

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Elvis with a testimony in music

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Elvis with a testimony in music

St. Canice's Church in Eglinton is presenting an event with a difference, next Sunday – not a service, not a concert, but a unique experience of the Christian message through the songs of Elvis Presley.

The event is a follow-up to a similar evening seven years ago which attracted people from right across the province. Asked where the idea came from, the Rector of St Canice's, Rev'd Canon Paul Hoey, said, "I heard Elvis tribute singer, Andy Rodgers from Coleraine, singing at a concert. As I listened, it began to dawn on me how many of the songs related to the message of the church.

“This event won’t be a service, nor will it be a concert; it will be a unique celebration of what’s at the core of the church and its message, but presented in a totally different way, with live music from Andy Rodgers, video clips and audience participation. We hope that it will attract Elvis devotees, but also others who are just curious to see how songs that are not normally sung in a church setting still have a lot to say about the message of Christianity today.”

Elvis was known for singing some gospel greats, such as ‘Peace in the Valley’, ‘If I Can Dream’ and ‘Swing Low, Sweet Chariot’, but there will also be focus on the message of his more ‘secular’ songs – many of which have a spiritual message in their own right.

Canon Hoey acknowledged that there might well be people who saw this kind of music as inappropriate for performance in a church. “There were people who objected to Jesus bringing the gospel into the market-place,” he said. “But there is a long tradition of the church using popular music to convey its message. Besides, it’s the same God who inspired the music of Elvis as he did the hymns we sing. It all gives glory to him.

“We won’t mind if anyone turns up wearing their Elvis gear,” adds Canon Paul. “I’m genuinely excited by the opportunity to welcome anyone who wants to come along.”

The ‘Elvis’ event takes place in St Canice’s Church of Ireland, Eglinton on Sunday 3 March at 7pm, and everyone is welcome. The cost of admission is a donation to the parish's Building Fund.

News

Three Diocesan Evangelists commissioned



Pictured right to left with Bishop David are Justin McMinn (The Gathering), Sarah Irwin (St John's Lurgan) and Paul Hawkins (Glen Community Church). The diocesan Warden of Evangelists, Capt George Newell, and Archdeacon Jim Cheshire who gave the address, complete the line-up.

Three new Diocesan Evangelists commissioned by Bishop David McClay of Down & Dromore on Sunday evening 25 February.

The commissioning took place in the shadow of Belfast's famous Harland and Wolf cranes at The Gathering in St Martin's Church.

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Pictured right to left with Bishop David are Justin McMinn (The Gathering), Sarah Irwin (St John's Lurgan) and Paul Hawkins (Glen Community Church). The diocesan Warden of Evangelists, Capt George Newell, and Archdeacon Jim Cheshire who gave the address, complete the line-up.

The church was full for the service.

The newly commissioned evangelists have successfully completed the two-year Evangelism Training Course which is facilitated by New Wine Ireland in partnership with Down and Dromore Diocese.

Many of those trained go on to take up paid roles as evangelists, church planters and outreach workers. Sarah Irwin is the Family Outreach Worker with St John's whilst Paul Hawkins works with one of the first church plants, Glen Community Church. Justin is a volunteer evangelist with his home church, The Gathering.

Two more Diocesan Evangelists will be commissioned later in the year and six are about to begin the 2024–25 course.

St Patrick's Dublin oral history project

Over the last year, the Cathedral has been running an oral history project in conjunction with Deirdre Nuttall.

The aim of this has been to capture personal stories about people's involvement with the Cathedral, whether they are a



recent addition to the Cathedral Community or one that's been here for somewhat longer!

The project takes the form of an informal meeting with Deirdre, a professional historian, who records a conversation with you which is subsequently placed into the UCD National Folklore Archive.

If you are interested in getting involved in this exciting opportunity, please contact Clark Brydon (Education & Safeguarding Officer) at [education@stpatrickscathedral.ie]

Make a Gift of Dignity for Mothers Day

"Now I am a deacon in my church," declares Theodora*, an agent of change in Papua New Guinea.



In communities where women's voices are often silenced, Theodora is championing the rights of mothers and women alike.

By empowering women to take leadership roles, Theodora witnessed a ripple effect of positive change.

Together, they addressed issues like alcoholism and domestic violence, paving the way for a future where everyone thrives.

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Your gift of dignity could amplify Theodora's mission, empowering more women to break barriers and create lasting change.

Make a Mother's Day Gift of Dignity today.



Go to

<https://mueshop.org/collections/make-a-mothers-day-2024>

Cloughfern MU support for Antrim hospital

Cloughfern Parish Mother's Union recently made up 44 toiletry bags, along with some snugglies made by their very talented



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member Edith and a beautiful baby hat made by Jennifer. These items are being presented to Antrim Hospital.

Prayer point - Keith Scott

Pray for Rev Keith Scott as he travels out to Burundi to teach and supervise



students at Bujumbura Christian University in March for 6 weeks. Pray for the students to engage well and understand Keith's limited French and for Lyn as she remains in N. Ireland. Pray also for CMSI.

Bishop's tribute to Mr Philip Gray, former Headmaster of Kilkenny College

“The news of the death of Mr Philip Gray, former Headmaster of Kilkenny College, will be met with great sadness by many people across the Diocese’, the Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory stated on the death of Mr Philip Gray, former Headmaster of Kilkenny College

“Philip had a long and distinguished career as a history teacher in King's Hospital before his appointment to



Kilkenny College in 2005. Unfortunately, a serious cycling accident in 2008 resulted in his resignation as Headmaster on health grounds.

“The school will be paying its own tribute; however I take this opportunity as Bishop, on behalf of the Diocese, to extend our very sincere sympathy to his wife Sandra, who has cared for him so devotedly

since his accident and to their children Glen, Stephen and Laura at this sad time”.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Belfast Cathedral Services and Music March 2024

“We hope that you can join us as we continue our journey through this penitential season, approaching Holy Week and the Feast of the Resurrection”.

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The March Services and Music List is now available.

<https://www.belfastcathedral.org/music/music-list>

Portstewart St Patrick's Table Quiz

On Saturday 16th March, a St Patrick's Table Quiz will be hosted in Portstewart Presbyterian Church Hall, starting at 6.30 pm until 9 pm



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2024

FRIDAY 1 MARCH

A SERVICE FOR EVERYONE!

I beg you, bear with one another in love

ST JOHN'S CHURCH OF IRELAND

DOAGH ROAD, BALLYCLARE

7.30pm

INFORMED PRAYER, PRAYERFUL ACTION

24-7 365 Days a year Prayer movement Ecumenical International Women-led

wwdp.org.uk

Registered Charity Number 233242

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Teams must consist of both adults and Children, a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 8. Food will be served during the evening, Irish Stew and Apple Pie come along for a fun-filled night, and book a team play-along, if you would like to go but not be in a team you can help out throughout the night.

BBC Choral Evensong move

BBC Choral Evensong moves an hour earlier to 3pm from April.

It's buried in a rather long web site article. At least it survives!

School fundraising tours of Coopershill House

Coopershill House is a fabulous privately-owned Georgian mansion near the village of Riverstown, Co. Sligo. It was built in 1774 and this year it is marking its 250th anniversary.

On 18th March (Bank Holiday Monday) tours will run on the hour from 10:00 am with the last tour starting at 3:00 pm.

Price:

€14 over 18 yrs. €8 under 18yrs

The price includes:

A guided tour of the house

Tea/coffee & biscuits

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Self-guided walk through the woods to see the fallow deer

All money raised will go towards a new play area at Taunagh National School in Riverstown.

Limited spaces. Reservation required by email: ohara@coopershill.com

In the media

Belfast Telegraph - New study showcases the good within NI Christianity... but does not get to the heart of the matter

Positive work highlighted in report...but shadow hangs over the priorities of the church, Gareth Hanna writes.

For anybody who has experience of evangelical churches in Northern Ireland, the new study from the Evangelical Alliance will paint a very familiar picture.

It explained how Christians who claim the 'evangelical' tag are fervent in their prayer life, their church attendance and their Bible reading.

Their beliefs around abortion and the freedom of churches to dissent from conducting same-sex marriages differ from those of the general public, again unsurprisingly.

However, there were some aspects of the research that may have proved more eyebrow raising to anyone whose sole experience of evangelical Christians comes through media reports of associated controversies, not least those surrounding Green Pastures founder Jeff Wright or ex-Causeway Coast Vineyard pastor Alan Scott.

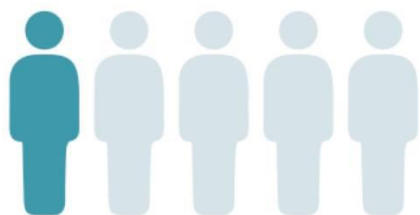
There is evidence from within the research of just how many good, kind people there are pulling up a pew (or more likely a soft chair) at evangelical churches in Northern Ireland.

As many as 81% of evangelicals believe that asylum seekers, refugees and other newcomers should be supported in practical ways and made to feel welcome in our communities, as opposed to only 56% of the wider population.

Most evangelicals give financially to developmental or humanitarian projects at least every month (60%) and are more than twice as likely as the general population to volunteer within community-based activities (55%). In line with that, two thirds of evangelical churches are involved in activities such as food banks or homeless support.

There is an undoubted selflessness in the words of Jesus and that is coming through within our churches — it just doesn't make it to the headlines.

That is all highly familiar to me, having been a part of evangelical Christianity in Northern Ireland for almost 20 years.



21%

of the general population say they
are evangelical Christians.

Some of the kindest people I know are planted firmly within the structures of these churches, people who have taught me an abundance in selflessness and in setting life-giving personal priorities around community over economy. There was one final statistic within the 'Good news people' document, though, that caught my eye, tucked away from the headline-grabbing statistics without so much as bold print included to draw anyone's attention.

It was an assertion surrounding ex-vangelicals — people like myself who no longer claim the 'evangelical' tag, having been put off by all manner of things not entirely explored in the document but including doctrines on same-sex marriage, abortion and the afterlife.



50%

of the general population say they
are practising Christians.

The ex-vangelicals surveyed were 11 times more likely than 'classic evangelicals' to believe the priority of the church should be to demonstrate the gospel through actions, whereas 95% of 'classic evangelicals' believe the priority of the church should be to both preach and demonstrate the gospel.

That spoke very loudly to me of the layer of toxicity I felt within the church.

From that experience, I would suggest a large portion of that 95% equate the all-importance of the gospel with the need to see souls saved from eternal torment.

The host of my favourite podcast (Nomad podcast) tells a story of being invited to an event at a church which he would become a member of as a result of the friendships forged.



It was only at a later planning meeting that he realised he had been the unwitting subject of 'outreach' and many of those friendships were motivated primarily by a need for him to be 'saved'.

Feeling deceived, he never went back.

Speaking for myself, much of the volunteering and giving I undertook within the evangelical environment was motivated

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at least in part by a fear for my own eternal destination, and that of others.

I found it an extremely unhealthy way to live, stripping me of an ability to do good for goodness' sake, instead secretly motivated by a hope for conversion.

Perhaps therein lies the gap between the 50% who profess to be a Christian, and the 23% who regularly attend church services.

Christianity gives so much to Northern Irish society, but there is a growing number who — having ditched what we experienced to be toxic aspects of theology — are ready to do church differently, with no underlying agenda.

Church Times - Plan to rein in PCC ‘table-thumpers’ passes first stage at C of E synod

Members of parochial church councils (PCCs) who persistently misbehave could be removed from their positions if a code of conduct requested by the diocese of Chelmsford is put in place, Pat Ashworth writes, February 24.

A motion asking the Archbishops' Council to consider implementing such a code received overwhelming backing by the General Synod on Saturday morning, despite a warning note from the secretary-general that it would be difficult to frame and hard to enforce (News, 9 February).

Synod members heard that an “imbalance of accountability” meant that PCC members currently face no significant consequences for aggressive behaviour, exemplified in a background paper as “slamming fists on tables and continually interrupting while others speak; or, outside meetings, emailing repeatedly — and when blocked on email, printing and delivering copies of a message.”

PCC meetings, the paper said, could become “psychologically unsafe environments for all participants, lay or ordained”. The Chelmsford motion before the Synod came from two churchwardens who found themselves powerless to remove a PCC member “whose behaviour repeatedly fell far short of acceptable standards”.

The imperative to forgiveness can sometimes normalise bad behaviour, the paper said. “We may hold to an ideal that we forgive seventy-seven times, but Matthew 18 also suggests there is a precedent for a church effectively removing people from fellowship. . .

“Collective decision-making does not work in an environment where one individual consistently dominates the discussion or threatens consequences if their preferred outcome is voted down.”

This was “not about a one-off loss of temper, one parish individual, one clash of personalities,” said Dr Sara Batts-Neale (Chelmsford), who moved the motion. “Sometimes when things go wrong, they go wrong badly. . . Too many people are getting hurt; good people are leaving the Church.” Harassers shared meeting space with those they

were harassing. The motion was intended to “encourage healthy cultures,” she said.

Advertisement


Fiona MacMillan (London) was concerned for those who, like herself, were neuro-divergent, whose manner of communication might be open to misinterpretation: a recent study had found that 91 per cent of people with autism had been accused of being aggressive or bullying.

And Prudence Dailey (Oxford) reflected: “It isn’t always clear who is the bully. . . We need to be mindful that whatever bar we might put in place is no lower than the equivalent bar for clergy.”

Adrian Greenwood (Southwark) sought unsuccessfully to amend the motion by putting the onus on individual PCCs to set standards of behaviour and discipline for their members. “Do we really need to ask the Archbishops’ Council for a review when we know what the problem is?”

Clive Scowen (London) also sought unsuccessfully to amend the motion by removing the call for a disciplinary process: “To make it legally binding and enforceable is a weapon for disaster,” he suggested. “At PCC level, where is the expertise to come from? How will fairness be achieved? Let’s not create a mechanism for enforcement which will make things ten times worse in an already divided PCC.”



Sandra Turner (Chelmsford) was concerned about the inclusion of lay volunteers in the code of conduct; it was hard enough already to find volunteers in rural parishes. She observed: “One person’s definition of poor behaviour is another person’s principled stand.”



A PRAYER FOR LENT

As the days lengthen and the earth spends longer in the light of day, grant that I may spend longer in the light of your presence, O Lord, and those seeds of your Word, which have been long-buried within me, grow, like everything around us, into love for you, and love for people; to become a visible declaration of your lordship in my life. Grant, Father, that this Lent there may be a springtime for my life in Christ.

Amen



The Ven. Pete Spiers (Liverpool) (speaking via Zoom) observed that some people had resorted to Zoom for PCC meetings as “a safer way to deal with disruptive behaviour”. Members who were behaving badly could be muted or transferred to the waiting room. Liverpool diocese already had a code of conduct in place which all PCCs had been asked to adopt, based on the Nolan Principles and others.

Richard Brown (Chelmsford) highlighted the many layers of governance already relating to PCCs, including the Church

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Representation Rules and the PCC Handbook. There were already many sample codes of conduct, he said.

In a vote by houses requested by Debbie Buggs (London), the motion was carried:

Bishops: 30-1, one abstention; Clergy: 128-23, four abstentions; Laity: 105-52, eight abstentions.

The motion, unamended, read:

That this Synod request that the Archbishops' Council carry out a review to consider:

the possibility of drawing up a Code of Conduct for PCC members and lay volunteers,

the issues required to put in place a disciplinary process for their removal from the PCC in cases where this is not followed,

the resources required at national, diocesan and parish level to bring this about.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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