



**Image of the day - Bridge builder award
for World Council of Churches**

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Front page photo - Religious leaders from several traditions at a symbolic bridge of hope in the interfaith prayer and memorial service in the Keizersgrachtkerk in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Sponsored by the WCC, the service was held on the first day of the 2018 International AIDS Conference. Photo: Paul Jeffrey/WCC

Reports

WCC honoured with Bridge Builder Award 2021

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is receiving a Bridge Builder Award for building bridges of understanding between people, nations, and communities at national and international levels. The award is presented by the Jury of the 14th August Committee Norway together with The Oslo Center.

The WCC will receive the award from the prime minister of Norway during a ceremony on 25 August together with His Excellency Dr Mohammad Bin Abdulkarim Al-issa of the World Muslim League and His Excellency Chief Rabbi Michael Melchior of the Religious Peace Initiative.

“The World Council of Churches is a powerful voice globally and a peacemaker and bridge builder between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, with vast respect for all the world's religions,” reads the award description from the Jury of the 14th August Committee Norway and The Oslo Center. “It is time to send a clear peace message to the world by working



Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, WCC acting general secretary and Dr Agnes Abuom, moderator of the World Council of Churches central committee at the Ecumenical centre in Geneva, Switzerland, June 2021. Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC

even closer together to extinguish conflict and violence while raising the values of respect, love, and tolerance for each other that are all rooted in the three monotheistic religions.”

Dr Agnes Abuom, moderator of the WCC central committee, said that the WCC is grateful for being honored for its efforts in an area that seems even more important in the face of the grave challenges facing today’s world. “We thank the 14th August Committee Norway and The Oslo Center for encouraging and recognizing all kinds of interreligious dialogue, from quiet conversations on a local level to global

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agreements sewn through years of deep conversations,” she said.

The award is both a great recognition of the work of the WCC and a great honor, said Abuom. "The symbolism of a bridge and its building is powerful,” she said. “A bridge cannot be built by a single person. It requires people agreeing to work together. Further, a bridge is a vehicle of communication, connection and movement to and fro— a vehicle needed so much during this pandemic when we cannot move both ways.”

WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca noted that the award comes at the time when the WCC is celebrating 50 years of nurturing and cultivating interreligious dialogue.

“In today’s world, we can show, in a profound way, what we can do together as people of different faiths to create a society where we live peacefully side by side,” said Sauca. “We are bound to each other in universal kinship through God, the source of our being and wellbeing.”

A summary of the previous Bridge Builder Award events (2003 –2020) is available at: www.14augustkomiteen.no and www.foundationdialogueforpeace.com.

Deacon’s marriage to divorcee halts her priesting

A newly-married deacon in Oxford is calling for canon law to be revisited, after she was unable to be priested

owing to her husband's divorce, Madeleine Davies write in the Church Times.

The Revd Sorrel Shamel-Wood, an Assistant Curate in the Dorchester Team Ministry, married the Revd Andy Shamel, Chaplain of Lincoln College, Oxford, in August last year. Mr Shamel had been divorced for a year when they met in 2017 while Mrs Shamel-Wood was training for the priesthood at Cuddesdon.

They were engaged in January 2018 and Mrs Shamel-Wood was ordained deacon in July 2020, a month before their marriage. They were unable to delay their wedding because Mr Shamel needed a spousal visa to start working in the UK. He was was ordained in the diocese of San Diego ten years ago and is licensed in the Oxford deanery.

Marriage following divorce is not an insuperable impediment to ordination in the Church of England. Canon C4 states that, on application by a diocesan bishop representing the candidate, the archbishop of the Province can issue a dispensation by way of a faculty. But guidelines also emphasise that “great care must be taken . . . to ensure that the Christian ideal itself is not obscured.” Among the factors that bishops are supposed to consider is the stability of the current marriage: applications are not normally entertained when the current marriage is less than three years old.

Ms Shamel-Wood praised both Cuddesdon and the diocese of Oxford for their support, but said that seeing her friends and cohort be ordained this Pentecost had been “very painful. . . Despite knowing in my head that this is a legal

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technicality, in my heart it makes me feel rejected by the Church and that I have been found unworthy.

“I also feel angry and frustrated at the irony that Andy continues to preside at the altar without any ramifications when it is his divorce that is the barrier to my ordination. I have never been married before but I am the one who is being punished.”

Practically, it would be helpful to her team — which looks after 12 semi-rural churches, for Ms Shamel-Wood to be able to preside at the altar.

“I think this law needs revisiting because, at the moment, it is hurting people,” she said this week. “It is too blunt an instrument to do justice to the complexity of people’s lives. . . This rule does not have a sound theological basis; it fails to take seriously a divorce once someone has been priested; and it punishes ordinands without taking the time to listen to their situations and stories. It would be better if each case were dealt with on an individual basis, to prevent situations like mine.”

Oxford diocese had “done everything they can to be pastorally supportive during this difficult situation,” she said. This had included being invited to deacon at the priestings in the diocese, and to co-teach on the diocese’s Old Testament course.

This week, the Bishop of Dorchester, the Rt Revd Gavin Collins, said: “I very much look forward to the day of her priesting.” *Courtesy The Church Times 2.7.2021*

'Voice from God' told officer to drive 12 miles to save man's life

A policeman in Co Fermanagh helped save the life of a man who had a heart attack while driving, after he heard a “voice from God” telling him to drive 12 miles out of his way, Ralph Hewitt reports in the Belfast Telegraph

The officer in the Fermanagh and Omagh Policing District, whose name has been withheld due to an ongoing threat against police, was on patrol in Enniskillen in December when he heard the message in his head.

After telling his fellow officer to drive to Derrylin, they found a car had crashed into a hedge after the driver, Noel Maguire (52), suffered a heart attack.

Both officers began CPR and used a defibrillator to save Mr Maguire's life as members of the public protected them from oncoming traffic.

Mr Maguire, from Brookeborough, spent the next 10 days in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, and made a full recovery after doctors told his partner, Jenny Farrell, that there was just a 5% chance of survival.

Speaking to the Belfast Telegraph, the officer, 'David', who is a born again Christian, said he was simply “told” to drive to Derrylin and felt he had to share his story to highlight the importance of CPR, defibrillators and the Air Ambulance.

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“On the way into Derrylin and as I turned around Fats Corner, I see ahead of me a car stuck in the hedge and I said, 'That's what we're here for',” he explained.

“We were praying over this man and doing CPR, and I told one of the members of the public to go to the local shop and get the defibrillator.

“We had brought him round with CPR but lost him, then we used the defib and brought him back again.”

Describing the message he received from God, David said the Holy Spirit enters your life when you are saved.

He said this wasn't the first time he felt God had spoken to him.

“I've had to do silly things, like later on that night a man was about to jump off a bridge,” David continued.

“I was getting a voice telling me to pray with him and I was arguing in my head that I will pray for him, and it said, 'No, pray with him'.

“The man got cross with me at one stage and I said do you mind if I pray with you so we did and the two of us walked off the bridge.

“That's the sort of thing that happens. It is amazing.”

Mr Maguire's partner Ms Farrell said he remembers nothing from the week before or after his heart attack, but the whole

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experience has made the couple look at God in a “different perspective”.

“Noel wasn't lucky, he was blessed,” said the 49-year-old. “I personally believe that God put all of those people in the right place at the right time.

“Noel was meant to leave work that day and if he didn't leave work, he probably would have died.

“His path was made out for him that day and I just thank God it was made the right way.

“When I got to intensive care that night, they told me Noel had a 5% chance of survival.

“They said even if he had survived he would have had brain and heart problems but he has none of that. God doesn't do half miracles.”

Courtesy The Belfast Telegraph 2.7.2021

People and places

St Gall's and St John's walk for water

Parishioners from two more parishes in the diocese of Down & Dromore have lent their energies to Christian Aid's campaign for climate justice.

In May, Claire and Neil Farmer from St Gall's, Carnalea, completed a sponsored walking challenge equal to the length of Ireland. They walked a combined total of 302 miles

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during the month, totting up their daily steps using an activity tracker.

While the St Gall's parishioners chose a distance challenge, the parishioners of St John's Orangefield in east Belfast opted to carry buckets of water instead. The rector, Revd Ross Wilson and his wife Sonia were among those who carried buckets of water around Orangefield Park on the afternoon of 12 June, raising more than £2,000 for the work of Christian Aid Ireland.

Rose

Claire and Neil's walk was inspired by Rose Jonathan (68), a widowed grandmother from Kenya where severe drought and a changing climate mean that she must spend up to seven hours a day walking to fetch water for her family and livestock.

Rose has been the sole carer for her six grandchildren since her husband died and her daughters moved to the city for work. Climate change has brought erratic weather, drought, crop failure and loss of livestock to the Kitui region, driving many people into poverty, hunger and homelessness. The

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absence of a water supply also means that Rose and her grandchildren cannot wash their hands at home to protect against coronavirus.

Claire said:

“Neil and I love walking in the beautiful Northern Ireland countryside but it’s different for Rose. It’s hard to imagine the worry she must feel, seeing her crops fail and her water supply run low. Our walk is for women like her.”

Speaking after their water carrying challenge, Revd Wilson said:

“The sponsored water carrying challenge has left our arms tired and maybe a couple of inches longer! We now have a better understanding of the lives of the many people around the world who have to carry more, for longer, every day, just to have water for life’s daily needs. And we are grateful for the wonderful blessing of running water from our taps whenever we need it.”

Christian Aid responds

In the rural areas of many African countries, it falls to women and girls to collect water for their families and farm animals, and in drought-affected regions this can involve long and often dangerous journeys on foot. In Kenya, Christian Aid is responding to the crisis by funding the building of earth dams (low-tech community ponds) which capture and store water when the rains do come. The charity is also installing taps to improve access to water and building blocks to improve hygiene and reduce illness.

Christian Aid Ireland Chief Executive Rosamond Bennett thanked the parishioners of St Gall's and St John's for taking on a walking challenge. She said:

“In a year when our fundraising has been impacted by the pandemic, we're delighted that our supporters are finding new and imaginative ways to make up for the lost income. Our supporters at St Gall's and St John's always give generously to support our work and their kindness is already reaching countries such as Kenya, bringing hope to people living in poverty – people like Rose.”

You can still donate online at www.caweek.ie/carnaleawalk

Omagh parishioners are getting “a gifted, loving pastor” says Bishop

The Parishes of Drumragh with Mountfield have a new Incumbent following the institution of the Rev Graham Hare by his old ‘boss’, the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster.

Members of both parishes – and friends from the new Rector's former parish, Drumglass (Dungannon), gathered in St Columba's Church, in Omagh, for Friday evening's Service. The congregation were socially distanced throughout the Service and wore face coverings in church.

Bishop Forster told the local parishioners that they were getting “a gifted, loving pastor” to help them live out God's

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call. “Let’s be people who follow the Good Shepherd,” he urged them.

“Sometimes whenever we contemplate the high calling of ministry,” Bishop Andrew said, “those of us who are ordained here, tonight, it can seem overwhelming – overwhelming – particularly as we look at the huge challenges of today. Graham, I want to remind you of the words that were said at your Ordination in Armagh Cathedral – these words: “because no one of us can bear the weight of this ministry in their own strength but only by the grace of God, let us pray earnestly for the outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit on these persons”. The grace of God, praying earnestly and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: it’s the only way ministry works.”

In his sermon, the Bishop said that one of the new Rector’s great skills was his ability to get to know and communicate with people. “People trust Graham, and they trust Graham because they know in him is someone worthy of trust.”

Rev Hare was a curate under Bishop Andrew, when the latter was in Drumglass, and the Bishop said he appreciated the new incumbent’s gift with a sermon. “I loved to sit and listen to Graham preach; he’s a gifted preacher who has a wonderful ability to take God’s word and show us how it connects to our everyday life. You will really enjoy his preaching. And it’s accessible. I remember somebody once saying to me, ‘Always make your sermons portable,’ and I really wasn’t sure what that meant. He said they’ve got to be portable so that people can take them home with them – they can remember it and live it out. You’ll remember Graham’s sermons and I know you’ll want to live them out.”

The Bishop also had some thoughts on ministry for those seated in the pews. “Ministry isn’t just about somebody doing it for you, ministry is something that we all do for everyone else. We’re all called to minister. Graham’s ministry – ordained ministry – is a different ministry from all of yours, but you’re called to minister too, to seek out what it is that God would have you do for him.

“The Church is about the whole body of Christ working together,” the Bishop said, “and if we do that there’s nothing can stop us. It’s when we start going our separate ways, when we start taking our own paths, when we stop wanting to be a body together, [that] is when the problems come. The people of God, ministering together, in unity for the good purposes of God in His world, that’s what we are about.”

Among those watching events unfold in church were the Rector’s wife, Hannah, and their three impeccably behaved, young daughters. The current Rector of Drumglass, Rev Bryan Martin – who delivered the second reading – mentioned the wider family when he told the Drumragh and Mountfield parishioners that they were getting a diamond; “In fact,” he said, “you’re getting five diamonds”.

Bishop Andrew thanked the Omagh Rural Dean, Rev Canon Robert Clarke, for organising the Service of Institution. The Bishop was assisted during the Service by the Archdeacon of Derry, Venerable Robert Miller and by the Diocesan Registrar for the Dioceses of Derry and Raphoe, Rev Canon David Crooks. The organist was Mr Derek Weir.

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Rev Hare succeeds Rev Ian Linton who moved to Rathfriland and Ballyward in February last year.



A head for Knock heights

Canon John R Auchmuty, Rector of Knock, Belfast, had a close up look at the major re-roofing work being completed at the Parish Church of St Columba.

<http://www.coiknock.org/ws/>

Director of Music at Canterbury Cathedral

David Newsholme will take on the new role of Director of Music at Canterbury Cathedral! Find out more:

[<http://ow.ly/IFhu50FnKRS>]

Seamus Heaney HomePlace

HomePlace welcomes a return to live performance with a series of Sunday shows in the Back Yard.

Featuring the cream of Northern Ireland's musical talent, these shows will be held outdoors and will last an hour from Sunday 8th August - 22nd August 2021

Pointers for prayer

Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee,
that the course of this world
may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance,
that thy Church may joyfully serve thee
in all godly quietness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Guardian of the weak,
through the teachings of your prophets
you have claimed our cities, towns, and homes
as temples of your presence and citadels of your justice.
Turn the places we live into strongholds of your grace,
that the most vulnerable
as well as the most powerful among us
may find peace in the security
that comes in the strong name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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God of grace and powerful weakness,
at times your projects were ignored, rejected, belittled, and
unwelcome.

Trusting that we, too, are called to be prophets,
fill us with your Spirit,
and support us by your gentle hands,
that we may persevere in speaking your word
and living our faith. Amen.

O God,
sustain us in the complexity of our humanity
as you sustained David--
playing the harp of youth,
throwing stones at giant problems,
loving our friends beyond wisdom,
dancing worship,
mourning children,
breaking our hearts in psalms, and
longing for warmth in our old bones. Amen.

Friend in Christ,
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers
as dear to us as our own needs.
Loving our neighbours as ourselves,
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions
on behalf of the church and the world.

Hear our prayers, God of power,
and through the ministry of your Son
free us from the grip of the tomb,
that we may desire you as the fullness of life
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,
and guided them in the way of your love,
so listen now to those who call upon you.
Move us to praise your gracious will,
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death

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and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens
and healed our spirits.
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,
those seeking healing,
those in need within the church and the world.
Hear our prayers
that we may love you with our whole being
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. Amen.

Creator God,
you call us to love and serve you
with body, mind, and spirit
through loving your creation
and our sisters and brothers.
Open our hearts in compassion
and receive these petitions
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.
Holy One,
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards
of the fragile bounty of this earth
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.
We offer these prayers of love
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbours,
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.
Loving God,
open our ears to hear your word
and draw us closer to you,
that the whole world may be one with you
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

Matthew 5:6 NLT

I wonder when you last felt painfully hungry or thirsty. I suspect for most of us that, if it has ever happened, it is a distant memory. However, it is likely that Jesus' hearers would have been very familiar with both. Harvests could be good or bad, and it was impossible to achieve a reliable flow of food. Additionally in a hot country people would often have felt desperately thirsty, and finding a good supply of clean water would never have been easy. Jesus wanted his followers to have just this kind of desperate longing for God's will to be done in the world and for his justice to be established.

Christianity suffers desperately from those who give it merely polite agreement. They live respectable and kindly lives and consider that Christian faith is generally a very good thing. Jesus is looking for something completely different. He wants us to have the same passion for his kingdom as a hungry and thirsty person has for food and drink. He wants our lives to be dominated by the longing to see his will done and for society to be ordered in a way that honours him. In our worship we will want to express our craving for God's honour, peace and love to be the experience of everyone in the world. And in our service we will strive to bring his justice and compassion to our society.

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The wonderful promise is that God will answer the prayers of those who have this passionate longing for his kingdom. For as long as we live on this earth we will be battling with the reality of sin and injustice. They are sadly an inevitable part of a fallen world but amidst it all God is working with us and hearing our prayers. Our task is to live so close to God that we never lose that passionate desire for his perfect will. Through reading the Bible, our fellowship with other Christians and our worship we keep alive our longing for the perfect, liberating Kingdom of God.

QUESTION

How hungry and thirsty are you for God's kingdom?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, forgive me for my half-heartedness. Give me a passionate desire to do your will. Amen

