



Image of the day
Pope Francis on the ball

People and places

Methodist Church's 'care home of the future'

A state-of-the-art care home in North Down is the result of a 15-year vision from a charitable Christian organisation, Graeme Cousins writes in the News Letter.

Described as a “care home of the future”, Copelands is a flagship project of Belfast Central Mission (BCM), set up in 1889 by the Methodist Church.

The site which will accommodate 60 residents, between Donaghadee and Millisle, has been in the possession of BCM since the 1930s, having been an orphanage, children's home and conference centre during its lifespan.

Nicky Conway, BCM's Chief Executive, said: “It has been a long road, but it has been a worthwhile journey to get where we are today with Copelands, and we are very proud of what we have achieved.

“What Copelands will provide in terms of care provision and a sense of community will be invaluable to those living and working there, but also to the neighbouring community, which has welcomed and embraced the project wholeheartedly.”

The focus of Copelands is to provide a sense of safety and wellbeing for those that live there and their families.

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Amenities the residents can benefit from include a cinema-style screening room, a hair salon and spa, communal lounges and dining rooms, quiet spaces for reflection and reading, a craft room, landscaped grounds, an enclosed garden and a rooftop terrace boasting views across the Irish Sea.

Andrea Selby, manager of Copelands, said: “We are beyond delighted that we have finally reached the stage where we can open our doors and welcome our first residents. Since mid-June we have been slowly introducing small numbers into each available wing to allow for settling in and a two-week isolation period.

“The combination of experience, enthusiasm and the beautiful new environment has meant the energy around the place is palpable and we are all so excited to be welcoming residents.”

BCM is a registered charity which operates around 20 social care and housing projects across NI

The unfolding crisis in Afghanistan ‘presents Ireland with another opportunity’ -Bishop McGuckian

Ireland must accept more refugees, as a priority in the context of current events in Afghanistan, and should speed up the process of doing so, the Catholic bishops have said. Patsy McGarry reports in the Irish Times.

Welcoming Ireland’s intervention at the UN Security Council on Afghanistan and the Government’s commitment to

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accept 150 refugees, they urged that the process “be accelerated and that the acceptance of additional refugees in Ireland should be considered as a policy priority.”

Bishop of Raphoe Alan McGuckian, chair of the Bishops’ Council for Justice and Peace, pointed out that “Ireland, as one of the wealthier nations of the world, must do more for forcibly displaced people in terms of welcome and integration through State and community supports.

“Yes, our hearts are deeply moved by the panicked scenes of people fleeing, but it should not take such scenes and circumstances to force governments to act.”

The unfolding crisis in Afghanistan “presents Ireland with another opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to the protection of human rights, including access to education for all, and to welcome the stranger among us. As Pope Francis reminds us, we are called respond to such challenges with four actions: welcome, protect, promote and integrate,” he said.

He continued: “In the interest of justice and peace, refugees should be welcomed and integrated in our communities. The values of our Irish faith tradition teach us that outreach, encounter and authentic dialogue can bring the true peace that the world needs at this time.”

More generally, he noted how “at the end of 2020 there were 82.4 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. Yet 85 per cent of these are being looked after in the least wealthy nations, with only 15 per cent being accommodated in the wealthier countries of the world, including Ireland.

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What does this say to us about solidarity and fraternity in our world today?"

The President of the Methodist Church in Ireland Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu has endorsed such calls surrounding "the plight of the Afghan people and responsibilities in Ireland at this time," particularly by "the group of Irish agencies working on migrant, asylum and refugee rights."

His Church was "committed to the welfare and dignity of those seeking refuge We recognise our responsibility locally and globally," he said.

Courtesy The Irish Times

Planners disregard C of I parish concern about fast track housing in Enniskerry

Green light for fast track housing in Enniskerry, Co Wicklow despite strong local opposition including C of I parish

Mary Fogarty reported in Bray People on August 18, 2021 that a Green light had been given for a €60m Enniskerry development

Cairn Homes has been granted permission to build 165 residential units at the townlands of Cookstown and Powerscourt Demesne, Cookstown Road, Enniskerry.

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As a development of over 100 residential units, the 'Strategic Housing Development' application was made to An Bord Pleanála rather than Wicklow County Council.

There were significant objections made to the plans within the community and by official bodies.

Wicklow County Council, representatives of the Church of Ireland and Powerscourt National School were among those to oppose the plans, for which there were 68 submissions.

The €60 million development is on a site of over 6.5 hectares and will include 105 two-storey houses, 56 apartments and duplex apartments in six three-storey buildings, and four one-bedroom 'maisonette' dwellings in a two-storey building, as well as a creche.

There will be vehicular access from the Cookstown Road from a new junction, 313 parking spaces, and 150 cycle spaces.

Wicklow County Council said that the scheme would be a material contravention of the local development plan and also represent a traffic hazard concerning the scheme.

However, the appeals board stated that the site is located 20km from Dublin City centre, served by public transport and can assist in the delivery of housing.

An Bord Pleanála said in its report that the proposed development is of strategic or national importance due to its

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potential to contribute to the achievement of the Government's policy to increase delivery of housing.

In a submission on the plan, Property Manager with the Church of Ireland, Pauline High stated that the design is better suited to a suburban type development and doesn't take any account of the rural location of the site.

'We would have concerns as to the additional traffic this will bring to the area and the impact this will have on what is otherwise a very tranquil setting,' said Mrs High.

The submission made by Mrs High supported the views made by the Powerscourt Rectory where Honorary Secretary of the Powerscourt Parish, Barbara Davis argued that the density is excessive.

The Board of Management of Powerscourt National School also opposed the scheme stating that 'we strongly oppose this current development as we feel it will have an extremely negative impact on the school in several key areas'.

New appointments at Armagh Observatory and Planetarium

Armagh Observatory and Planetarium has announced its latest appointments to their Board of Governors.

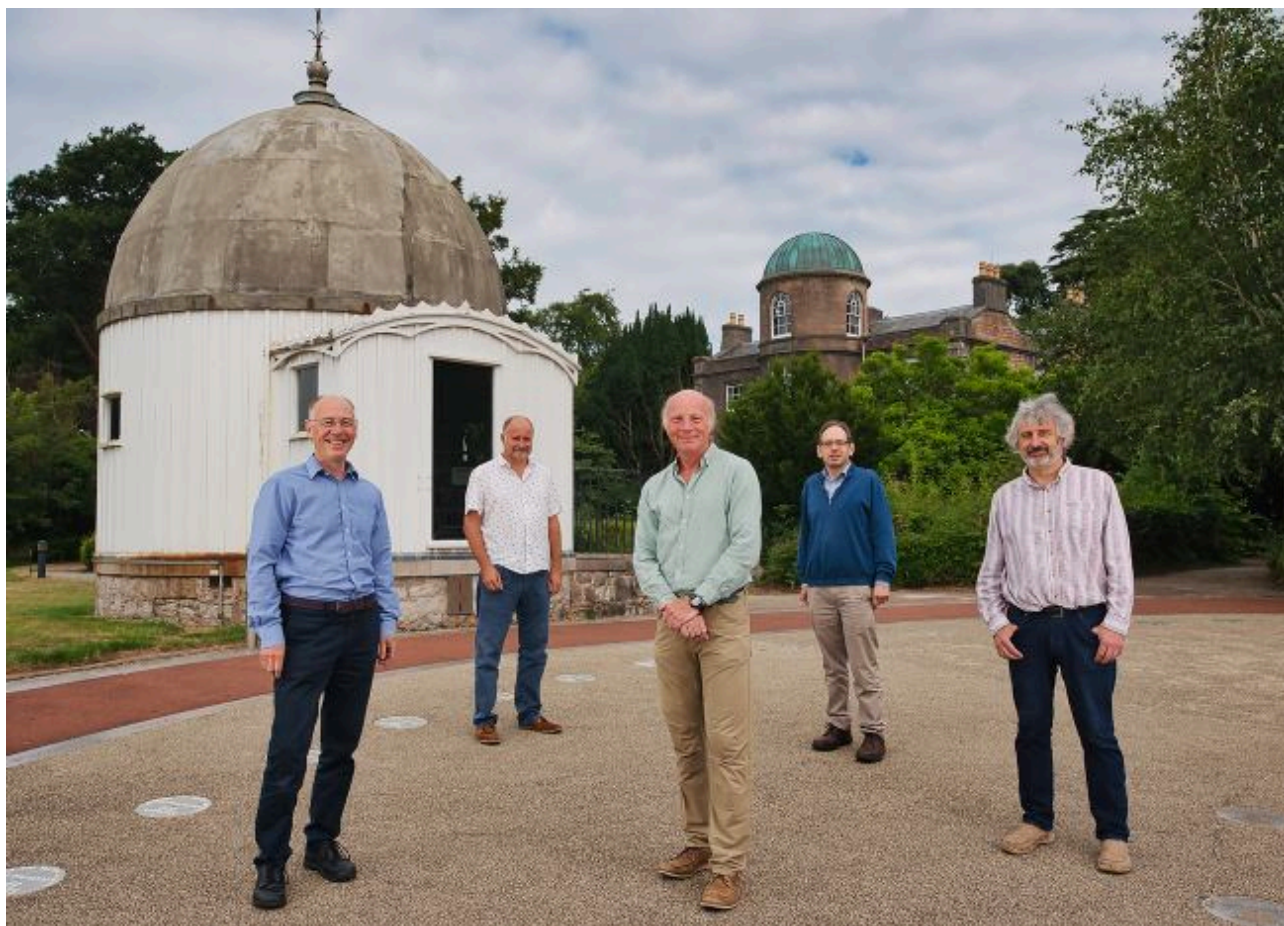
Archbishop John McDowell, who took the post of Chair by virtue of statute on his elevation to Archbishop in 2020, has



Included are back from left: Kim Moylan, Boardroom Apprentice 2020-21, Dean Shane Forster, Board of Governors, Greg Cox, Board of Governors and Management Committee. Middle L-R: Eugene Rooney, Management Committee, Jason Murray, Boardroom Apprentice 2021-22, Paul Kennedy, Management Committee Front from left: Archdeacon Elizabeth Cairns, Board of Governors, John Briggs, Management Committee Chair, Archbishop John McDowell, Board of Governors Chair, Prof. Michael Burton, Director, Sammy Leslie, Board of Governors

welcomed five new members to the Board, Columba O'Hare reports in Newry.ie.

Dean Shane Forster and Archdeacon Elizabeth Cairns also joined by virtue of statute when appointed to their positions within the Chapter of the Church of Ireland Cathedral and churchnewsireland@gmail.org



New appointments - Included front from left: Prof Simon Jeffery, Prof Michael Burton, Back: Prof Jorick Vink, Dr Tolis Christou and Dr Stefano Bagnulo

Mr Greg Cox by public appointment to represent the Department for Communities. Archbishop McDowell also invited Archbishop Eamon Martin and Ms Sammy Leslie to fill two remaining vacancies

Speaking about the latest appointments, Archbishop McDowell said: “I am delighted to announce our latest Board members, who all bring their own skills and expertise to the role. These latest appointments will strengthen our position going forward, collaborating and working alongside one another, within such a unique organisation.”

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Armagh Observatory and Planetarium is an exemplar for Northern Ireland on the world stage, excelling in research and public outreach in science, set within a heritage environment that is rich in scientific history.

The Board of Governors' role is to ensure that the culture and character, history and patrimony embodied in Armagh Observatory and Planetarium is protected.

At the end of June, Archbishop McDowell, John Briggs, Chair of the Management Committee and Professor Michael Burton, Director welcomed some of the new members of the Board of Governors and Management Committee for a familiarisation tour of the Observatory & Planetarium.

The Board of Governors has delegated the primary responsibility for the governance and management of Armagh Observatory and Planetarium to a Management Committee with the statutory purpose of “developing and improving the knowledge, appreciation and practice of astronomy and related sciences”.

Armagh Observatory and Planetarium has announced its latest elected members to the organising committees of the prestigious International Astronomical Union (IAU), cementing its place as a leading research institution of influence on the global stage.

New appointments for Astronomers

Three Astronomers working at the Armagh Observatory, Stefano Bagnulo, Michael Burton, and Simon Jeffery have been appointed as Commission Vice-Presidents taking on

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new roles for the next three years. Continuing in their roles for another term in the Divisions and Commissions are Michael Burton, Tolis Christou and Jorick Vink.

The IAU is structured into Divisions, Commissions, and Working Groups comprising of professional astronomers from 90 countries around the world at Ph.D. level and beyond, who are active in professional research, education and outreach in astronomy.

Professor Michael Burton, Director of the Armagh Observatory & Planetarium said: “It’s fantastic for a small organisation like us to play an active part of such an esteemed organisation, enabling us to have input on a global stage. Being actively involved with IAU means we collaborate and interact with many scientific organisations worldwide, which is a real privilege. The new Vice-President roles will become Presidents after three years, and then Advisors after another three years, so these are nine year roles which will give us vast knowledge and experience.”

The International Astronomical Union, that spans over 90 countries, has a mission to promote and safeguard the science of astronomy in all its aspects, including research, communication, education and development, through international cooperation.

The scientific and educational activities of the IAU are organized by its 9 Scientific Divisions and, through them, its 35 specialized Commissions covering the full spectrum of astronomy, along with 53 Working Groups.

Report courtesy Newry.ie

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

Reports

Getting vaccinated is an 'act of love' - Pope

Pope Francis is urging people to get vaccinated against Covid-19.

He featured in a video by the Ad Council expressing his gratitude for the scientists who have made an effective Covid-19 vaccine possible.

"Thanks to God's grace and to the work of many, we now have vaccines to protect us from Covid-19," he said.

While millions around the world have been vaccinated, there are many who are hesitant.

The Pope said that taking an approved vaccine was "an act of love".

While taking the vaccine might be a "small gesture", he said it was one that was "capable of transforming and improving societies".

But he also said the vaccine needed to be "available to all" if there was to be any real hope of ending the pandemic.

"Love for oneself, love for our families and friends, and love for all peoples. Love is also social and political," he said.

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He continued, "Getting vaccinated is a simple yet profound way to care for one another, especially the most vulnerable."

Cathedrals at most diverse ever despite race criticism

The congregation of Anglican cathedrals is more diverse than it has ever been, with greater numbers of young people and those from ethnic backgrounds attending, a report has found.

It comes despite the Most Rev Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, last year describing the Church of England as "still institutionally racist", prompting church officials to set up a taskforce to investigate. The report, the Social and Economic Impact of England's Cathedrals, has found that the profile of worshippers reflects modern British society more than it used to.

It found that 26 per cent of cathedrals reported an increase in the diversity of their congregation, including those from migrant communities and those identifying as LGBT, as well as a wider age range thanks to a rise in the attendance of young families. It cites Winchester Cathedral, which works to increase social diversity and to encourage the working-age population to remain in the town, as well as the efforts of several cathedrals in providing support for "migrants and asylum seekers".

Adrian Dorber, chairman of the Association of English Cathedrals, which commissioned the report, said: "This change is a symptom of wider social change. We've also

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made big strides in how to receive a wider group of people.” The report also counters the common perception of declining church attendance. The increasing number of younger families attending church comes despite forecasts showing that the UK population is ageing at a significant rate.

The report found that cathedrals have also seen a boom in volunteering by their socially conscious congregations, compared with a decline in other parts of society.

UK churches 'stand ready' to welcome Afghan refugees

UK churches are ready to welcome Afghan refugees and help them settle into life in a new country after fleeing Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

The Welcome Churches network is asking people to donate towards its Emergency Afghan Fund that will provide help to Afghan families being evacuated to the UK.

Dr Krish Kandiah, who is working with the fund, said, "Churches around the UK are responding with the love of Christ to the needs of the Afghan refugees.

"Families have had to flee a war zone with only what they could carry and they are in need of our love and support as they enter the UK and become neighbours in our communities."

He has identified three ways that UK churches can help.

help.

"Firstly pray, secondly join the Welcome Churches network so your church can be trained and prepared to help practically, and thirdly give so we can quickly get practical help to the people that need it," he said.

The Diocese of Chelmsford has said it is standing ready to serve and support Afghan refugees across its parishes.

It has some experience in this already, having resettled 250 refugees since 2015, including families fleeing the Syrian conflict, and Afghan interpreters and their families escaping the Taliban.

With the Taliban taking control of Afghanistan in recent days, the diocese says its resettlement programme will now be "widened and reshaped to work alongside partners in providing the care, love and support to which the gospel calls us."

Jesus wont' forget the Afghans, says bishop

Catholics should pray for the people of Afghanistan in the confidence that Jesus Christ will never abandon them, a bishop has said.

Bishop Declan Lang, chairman of the Department of International Affairs of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, issued a statement as the Taliban regained

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control of Kabul, the capital, immediately following the withdrawal of US troops.

“As Christians, we are called to be people of hope, even when a situation may appear hopeless,” said Bishop Lang.

“Today our hope can be placed in those who are working tirelessly for dialogue, justice, and peace in their country,” he said.

“Our hope can be placed in the humanitarian organisations that are continuing to offer their assistance, and the efforts to welcome and protect refugees fleeing their homes,” he continued.

“Above all we place our hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom we pray in the knowledge that he will never abandon the people of Afghanistan.”

Pope Francis used his Angelus on Wednesday to plead for peace within a country afflicted by decades of war.

“I ask all of you to pray with me to the God of peace so that the clamour of weapons might cease and solutions can be found at the table of dialogue,” said the Holy Father.

“Only thus can the battered population of that country – men, women, elderly and children – return to their own homes, and live in peace and security, in total mutual respect.”

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

Edinburgh Festival Evensong

Choral Evensong on BBC Radio3 this week came live from St Marys Cathedral Edinburgh, during the Edinburgh Festival “We rejoice in the return of our choir after enforced absence, and in our organ, rededicated last Sunday” said Provost John Conway. Listen again here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b065xct0>

Songs of Praise tomorrow

Here’s what’s coming up on this week’s Songs Of Praise where Claire McCollum explores the magnificent Jurassic Coast to find stories of faith, fossils & science! With favourite hymns from the seaside in Swanage.

Sunday 1.15pm BBC One and afterwards here

bbc.in/3yQKZ9a

An Irish reflection on Mary Sumner’s prayer

An Irish member of the Mothers’ Union reflects on their founder Mary Sumner prayer as part of a “31 Days of Inspiration” world wide link

youtu.be/BStMr7T5_pg

Amazing Grace with more than 200 bagpipes

Live in Berlin - Amazing Grace at the Berlin Tattoo. Vocals; Carl Ellis, bagpipe; Ronnie Bromhead, conductor: Sergey

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Raibitschuk, Massed Pipes and drums, Militär Orchester
Torun, The Real Jigs, The Irish Beats Dance Company,
Traditioneel Jachthoorn Korps Garde Jagers, Offizielles
[[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKQULTTnaI8>]

Poem for today

Behind the Closed Eye by Francis Ledwidge

I walk the old frequented ways
That wind around the tangled braes,
I live again the sunny days
Ere I the city knew.

And scenes of old again are born,
The woodbine lassoing the thorn,
And drooping Ruth-like in the corn
The poppies weep the dew.

Above me in their hundred schools
The magpies bend their young to rules,
And like an apron full of jewels
The dewy cobweb swings.

And frisking in the stream below
The troutlets make the circles flow,
And the hungry crane doth watch them grow
As a smoker does his rings.

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Above me smokes the little town,
With its whitewashed walls and roofs of brown
And its octagon spire toned smoothly down
As the holy minds within.

And wondrous impudently sweet,
Half of him passion, half conceit,
The blackbird calls adown the street
Like the piper of Hamelin.

I hear him, and I feel the lure
Drawing me back to the homely moor,
I'll go and close the mountain's door
On the city's strife and din.

Pointers for prayer

For the week following the 11th Sunday after Trinity.

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 our 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.

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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.

God of salvation,
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,
hear our prayers
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings
with your unending compassion.
Redeeming Sustainer,
visit your people
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,
that we may hurry to make you welcome
not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

Living God,
you are the giver of wisdom and true discernment,
guiding those who seek your ways to choose the good.
Mercifully grant that your people,
feasting on the true bread of heaven,
may have eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Almighty and everlasting God,
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray
and to give more than either we desire, or deserve:
Pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy,
forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid,
and giving us those good things
which we are not worthy to ask
save through the merits and mediation
of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

Speaking to the Soul

“O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unending love with those who love him and obey his commands, listen to my prayer!”

Nehemiah 1:5-6 NLT

These words give us a wonderful insight into Nehemiah's understanding of God. Everything that follows in this book flows out of these few words. Nehemiah's courageous actions were the result of the way he understood God, and the truth is that it's the same for us. Our understanding of God (or to use the technical term - theology) will shape the way in which we speak and act.

Nehemiah knew the awesome greatness of God but in the same moment he recognised that he was a God of love who wanted to live in covenant partnership with him. The challenge that faced Nehemiah was enormous. He lived far



away from Jerusalem where the problems facing the residents were colossal. Added to that, he held a very important and trusted position in the court of the Persian King Artaxerxes. It was almost unthinkable that the King would release him from his sensitive role as the royal wine taster. Anyone who was looking out for their own safety would have kept quiet about the problems in Jerusalem, and tried to get over them. The last thing they would do would be to go to the King and ask for some leave so that they could fix the problem. The fact that Nehemiah did so shows me how completely he trusted God.

The same principle applies today. Our lives are shaped by our understanding of God. Nehemiah begins his prayer with 30 words to describe God. I wonder what your 30 words would be. I encourage you to set aside some time today to write them down. I am fairly sure that your words won't be exactly the same as Nehemiah's or indeed anyone else you know. Amazingly, God enters into a unique relationship with each one of us and our understanding of him will be shaped by our personal journey of faith. I find this incredibly exciting and, as our relationship with God grows and matures, I hope

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that the 30 words that we will choose in future will keep changing.

QUESTION

In about 30 words how do you want to describe God today?

PRAYER

Lord God, we worship you because you are such an awesome God and yet still love us as individuals. Amen

