We have the shoe box appeal which touched many people's hearts. We have had over 130 shoe boxes in already.

"Our generation, when it came to Christmas you didn't get very much. We might have got an item of clothing, a wee toy, an annual to read, a couple of bits of fruit

and maybe a toothbrush.

“We thought it was great as it was stuff that we needed and it is exactly the same small practical things going into these shoe boxes. They contain an item of clothing, a toy and even practical things such as soap which we take for granted.”

The shoe boxes will be distributed in Africa and Fr Brankin added that a video of last year’s boxes being distributed would have brought a tear to your eye.

Closer to home, the parish will be distributing hampers to local families in need.

“The hampers will go to the families that need it and especially this year. This year people are struggling even more but it is lovely how people in the parish are always thinking of others.

“I think it is because they have been through tough times themselves and they know what it is to need, they know what it is like to struggle,” Fr Brankin added.

This weekend the parish will also host a Christmas Fayre before and after Mass on Saturday and Sunday.

Reflecting on this, Fr Brankin said it will help families who are struggling.

“We get a lot of appeals from people, not just through St Vincent de Paul, but directly from people who are struggling. Sometimes the people who don’t ask are the ones who are really in need and you get far more joy helping and supporting those families who have very little.

“We will have plenty of stuff available at the fayre. There will be a raffle, hampers and gifts with the money going to help those most in need over the winter.”