

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – The Hub at Queen's University

August 22, 2022

Image of the day



The Hub at Queen's University

The student centre and the Church of the Resurrection at 22 Elmwood Avenue offer worship each Sunday at 10.30am. The young adults welcome team (Front page photo) will greet you at the door.

People and places

Discovering Donegal on foot

Brendan McManus SJ and Anne McGowan led a group of pilgrims along the Sli Cholmcille Pilgrimage walk

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from Sliabh Liag to Gartan in Donegal, from 22-28 July 2022. They walked by day and rested mainly in local B&B's by night.

The Slí Cholmcille is an ambitious project to establish a pilgrimage trail linking key sites related to St Colmcille/ Columba from Donegal, Derry, the North Sperrins and the Bann to Argyll and eventually the island of Iona.

Read below Brendan's reflection on the memorable trek in the footsteps of St Colmcille, the patron Saint of Derry.

A Journey of Transformation

Seven Day Pilgrimage on the Sli Cholmcille

The Slí Cholmcille takes the pilgrim walker through the most stunning scenery over hills and mountains, around coast and lakes, and through villages and towns in the footsteps of one of Ireland's most important early Christian Saints.

Toward the end of July, we eleven pilgrims walked about 20 km a day, making our way over mountains and bogs, along rivers and streams, and discovering the wealth of Donegal's heritage, culture, and sheer beauty.

More than just a walk, this was a pilgrimage, following in the footsteps of Donegal's own St Colmcille (Columba) and trying to recreate that original Celtic Christian experience of discovering God speaking to us in everything. This meant reflecting on our lives, having times walking in silence and mass/liturgy, having a spiritual theme every day, and sharing together in the evenings.

Just like the Camino, this unique Donegal pilgrimage was a journey of transformation. Donegal has always been a place apart with its own culture and landscapes, and afforded a unique experience of genuine Celtic Christian spirituality: closeness to a rugged nature, and was experienced as a place of peace and recuperation from the ills of modern life.

It was a magical hideaway that allowed recuperation and renewal; life moved at a different pace especially walking, and there was lots of time to come back to yourself. It was a unique experience of the 'desert', the origin of monasticism and Celtic Christianity, an ascetic retreat to a wild place to pray and reflect, face oneself, purify and reintegrate oneself.

This year we piloted a shorter version of the longer Sli 'spine' that eventually goes to Scotland and would take several weeks. We wanted to offer an inclusive package, food, accommodation and bus transfers, that could be done in 7 days and would cover the main Colmcille sites, finishing in his birthplace of Gartan.

The trail began in the area around Teelin in west Donegal which is the start of the pilgrim trail up the majestic Sliabh Liag (we were blessed with a good day making it a sublime experience). Then it was on to Glencolmcille, a stunning valley on the edge of the wild and rugged northwest Atlantic coastline, filled with Columban sites that revolve around a local turas or pilgrim route. The route continues up through Ardara, Glenties, Fintown and finished in Gartan, the birthplace of Colmcille, with a visit to Glenveigh National Park.

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Some of the highlights experienced along the trail included the majestic Sliabh Liag (highest sea cliffs in Europe); the village of Glencolmcille, a valley literally filled with pre-Christian and Christian sites; the abandoned famine village of Port that sits above a wild, stoned beach and picturesque harbour; the Assaranca Waterfall in full spate; the Bluestack Way river walk between Ardara and Glenties. Fintown to Gartan features a wild boggy forest trail that brought out the best of in us all in terms of collaboration and helping one another.

Finally, there are the Colmcille sites around Gartan including the Abbey and birthing stone; while the beautiful Glenveagh National Park is also located on the trail. If that were not enough, finishing in the wonderful Gartan Outdoor Centre allowed us to witness the morning mist on the lake, simply unforgettable.

These were the key elements of the Pilgrimage:

The Spirituality of Colmcille: While there are legends and stories aplenty concerning Colmcille, we know that he is firmly rooted in Donegal, was born in Gartan and travelled widely. The most important aspects of this spirituality are that it was: ascetical, monastic, Gospel (the Good News of Christ's presence within) & scripture-based, pilgrim (an exile for Christ) and contemplative. We had agreed times of walking in silence every day.

The landscapes: the route is majestic, stunning, and awe-inspiring; it offers a mix of coastal and highland landscapes where you can feel a sense of freedom and getting away from it all. The route covers granite mountains, pristine

beaches, sandy machair grasslands, peatland ecosystems, and traditional drystone walls with mixed farmland.

The hospitality: Donegal is renowned for its friendly people who provide a welcome like no other, a culture of tradition steeped in the Irish language.

Steeped in history: the route offers pre-Christian and early Christian sites, with many well-preserved national monuments from the time of St. Colmcille to the strongholds of some of the County's most famous Clanns.

A remote escape: Donegal is isolated physically, culturally and even politically. The route is located in Ireland's northwestern corner. and as part of the ancient province of Ulster (though separated by the border from Northern Ireland's other 6 counties); and is remote and difficult to access, meaning that Donegal is far from the densely-populated eastern and southern regions of Ireland, and except for Northerners, is off the main tourist itineraries.

The implications for our modern-day pilgrims on the Sli Cholmcille:

Exposure to remote and uninhabited places

Time spent walking alone for long periods in nature, being able to collect one's thoughts

Practicing contemplation and inner listening, that is, awareness of how God speaks through everything: nature, feelings, memories, ruins, symbols.

A spiritual programme featuring Gospel themes, Psalms and readings

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Ascetical practices inherent in walking pilgrimage: times of fasting, physically challenging exercise, moments of fatigue and reaching one's limits

Appreciating the Donegal welcome and hospitality

Discovering historical, artistic and social heritage

Quotes from participants:

'One of the happiest weeks of my life. So, so memorable.'

'What wonderful memories to carry forward. It was a really, really special week; I thoroughly enjoyed walking, talking, and getting to know everyone.'

'Walking the Slí put a distance between me and the many distractions of life and drew me closer to another dimension..'

'I liked the linear aspect of the walk, the community, the butterflies and the red deer..'

'I found it great for the Body, Mind & Soul.'

'Cherished the sense of peace and purpose and the opportunity to gain perspective and reflect'

'It is the Slí's great contrast to normal life that is already enticing me back..'

See <https://slicholmcille.org> or contact

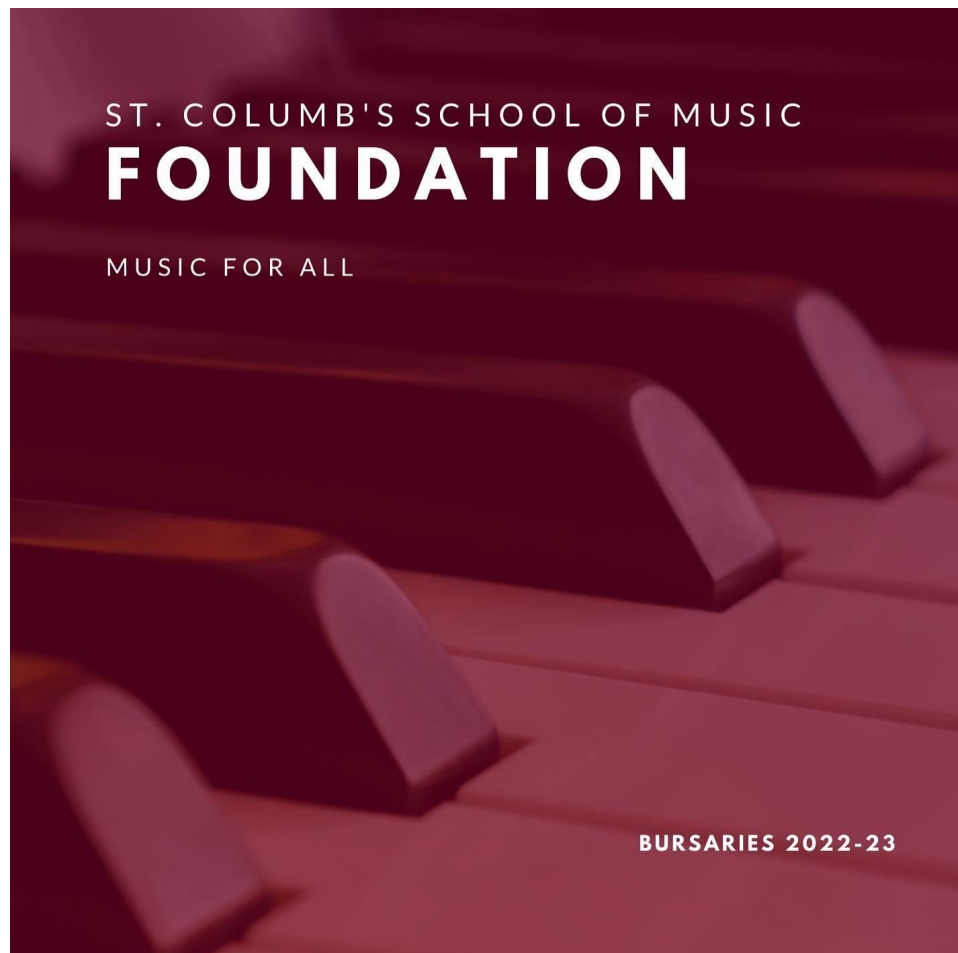
runai@slicholmcille.org for more information and photos of this pilgrimage.

St. Columb's School of Music bursaries

St. Columb's School of Music currently offers Music Bursaries for students wishing to study music

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Bursaries are designed to provide assistance to families who are experiencing financial difficulties which threaten the ability of the student to learn a musical instrument and attend St.



Columb's School of Music. Bursaries are awarded at the start of the Academic year and run until the End of Year Concert (September - June), covering the cost of tuition, instrumental hire and exam entries.

Applicants for bursaries must demonstrate real financial need; families who may be classified as low income, but have substantial assets may be ineligible to receive a Bursary. Financial Hardship may be demonstrated by, but limited to, proof of free school meals, financial statements or a letter from a school principal or head teacher.

Applications can be found online at <https://www.stcolumbsschoolofmusic.com/school-foundation>.

Available Bursaries:

- The Mayor's Music Bursary
- Inner City Trust Music Bursary (2)
- The Honourable the Irish Society Music Bursary (3)
- Gordon Harper Music Bursary

One application can be used for all available bursaries - please state your instrument of choice (Drums, violin, clarinet, flute, guitar, piano)

Deadlines for all applications is 5pm on Friday 26th August.

World News

Scottish Bishop suspended, just for hours

The Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney was reinstated to her job August 10 — after having been suspended earlier the same day by the head of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Kirk Petersen writes

The Rt. Rev. Anne Dyer has been responding to allegations of “bullying” for nearly two years. In August 2021, an 18-page independent report described confrontations between the bishop and the trustees and leadership of the diocesan cathedral, and recommended that she be ousted. The church declined to do so, instead establishing a mediation process between the parties.

But a year later, after receiving two formal complaints of an unspecified nature, Bishop Mark Strange, the primus of the church, suspended her to investigate the complaints. She promptly appealed the suspension, which then was lifted. “The suspension ceases to have effect until the appeal is determined by the Episcopal Synod. It is expected that a meeting of the Episcopal Synod will be arranged as soon as possible,” the church announced. The mediation process “is expected to be put on hold pending the outcome of the disciplinary process,” the church said in an earlier announcement.

The brief suspension was announced two days after the end of the Lambeth Conference, which Dyer attended and wrote about almost daily on her Facebook page.

The suspension “does not constitute disciplinary action and does not imply any assumption that misconduct has been committed,” the primus wrote. “The decision to suspend has been taken bearing in mind the interests of both those making the accusations and Bishop Anne.

Dyer’s episcopacy has been controversial from the start. When she was appointed in 2018, half of the priests of the largely conservative diocese protested because of her support of same-sex marriage, according to Christian Today. Aberdeen and Orkney was the only one of the SEC’s seven dioceses to oppose the church’s 2016 authorization of same-sex marriage in the church. The 2021 report found no evidence that the issue played a role in the recent conflict in the diocese.

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In response to allegations of bullying in the 18-page report, Dyer wrote in a letter to the diocese: “I am very sorry indeed that some in the diocese feel this way, and want to attend to the matters and concerns raised as a priority.” She added, “I had also felt myself, since I arrived, to be subject to significant bullying and harassment on a number of fronts.”

The Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney comprises 46 congregations in the city and county of Aberdeen, as well as the Orkney and Shetland Island groups north of the Scottish mainland.

The Scottish Episcopal Church is an independent provinces of the Anglican Communion, and reported membership of 27,585 in 2019. Unlike the Church of England, which is by far the dominant church in England by membership, the SEC is the third-largest church in Scotland, after the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) and the Roman Catholic Church.

Irish Missionary opens Women’s Empowerment Centre in Kenya

In 2009, Irish missionary priest, Fr Patrick Devine SMA, who had served 25 years in Eastern Africa set himself a new challenge.

Reading the signs of the times, he identified the need for an organisation of professionals that would build peace and bring about transformation and resolution of inter-ethnic and religious ideological extremist conflicts throughout marginalised terrains of the region and in the informal urban settlements around Nairobi City.

From that developed the Shalom Centre for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation which engages and trains women and men influential opinion shapers in working towards breaking the vicious cycle of conflict in these locations. From small beginnings, Shalom has grown with a professionally qualified team and has forged relationships with academic institutions in Ireland and the USA, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa, as well as being accredited by the U.N.

Addressing issues of women's rights to dignity, safety and security has been a key part of Shalom's work over the years. Now, the vision of Fr Devine and his team has extended to set up the Shalom Empowerment Center which is located at St. Josphat's House, Kahuhu Road, Riruta on the outskirts of Nairobi where five informal urban settlements or slum areas interface with or are close to each other.

This new Center will give special attention to all forms of manifest and structural violence; inter-ethnic, inter-religious, domestic violence, sexual violence, among others. In doing so the Center will provide training on conflict transformation skills, peacebuilding techniques, post-traumatic stress disorder healing approaches, and other relevant interventions to women and children suffering from violence.

Empowering women and children to be significant architects of their own security and development whereby their human rights and dignity are respected and honoured will be at the heart of the Center's training programmes. With a professionally qualified team, the Center will instill healing, empowerment, control and authoritative voice to the women

and children whom it serves. Fr Devine says that the team “believe that social protection systems and formation institutions for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are needed to ensure that the lives and dignity of women and their children are esteemed, valued, and protected.”

Domestic violence is a major social problem affecting the health of millions of people often resulting from prolonged physical and emotional injuries. Similarly, other forms of violence against women in the slums include rape, forced abortion against their will by men and families; and female genital mutilation. Domestic violence is mainly perpetrated by men and thus it is imperative that when solving domestic violence related issues, collective responsibility and input from men and society at large should be emphasized.

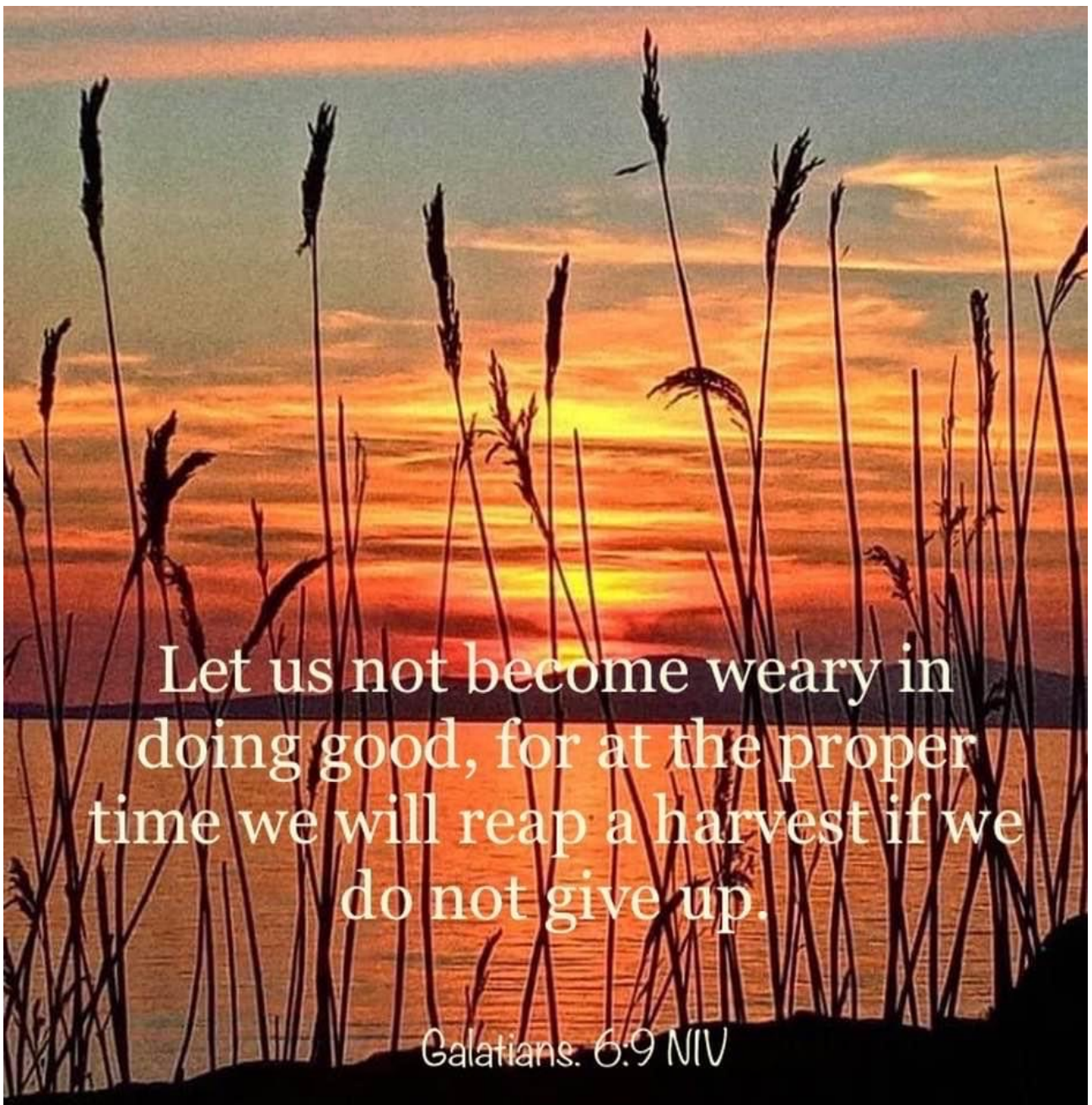
Violence against women and children, be it during social conflict/war, structural violence, sexual violence, domestic violence, among other forms, is often linked to reproductive health. Thousands of women, young girls and children in informal urban settlements suffer from many forms of violence - sexual, child and/or forced marriage, sex trafficking and rape – which inflict very serious damage on individuals and families, and are global public health problems of epidemic proportions. The negative consequences resulting from this violence include exposure to suicide and depression, mental health issues, unstable family relationships, physical and psychological trauma, risk of miscarriage and having low birth weight infants and delayed onset of prenatal care.

There is a widespread increase in human trafficking in Kenya. Although boys and men are victims as well, the majority of individuals identified as trafficked for both labour and the sex trade are women and girls. According to the U.S. Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report 2020, the government of Kenya reported identifying 853 victims of trafficking - 275 adult females, 351 girls, and 227 boys - a significant increase compared with about 400 identified victims in 2018. Trafficked women and girls encounter high rates of physical and sexual violence, including homicide and torture, psychological abuse, horrific work and living conditions, and extreme deprivation while in transit. Serious mental health problems result from trafficking, including anxiety, depression, self-injurious behaviour, suicidal ideation and suicide, drug and alcohol addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder, and dissociative disorders.

Parenting is of critical importance as it is a sphere of life that significantly influences and forms the stability and future security of a child and, consequently, society as a whole. It shapes a child's future morality, ethics, respect for the dignity of every human being, and their overall social responsibilities. Transforming and countering all forms of violence, including violence against women and children, can be enhanced by emphasising the collective responsibility of both parents for these formative issues. The necessity of establishing and ensuring impartial access to social care and support institutions for those who are the victims, and perpetrators, of violence is also of critical importance.

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These are the sort of issues that the new Center will endeavour to address. There is a very well qualified team in place and all are Kenyan nationals. Sr Lucy Njori BA of the Dimesse Sisters is the Center Administrator, Sr Sarah Ngigi of the same congregation is a registered Nurse and Counseling Officer, and Sr Catherine Mutua of the Daughters of St Anne is the Community Development & Social Worker. Mrs Nancy Mirera is Counselling Psychologist and Mental Health Officer. The Lead Project Officer is Mrs Judith Akedi Otsieno MA and the Project



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Officer is Ms Esther Njeri Kibe MA – both from the Shalom Center for Conflict Resolution & Reconciliation.

This is a visionary project providing professional services to empower women and girls in deprived and marginalised communities in the slums of Nairobi and surrounding areas.

Readers wishing to support this essential work can do so on <https://shalomconflictcenter.org/> or can contact Fr Devine at pdevine@shalomconflictcenter.org.

Perspective

Church buildings are the beating heart of the spiritual life of the country by the Archbishop of York

A steeple rising from the skyline of a town, a church building along one side of the village square. The shadow of a cathedral. All are familiar landmarks within the British landscape - The Most Rev Dr Stephen Coterie writes in the Credo column of The Times last weekend.

We gather for weddings, funerals and baptisms, for Harvest Festival, Easter and Christmas. The church is a space of memories, of connection with the past and of hope for the future.

In the National Churches Trust's recent consultation on 'The Future of the UK's Church Buildings', there is perhaps one



quote that eloquently sums up our relationship with them: "Church buildings are the beating heart of the spiritual life of the country as they have been for centuries. In a world of deepening divisions, rivalries and tensions, to lose a local church diminishes further

our faith, our society and our cohesion as a nation."

Obviously for me, the heart of church buildings is the important part they play in our worshipping lives; we gather as God's people to worship daily in some places, weekly in others. But the impact of the church building extends far beyond the gathering of the faithful.

The church has a mission to show the heart of Jesus in a world of so much hurt, confusion and uncertainty. The Church's primary vocation is to be the place that serves and teaches; to be the Church aligned with that which is basic and obvious to our Christian faith, which is to show the heart of Jesus to others through our teaching and preaching and evangelising, in the service that we offer to and with the community, and the invitation we extend to everyone to come through the door.

Our church buildings allow us to offer sanctuary in the midst of the community. The open doors of a church in a busy city centre beckon the weary to a place of peace and quiet, an oasis for the commuter at the start and end of the working day, a place to pray, or simply sit in silence, or have a cup of tea, a biscuit and a natter.

Of course the church building is inseparable from the Church: the offer of hospitality is central to the Christian faith and the value of the church building can be seen in how this hospitality is shown in the community. In many places, the church hall hosts community play groups, exercise classes, youth groups, a foodbank and other help for local people, making it a bustling hub of activity.

These activities show the many and varied ways in which the church building is central to the vitality of the community and why so many people who are not part of the worshipping community feel passionate about church buildings. They tell at least a part of our story and our history, as places to remember loved ones, commemorate events and gather together. The stones of the building have a long memory, and so church buildings are far more than merely bricks and mortar.

Perhaps one of the most pertinent stories in the Bible when thinking about church buildings, their upkeep and their preservation is that of Nehemiah. Nehemiah was cupbearer to the king, an important job. He was called by God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, a huge and daunting undertaking, which will be well-understood by those called to care for and restore our church buildings. This was not an easy task. Nehemiah was mocked, yet he worked hard,

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planned, persevered and trusted that God would bring success (Neh. 2:20).

Throughout the story, Nehemiah refuses to lose hope. Again and again, leaders plot to derail the rebuilding of the wall. Nehemiah rallies his people to work and to pray, to rebuild the walls. The city walls were needed for protection, for the safety of the city and the temple. And so the walls of church buildings need to be preserved for the sake of the people and for the Kingdom of God.

Just as the steeples rise into the city skyline, so hope should rise from the message of the Church, a place of safety, a sanctuary, a gathering place, a community hub.

I am reminded of a story I once heard:

A person came upon a construction site where three people were working. They asked the first, "What are you doing?" and the builder replied: "I am laying bricks." They asked the second, "What are you doing?" and the builder replied: "I am building a wall." As he approached the third, they heard the builder humming a tune as they worked, and asked, "What are you doing?" The builder stood, looked up at the sky, and smiled, "I am building a cathedral!"

So, what are we doing? What are we building? Brick by brick, we care for our buildings, our people and our community as we continue to build the Kingdom of God.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/brick-by-brick-churches-offer-a-sanctuary-for-all-9t33t6zmq>

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Poem for today

The Rock of Cashel by Aubrey de Vere

Royal and saintly Cashel! I would gaze
Upon the wreck of thy departed powers
Not in the dewy light of matin hours,
Nor the meridian pomp of summer's blaze,
But at the close of dim autumnal days,
When the sun's parting glance, through slanting showers,
Sheds o'er thy rock-throned battlements and towers
Such awful gleams as brighten o'er Decay's
Prophetic cheek. At such a time, methinks,
There breathes from thy lone courts and voiceless aisles
A melancholy moral; such as sinks
On the lone traveller's heart amid the piles
Of vast Persepolis on her mountain stand,
Or Thebes half buried in the desert sand.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

The publication of Church News Ireland is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD. He may be contacted at houstonmckelvey@mac.com

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