

Church News Ireland



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Image of the day

Another 72 hr fast for Christian Aid

Retired C of I cleric, Canon Stuart Lloyd former Rector of Ballymena, will be doing his annual 72 hr fast in McNeills Broughshane on Thursday 22nd of May to the 24th.

It's all for Christian Aid and any donations will be gladly received.

Call down and see him and give him some encouragement.

News

Commissioning Service for office-holders in churches in Derry Rural Deanery

Just four days after its parish hall was broken into and ransacked – St Augustine's, Derry hosted a Commissioning Service for office-holders in churches in the Derry Rural Deanery.

The service was led by the Rector of 'the Wee Church on the Walls', Rev Nigel Cairns, who was assisted by senior clergy from six other local parishes. The Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster, preached the sermon at the service and led an Act of Dedication during which



Churchwardens, parish secretaries and treasurers, Glebewardens, Select Vestry Members, Safeguarding Trust Panel members and parish volunteers were commissioned to "assist in the servant mission of Christ".

Bishop Andrew said he wished to express solidarity with the parishioners of St Augustine's after what he called "the trauma of Wednesday evening". He also acknowledged the resilience they had shown in the wake of the break-in. "I know, first hand, the love that all of you have for this church, its buildings, its confines and the sense of violation in many ways that happened from the break-in. We were all very much with you in heart and in spirit during that time. During the Second World War, during the Blitz, Winston Churchill said the maxim of the British people is 'Business as usual' and I think that's what St Augustine's has shown us this week: it's business as usual, and they carry on in the good work of God in this parish, sharing the love of God through the many visitors to our Walled City. We want to stand alongside you in what has been an upsetting week but we're



very thankful all of you showed that spirit of 'business as usual', keeping on in the good work that you do."

The Bishop thanked those present for dedicating themselves to the service of God and his church, and said that ultimately officeholders like them were the backbone of the Church of Ireland. "You're the ones who aren't just about keeping the show on the road; you're the ones who're about seeing the work of the Church established, flourishing and growing, and I want to thank you for that."

The congregation heard some good news from the Bishop about the recent church census which, he said, showed a modest increase, last year, in the number of people attending church in the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe. "God is bringing new life to his Church," Bishop Andrew said. "I actually think there's a younger generation who're identifying the emptiness of the rampant secularism of their parents' generation. They're seeing that it just doesn't work, and

they're reaching out for reality and authenticity and relationship, and they're finding it in church.



The Bishop asked the men and women being commissioned on Sunday evening to help bring more people into church. "Can I encourage you, as office-bearers in your church, first of all to be there each week and to encourage others to be there, people who you feel have dropped off the radar a bit, or maybe are searching. Younger people - invite them along; don't be embarrassed to invite them along. Invite them along to something that matters, that counts, that's important. I think we've really got to do that to encourage church attendance."

Bishop Andrew emphasised the importance of worshipping "corporately", as the family of God. "There's no other organisation in the world that brings together the tiniest babies to the oldest people and says we're one family. I remember as a Rector in Dungannon we'd a baptism one Sunday. It was beautiful, I baptised this beautiful baby called

Henry and he was - what - a couple of months old? And also in the church that Sunday was a legendary figure in Dungannon called Bobby Mills who'd just celebrated his one hundredth birthday. There's no other organisation does that. There's nothing does that but the Church - [that](#) brings us together as family."

More than 11,000 people take part in consultations for next archbishop of Canterbury

More than 11,000 people have participated in the consultations for the next archbishop of Canterbury – carried out online, by mail and in person between February and March this year.

The public consultation was a unique opportunity to influence the future of leadership within the church, helping to discern the gifts, skills and qualities required in the 106th archbishop of Canterbury to meet the needs of the church today and in the years to come.

The themes that emerge through this consultation will sit alongside the "Statement of Needs" produced by the Diocese of Canterbury, as well as other information provided by the national church and Anglican Communion. This information will inform the Canterbury Crown Nominations Commission of the needs of the mission of the Church of England and the wider Anglican Communion.

Here are some of the consultations at a glance:

Secretaries' consultations – the archbishops' secretary for appointments and the Prime Minister's appointments secretary met with over 350 individuals during the consultation period, including representatives of other Christian traditions and non-Christian traditions, parliamentarians, leaders from public life, and those who minister, work and worship across the Church of England and the Anglican Communion.

Children and young people consultations – over 1,200 children and young people participated in consultations conducted by the National Society for Education and the appointments secretaries.

Online public consultations – the online consultation form received over 9,600 responses.

Written public consultations – over 160 pieces of written correspondence (e.g. emails and letters) were received.

Justin Welby says Pope Francis supported him at his 'lowest'

The former Archbishop said: "Francis was someone who made people want to know God – and God's love – as he did. He was not perfect, but he was passionate for God."

he former Archbishop of Canterbury has described Pope Francis as "mischievous, kind, and extraordinarily empathetic", saying he supported him at his "lowest".

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Writing for Anglican Ink, Justin Welby described Francis as a "man who was above all, a pastor".

Recalling the time he first met Francis, he describes a humble, warm man, who operated in contrast to the grandeur and gravity of the Vatican's architecture.

"I had never met a pope before and was on edge," said Welby. "The Vatican is designed to overwhelm visitors with power... It is surreal."



"I am senior to you' [Francis](#) says, with a level look," Welby recalled. "I feel a sense of disappointment: I did not think he was like that. 'Indeed you are, Your Holiness...' I begin. He interrupts, smiling, 'by three days'. He was inaugurated that much before me: in March, earlier that year."

"We both laugh and there are the beginnings of a friendship," remembered the former Archbishop.

Welby said: "It always seemed to be sunny when we met."

He described sitting at Francis' side, at a gathering in Sudan, where Francis was unashamed to call for peace in front of the country's government. The pope emphasised the damage of war and trauma of rape experienced by many in the country.

In 2019, Francis requested both rebel leaders and South Sudanese government leaders to attend a retreat at the Vatican.

Welby witnessed him kneeling at and kissing the feet of men who had waged violence, imploring them to make peace. He described a man of humbleness and simplicity, drawing on his own experience of heading up an international church body.

He went on: "As I found even in the small corner that is Anglicanism around the world, centuries of history and a global presence bring a complexity... It can be frustrating – I saw and heard his frustration. To the outside observer, little

may seem to change. It will be decades before we see whether the things Francis did bear fruit. The next pope may well be from Asia or Africa, with a deep conservatism on issues we consider in the UK to be so obvious they need no discussion.

"But they will also find that bending the attitudes of 1.2 billion Catholics to a single agenda is unthinkable. They come from every country on earth and speak every tongue under heaven. The pope is not the CEO of Rome Inc., but the Holy Father."

The final meeting of the two church figureheads came on the phone, shortly after Welby's resignation as Archbishop of Canterbury in November 2024.

"There was little warning, just a call and his voice," said Welby. "This was typical of the man who was, above all, a pastor."

The former Archbishop said: "Francis was someone who made people want to know God – and God's love – as he did. He was not perfect, but he was passionate for God. He was supremely relational – regardless of status – and he lived out his call for the shepherd to be close to the sheep.

"He saw those who sought, however poorly and fallibly, to follow Christ as brothers and sisters. Whether they were in prisons or palaces, slums or stadiums, made no difference."

Education

Dalriada student wins place at National Mathematics Summer School

Congratulations to Alex Bustard (Year 11) who was placed in the top 1.5% in the UKMT Intermediate Challenge, despite being a year younger than the majority of the 200,000+ participants!

This was a fabulous achievement resulting in Alex being invited to the prestigious National Mathematics Summer School in Woodhouse Grove School in Bradford.

Ballymena Academy DofE at Buckingham Palace

Congratulations to four of the school's DofE Gold Award participants James Gregg, Lydia Gregg, Natalie McCullagh and Ellen Thomson (all Year 14) who attended a Gold Award Holders' Celebration at Buckingham Palace on Friday 9th May hosted by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. Well done!



Rainey commemorates the 80th anniversary of VE Day

As we reflect on the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe following World War Two, let us take a moment to remember the contribution of past pupils and staff of the Rainey Endowed.

Over 100 former Rainey pupils served in the conflict. As conscription was not extended to Northern Ireland, it is even more remarkable that those who committed to the war were volunteers.

Thanks to information collated as part of the Rainey 300 publication, we can read about the contribution of many of the service men and women. They served in the RAF, Navy and Army, taking on many different roles. Some were stationed in Europe, some carried out missions in Germany, while others served as far afield as Nigeria, Libya and Singapore!

To focus on one serviceman, we can look to the great courage displayed by Richard McCullagh, Art Master at Rainey who was given special leave of absence to volunteer in the Royal Navy in June 1940. He was sent on many patrol missions of the English Channel. During one of these patrols, a Norwegian destroyer, Eskdale was struck by a torpedo. Ablaze and liable to blow up at any moment, with enemy craft still in the area, Lieut. McCullagh was dispatched to help with the rescue mission. In all approximately 100 men were rescued and as McCullagh

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and his crew pulled away from the Eskdale, an explosion blew the destroyer to pieces. For his courage McCullagh was awarded the Medal of St Olaf with oak leaf by King Haakon of Norway.

We are grateful that the majority of our former pupils survived the war, however, there were indeed some who paid the ultimate sacrifice. We remain grateful to them all. Without their courage and willingness to serve, we would not enjoy the freedoms we do today.

More information regarding Rainey service men and women can be found in the Rainey 300 publication as well as at the following website <https://www.magherafeltwardead.co.uk/instpage.asp?instid=7&sortid=2>

Clergy and ministry



Pathways to the future in Hannahstown

Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ of Connor and Down joined parishioners in St Joseph's Church, Hannahstown on Good Shepherd Sunday as he concelebrated Mass with Fr Patrick Devlin and commissioned the new Parish Pastoral Council.

“We thank the members of the Hannahstown Parish Pastoral Council for their service in this important ministry of service leadership and wish them well in their new role. Please keep them in your prayers”.

General Synod - Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue

The Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue is “a vine with many branches reaching out to be with, engage, promote, support, maintain, encourage and build up unity within the wider body of the Church”. So said the proposer of the Commission’s report, Canon Stephen Fielding, to General Synod (Friday May 9).

The report of CCUD outlines a wide range of inter–church and inter–faith relationships. It covers the activities of three working groups – covering Anglican and ecumenical affairs, European affairs, and inter–faith issues – and notes that the next meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council will be hosted by the Church of Ireland in 2026. The European Affairs Working Group plans to launch a new blog, providing a digest of material drawn from various sources and perspectives. The Inter Faith Working Group has continued to host an annual conference, with the next taking place in Dublin in May.

Canon Fielding spoke of his work as the Porvoo Contact Person for the Church of Ireland and a conference he attended in Sweden with the Archbishop of Dublin who chairs the **Porvoo Contact Group** at which Archdeacon Andrew Orr was a delegate and speaker. He thanked all who responded to the recent survey on past and current connections with the Porvoo Churches. The survey reported an interest in wishing to learn more about the Porvoo Communion.

Referring to Canon Dr Maurice Elliott's report from the Meissen Commission, he noted Dr Elliott's sentiment that the aspiration of the Meissen Agreement was towards full visible unity, the most significant challenge remained interchangeability of ministry. He said that the Porvoo Communion was actively seeking ways to enable transivity of ministry that will bring together other Anglican and Lutheran Churches.

He also noted the forthcoming Porvoo Communion meeting in Cardiff around the theme of 'Christology and Ecumenism – marking the 1,700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed'. The Nicene Creed, Canon Fielding said, was one of the statements that drew us together as a credal church.

Seconding the report, **Canon Katherine Poulton** (for the Revd Suzanne Cousins) said that the work of CCUD was largely unseen but was significant and often seminal. She urged members of Synod not to take ecumenical partnerships for granted in light of contemporary influential forces and voices in society which are contrary to Christ's

call and command to love and which are confusing and misleading for citizens, including church people.

She drew Synod's attention to the **Inter Faith Working Group** and the growing importance of interfaith matters, which she said were pertinent to us all. "Today it is quite apparent that our ability to engage comfortably and graciously with people of faiths other than the Christian faith is essential to our witness, work and citizenship, and for many of us, in our increasingly multicultural settings, interaction and engagement is an everyday affair. And so the Church's evolving work in the area of inter faith dialogue and relations is of increasing relevance and requires our careful attention," she stated.

Canon Poulton said that part of the working group's role was to assist the commission in providing a voice within the Church of Ireland for refugees and asylum seekers, a voice of mercy, grace and the compassion of our Lord Jesus himself towards displaced people, refugees, migrants and the marginalised.

She commended the '**Dialogue of Friendship**' conference run in conjunction with Sanctuary of Faith – the faith stream of Places of Sanctuary. This conference takes place on Saturday May 17 in Dundrum Methodist Church, Dublin under the title 'Listening Well to Build Communities'. Dr Ebun Joseph is a keynote speaker and Dr Lucy Michael of the Primate's Reference Group of Ethnic Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Justice will contribute.

Synod approved the membership of CCUD for the coming year as follows:

Ms Gina Copty, Very Rev Niall Sloane, Rev Canon Dr Daniel Nuzum, Rev Meurig Williams, Rev Suzanne Cousins, Ms Cate Turner, Rev Abigail Sines, Rev Canon Kevin O'Brien, Mr Femi Atoyebi, Dr Bridget Nicholls and Rev Dr Ryan Hawk.

Speaking to the report **Archbishop Michael Jackson** spoke of the work of the commission. He said that while 20 years ago there was a tension between missional and inter faith self-understanding, that gap was closing as it gave the opportunity to each to give an account of their faith. The Orthodox traditions have been rising in Ireland, he said. He also encouraged people to mark the anniversary of the Council and Creed of Nicea. "Members of the Orthodox churches in our midst can enhance this discussion," he said adding that dialogue was important in understanding and living. He encourage members to feel that the work of CCUD was something entirely of their locality, humanity and personal belief.

The **Revd Dr Karen Campbell** of the Irish Council of Churches drew members of Synod's attention to the IICM conference in November which focuses on the Council of Nicea. She urged people to support it. She said they were also running a conference entitled Called to Preach on June 17 to encourage female preachers.

George Woodman (Connor) spoke about the Interfaith Working Group and said he welcomed this activity but noticed that the focus was mostly on the Southern Province and there was little impression of anything being done in the Northern Province or jurisdiction. He said he was a member

of the Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum and would like to see it mentioned. He said he knew a lot of parishes were active on the ground and highlighted the Oxford Interfaith Walk that he took part in. After the riots in Belfast last summer which took on a religious tint, the bishops made excellent statements but he suggested that something was needed to bring senior clergy and other faith leaders together in a public event. He thanked the Archbishop of Dublin for what he said about the Council of Nicea.

The **Revd Rebecca Guilda** (Clogher) highlighted a trend that while the Church was warm to those of the established denominations, there was a suspicion of new denominations. They were seen as a threat rather than as other fellow Christians. She suggested that while the new denominations make us ask hard questions, they are nonetheless our Christian brothers and sisters.

Events

Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo

**This August,
we'll take
audiences
back to where
it all began in**



1950, with the British Army taking on the prestigious role of the Lead Service.

They'll be joined by acts from the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Canada, Germany, Poland, Ukraine and the United States of America.

Don't miss the action! Book your 'The Heroes Who Made Us' tickets now:

<https://bit.ly/3H22VpW>

Resources

Liturgy resources launched at General Synod

The Liturgical Advisory Committee launched new resources aimed at helping children to become more rooted in the life of their local church at General Synod.

'Journeys Through the Church Year' has been compiled by the Revd Julie Bell and is the product of a great deal of hard work by her and members of the LAC.

Introducing the resources, chair of the LAC **Archbishop Michael Jackson** said that from time to time the LAC heard the voice of the Church and sought to do something fresh and new. He said with 'Journeys Through the Church Year', the LAC had formulated a liturgical response to the Church year. "It was a complicated process but the **Revd Julie Bell**

had undertaken it and it enables families to find church in in these resources,” he said.

Ms Bell thanked the LAC for resourcing the project. The resources were given as an approach to worship which was inspired by children with whom she had shared much of her journey from choristers learning church music to children reading Gospel stories and asking questions about them.

“These resources are shared with the hope that they will open the spiritual insights children bring to our worship,” she stated. “The primary focus has been bringing children into worship and ways to grow in participation at their own pace.”

“The words shared here are designed to be cumulative, to be shared over time rather than all at once. So you will see in the seasonal services, the approach is to give children the opening lines of the text such as the Nicene Creed and grow into the full text later. At the heart of the resource is preparation for worship and there is a preparation session before every season,” she added stating that some seasonal activities linked with the worship on Sundays and Holy Days.

She hoped that the resource would provide sparking points for people to take the material and make it adaptable to their own contexts.

Dean Nigel Dunne, secretary to the LAC, spoke about the distribution of the resource which will be made available through diocesan synods over the coming months. The preparatory sessions will be available online, he said and the committee is still working on a home resource.

He paid tribute to Ms Bell and the **Revd Alan Rufli** for their work on the project.

“These resources are designed to help children become more rooted in the life of their local church. But it is also designed to take them on a journey that will make them more comfortable with the language of the Book of Common Prayer as they grow up,” he concluded.

In the media

Alf McCreary: The Catholic Church seems to have made a wise choice in Pope Leo XIV

<https://app.newsletter.co.uk/story/5122094/content.html>

Supreme Court ruling

Stormont’s education minister plans to publish school sports and toilets policy ahead of equality guidance

<https://app.newsletter.co.uk/story/5122626/content.html>

Sentenced for sexual offences committed against ten-year old pupils

https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/william-maher-sentenced-sexual-offences-31621255?utm_source=app

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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