



Image of the day - St Brendan's Cathedral, Loughrea

People and places



Covid Recovery Day in Carnmoney Parish

Carnmoney Parish Church hosted a Covid Recovery Day as a way of helping members of both the church and the local community to reflect on and process their experiences of the pandemic.

This took place on Wednesday August 4, when a number of different reflective prayer stations were set up around the church hall and people were invited to wander around at their own pace and reflect at each station.

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There was a quiet corner at one end of the hall, and refreshments were served throughout the day at the other end, with people on hand to chat and pray with people if they wanted.

At 9pm, the different themes of the day were pulled together and prayers were offered in a concluding service of Evening Prayer.

The rector, the Rev Andy Heber, said: “Many church members offered their time and gifts to make the day a success, and feedback from those who attended was very positive.

“The day proved to be a great way to help the church connect with the local community, offering something which people hopefully found helpful and beneficial.”

24 hours of prayer in Fanlobbus Union of Parishes

During the months of July and August, Fanlobbus Union, Co. Cork organised twenty-four hours of prayer in each of their four churches; Dunmanway, Drimoleague, Drinagh and Coolkelure.

Each day of prayer started at 12.00 noon on Friday and finished at 12.00 noon on Saturday. Throughout the day there were fixed times for Holy Communion, Morning and Evening Prayer, as well as fifteen prayer stations in each church to reflect on different topics and guide attendants in their prayers.



Fanlobbus Prayer Station - Christian Aid

Between twenty-five and forty-five people of all ages attended each of the churches, with many coming for the services and staying on to use the prayer stations. A virtual tour of the prayer stations can be viewed on the Fanlobbus Facebook page.

The Rev. Cliff Jeffers said, “The purpose of these days of prayer was to encourage the church to pray for our priorities for the future as we approach the re-opening of our activities later this year. The feedback from these days of prayer is being processed by a mission and ministry group in the parish. Going forward, this will help to clarify the parish vision for the next phase of ministry and activity in Fanlobbus Union of Parishes.”

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**Fanlobbus
Prayer
Station -
Homeless**

Mother and baby campaigners will seek answers over Tuam exhumation

Group to also quiz minister about redress scheme — but fears plans 'will take years'

The Tuam Babies Family Group will meet Children's Minister Roderic O'Gorman on August 30 to "demand answers" about when the exhumation of the children's mass grave at churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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Fanlobbus Prayer Staion - Farming

the former Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home will begin, Ali Bracken writes in the Sunday Independent.

It is also seeking clarity on how the promised redress scheme for survivors of mother and baby homes will proceed.

The meeting follows a virtual consultation earlier this year between Mr O'Gorman and the group seeking clarification on when the promised exhumation and redress will be put in place.

Annette McKay, whose sister died at at the Co Galway institution, said: "It is not as simple as setting a date for the

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excavation and sending in a digger. There is a lot to be done ahead of that.

"There needs to be an ethics committee established and a lot of local stakeholders' needs to be consulted, as well as the families whose children are buried there.

"We're worried this could take years."

Ms McKay, a spokeswoman for Tuam Babies Family Group and who lives in Manchester, added: "We just at this stage expect a concrete plan from Roderic O'Gorman.

"The exhumation will obviously take a significant amount of planning. It is time for an action plan to be put in place. We will be insisting on a concrete plan out of this meeting.

"Commitment is not enough, action is now needed. It's the same situation in terms of the redress scheme, bearing in mind survivors who are still alive are in their 80s and 90s."

A total of 987 children died at the mother and baby home in Tuam, a commission of investigation found in January.

Ms McKay's late mother Maggie gave birth to a baby girl, Mary Margaret, at Tuam in December 1942, according to records.

She had become pregnant after being raped by a caretaker at St Anne's Industrial School at Taylor's Hill, Galway.

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Ms Mackay's mother was abruptly transferred to St Brigid's Industrial School in Loughrea within weeks of the birth of her daughter.

"My mother only once spoke about it. She said Mary Margaret was a bonny baby," said Ms Mackay.

"A few months later, when Mum was in the industrial school in Loughrea, someone came and told her: 'Your baby is dead.' As simple as that. As if it was nothing."

Official records obtained by the family confirmed the death of Mary Margaret in June 1943 at Tuam, aged six months.

Ms Mackay said: "I'm sure I'll never get all the answers about what happened to my older sister. But Roderic O'Gorman now at least owes us what was promised, a plan for the promised exhumation process."

The general scheme of the Certain Institutional Burials Bill was published in December 2019, following the fifth interim report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes, which highlighted major issues with burials at Bessborough in Cork and Tuam.

In its final report, the commission found most of the mother and baby homes did not hold burial registers.

Earlier this month, Tuam survivors criticised officials in the Department of Children for attending a party for former minister Katherine Zappone a week after cancelling a meeting to discuss their plight.

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Mr O'Gorman's office cancelled a meeting with Tuam survivors on July 14 due to a Covid outbreak in his office.

Courtesy the Sunday Independent, August 22, 2021

Among the abbeys of Down

There are many well known ecclesiastical sites in and around the Ards Peninsula such as Bangor Abbey, Movilla and Grey Abbey but Black Abbey, home to the priory of Saint Andrew of the Ards in Innishgarie is less known about.

Henry VIII dissolved Black Abbey during the Reformation but small anglican groups continued to use it's site and it's associated sites at Ballyhalbert and Ballywalter. By the end of the 17th century all three sites were in a poor state and an Act of Parliament (Act for building several parish churches in more convenient places) in 1703 lead to the building of a single, centralised church - Saint Andrew's, Balligan (1704).

Saint Andrew's served the people of the surrounding parishes for over 140 years and was known as a very charitable organisation ensuring the upkeep on unwanted and orphaned young people.

The centralised approach ended in 1844 due to the pressures of increasing populations which lead to the building of three new churches to serve the different parishes - Holy Trinity, Kircubbin (1843), Holy Trinity,

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Ballywalter (1849) and Saint Andrew's, Ballyeasborough (1850).

Reports

Papal Foundation warns of 'Bleak Future' for religious freedom in Afghanistan

There are an estimated 200 Catholics in Afghanistan — a tiny minority within the minority of around 7,000 Christians — and days after the Taliban took control of the country following the withdrawal of U.S. troops, a papal charity is sounding the alarm over their situation.

Aid to the Church in Need said it sees “a black future for religious freedom” in Afghanistan.

Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman for the Taliban, declared on Twitter that it's now officially the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.”

Thomas Heine-Geldern, executive president of the pontifical foundation, expressed profound concerns about the seizure of power in the Central Asian nation.

“During the rule of the previous Emirate of Afghanistan, the Taliban imposed a strict version of Sharia law nationwide,” he said. “We can expect that Sunni Islam will be the official religion, Sharia law will be reimposed, and hard-won freedoms for human rights, including a relative measure of religious freedom, over the last 20 years will be revoked.”

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The Taliban ruled Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001.

This concern is shared by the Vatican, which on Wednesday ran a cover story in its newspaper asking about the future of women in Afghanistan.

“Regardless of the reassurances of the insurgents, for the Afghan women this seems like the beginning of a new nightmare,” says the cover story of L’Osservatore Romano from Aug. 18. “When they led Afghanistan during the second half of the 1990s, the Taliban led the country to total darkness: Women were in fact, ‘canceled’ from society.’ And with the return of the Taliban, there’s a concrete risk that the most extremist version of Sharia, the qur’anic law, returns too.”

In its statement, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) highlights that it had predicted the deterioration of the situation in its recent Religious Freedom Report, published in April 2021. Afghanistan has always been among the countries that most violates religious liberty, as documented both by ACN and the U.S. State Department’s Religious Freedom Report.

Even before the Taliban took over on Sunday, the Afghani constitution established Islam as the state religion. According to the 2020 U.S. Religious Freedom Report, “conversion from Islam to another religion is considered apostasy, punishable by death, imprisonment, or confiscation of property.”

Although there are no explicit restrictions on the ability of religious minorities to establish places of worship or train their clergy, in reality, options for them are limited, notes the

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2021 report from ACN. Some foreign embassies provide places of worship for non-Afghans. The US-led military coalition has facilities where non-Muslim worship can take place.

There's only one Catholic church in the country, and it's technically on foreign soil, as it's located within the Italian embassy.

Christianity is seen as a western religion and alien to Afghanistan, the ACN report notes, adding that the military presence by international forces has added to the general mistrust towards Christians, a situation that forces Afghan Christians to worship alone or in small groups in private homes.

Despite a constitutional provision guaranteeing religious tolerance, those who are openly Christian, or convert from Islam to Christianity, remain vulnerable.

The situation has grown steadily worse for the 0.01% of the Afghan people who are not Muslim — in addition to Christians, there are small groups of Hindus and Sikhs, as well as one Jew, who recently promised to remain in Afghanistan to protect the one synagogue.

“Our analysis, unfortunately, does not leave much room for hope,” says the statement released by ACN on Thursday. “All those who do not espouse the extreme Islamist views of the Taliban are at risk, even moderate Sunni. The Shia (10%), the small Christian community, and all other religious minorities, already under threat, will suffer even greater

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oppression. This is a huge setback for all human rights and especially for religious freedom in the country.”

The foundation also expressed regrets over the fact that a number of countries have already declared their sympathies for the new Emirate, which will not only legitimize the Taliban but also “embolden authoritarian regimes all over the world, particularly in the region, spurring increasing violation of religious freedom in their own countries.”

“International recognition of the Taliban will also act as a magnet for smaller radical Islamic groups, creating a new constellation of religious terrorist factions that could supplant historic formations such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State,” ACN warns. “Among others, areas of concern include Pakistan, Palestine, and the province of Idlib in Syria. The situation for Christians and other religious minority communities already suffering oppression will further deteriorate.”

The fact that most Western embassies are closing, and international observers are leaving, as they did in Syria in 2011, is not a good omen, the papal foundation added.

Counting the cost of pandemic ministry

What is the state of clergy morale, one year after the first lockdown, ask Leslie Francis and Andrew Village writing in the Church Times.

Our first survey, Coronavirus, Church and You, ran between 8 May and late July 2020. We wanted to

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assess the immediate impact of what was then thought to be a short-term strategy to deal with the pandemic.

Our first survey provided useful data on the emotional toll of Covid-19 ([Comment, 16 October 2020](#)), the fragility of rural churches ([20 November 2020](#)), the perspective of retired clergy ([1 January 2021](#)), the greater dissatisfaction of older churchgoers ([12 February 2021](#)), the eucharist in time of lockdown ([19 March 2021](#)), the growing alienation of men from the Church ([14 May 2021](#)), and the spiritual awakening evoked by the lockdown ([2 July 2021](#)).

When, responding to the third upturn in infections, the [Prime Minister](#) introduced a further lockdown on 4 January 2021 ([News, 8 January](#)), we decided that it was time to take further soundings. The Covid-19 and Church-21 Survey was launched on 22 January to capture an update on how clergy and [laity](#) were responding. Among the 6000 participants in the second survey, there were 413 Anglican clergy engaged in full-time parochial [ministry](#) in England. Most of these clergy engaged in full-time parochial ministry had been innovative, creative, and doing a good job to keep their churches engaged. But all this has been at considerable personal cost, and it has taken its toll. The purpose of this, our first report from the Covid-19 and Church-21 Survey, therefore, is to draw attention to the extent of this personal cost, and

to do so through an established model of work-related psychological well-being.

OUR model of work-related psychological well-being employs the theory of balanced affect, which has its roots in the pioneering work of Norman Bradburn in his book *The Structure of Psychological Well-being* (Aldine, 1969). This theory, which distinguishes between positive affect and negative affect, was brought to research into [clergy well-being](#) by the Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI; Francis, Laycock, and Brewster, 2017).

We see positive affect (happiness and satisfaction) and negative affect (stress and exhaustion) as separate systems. What keeps clergy going is the way in which positive affect offsets the negative consequences of negative affect. Coping with the pandemic can bring increases in both positive affect and negative affect. What our data tell us is that, among parochial clergy, the increases in negative affect outweighed the increases in positive affect. The following statistics illustrate this point.

In terms of positive affect, 15 per cent of clergy said that their sense of calm had increased during the pandemic, but 40 per cent reported a decrease; 17 per cent said that their enthusiasm had increased, but 43 per cent reported a decrease; nine per cent said

that their happiness had increased, but 41 per cent reported a decrease.

On the other hand, 56 per cent of clergy said that their sense of gratitude had increased during the pandemic, compared with eight per cent who reported a decrease; 52 per cent said their sense of thankfulness had increased, compared with eight per cent who reported a decrease. These are positive signs, with increasing feelings of gratitude and thankfulness. Serious erosion in enthusiasm and overall happiness, however, may damage the resilience to bounce back after experiences of negative affect.

In terms of negative affect, 82 per cent of clergy said that their sense of fatigue had increased during the pandemic. For 67 per cent, frustration had increased, and, for 73 per cent, exhaustion had increased. Fifty-seven per cent had become more anxious, 60 per cent had become more stressed, and 51 per cent had become more irritable.

These are not positive signs. These figures are high, and it is here that we can begin to quantify the detrimental effects of living through and dealing with the pandemic on the well-being of parochial clergy.

THE second lens through which we viewed the way in which clergy perceived the effect of the pandemic on

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their well-being was through asking direct questions about how well they had coped, and how they saw the effect on their health.

A year on, 42 per cent said that they had not found it easy to cope: 46 per cent were experiencing deterioration in [mental health](#), 36 per cent in physical [health](#), and 26 per cent in spiritual health. These figures help to illustrate the consequences of changes in negative affect outweighing changes in positive affect.

There are strategies that clergy can employ to compensate for increases in negative affect. Nearly half (48 per cent) said that they were eating more: 37 per cent were eating more chocolate, 34 per cent were drinking more alcohol, and 28 per cent were drinking more coffee. More than one in three (37 per cent) said that they were taking less exercise. The problem, of course, is that neither eating more, nor drinking more alcohol, provide long-term solutions. Here are issues that we consider are worth researching in greater depth, in light of the best available knowledge concerning the [science](#) of clergy well-being.

The Revd Andrew Village is Professor of Practical and Empirical Theology, and Canon Leslie J. Francis is Visiting Professor of Theology and Religious Studies, both at York St John University.

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Courtesy The Church Times, August 20. 2021

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

Life and Society in Nineteenth-Century Ireland - Stran lifelong learning

Delivered by Dr Simon Gallaher, BA MPhil PhD.

The course investigates this period in Irish history, looking at broad social and cultural themes. What was the experience of famine, poverty, and disease? How was education and welfare provided?

<https://www.stran.ac.uk/product/life-and-society-in-nineteenth-century-ireland/>

Artwork by Sir Antony Gormley

ITV - News that an artwork by Sir Antony Gormley is to be installed on the west front of Wells Cathedral later in August. The sculpture will occupy a vacant niche for 18 months.

<https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2021-08-18/giant-sculpture-named-doubt-to-be-installed-outside-wells-cathedral>

IPCC Report on Climate Change

This is "code red for humanity"

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A reaction from Methodist World Development to the IPCC Report on Climate Change.

What does the report say?
What needs to happen now?
Why does it matter to WDR?

Read the blog here
buff.ly/3yEdlxD

Poem for today

Dingle by Bernard Kennedy

From main roads through the pass
and there, beneath,
as if a mountain gate over
a valley, lake or bay
a golden road
to visit a past,
Peig, the Blaskets,
basket of another age
of literature,
all writers on the island,
an embryo,
of Ireland, vacated
to new lands.

Or round Sleah head,
a bleak peak,
a romance with Ryan's
daughter.

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

A corner, fluid
of memory and romance,
Now we are too
sophisticated,
beyond the word
of linking
mountain and sea,
and honesty.
Dingle beautiful town.

Pointers for prayer

Holy Wisdom,
you granted Solomon's request
for an understanding mind
and the knowledge to discern good from evil.
Fill us with such understanding and knowledge
that we may act as instruments
of your loving desire for creation,
working with you to transform
our conceit into concern for others,
our fear into love,
our violence into peace,
and our brokenness into wholeness. Amen.

Friends 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.

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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
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.

Speaking to the Soul

The king asked, “Well, how can I help you?” With a prayer to the God of heaven, I replied, “If it please the king, and if you are pleased with me, your servant, send me to Judah to rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried.”

Nehemiah 2:4-5 NLT

This was a terrifying moment. King Artaxerxes noticed that Nehemiah was looking sad. He could tell that there was something troubling his wine taster but Nehemiah had to be very careful what he said. The King was extremely powerful and if he didn't like the answer it could have been the end for Nehemiah. We then read that Nehemiah prayed. It must have been a quick one, indeed it is often described as an arrow prayer. In the previous chapter we saw Nehemiah praying at great length but now time is of the essence and he can only offer up the briefest prayer to God.

Arrow prayers are good. It is a blessing that in the midst of our busy lives we can offer to God brief prayers knowing that he will hear us. But it would be tragic if those were the only kind of prayers that we brought to God. It's the same in any relationship. If the only way I communicated with my wife was by brief greetings as we walked past one another something would have gone very deeply wrong. But because we talk easily and at length with one another it is fine that some of our communications are incredibly brief.

This was clearly the case in Nehemiah's relationship with God. In chapter 1 he spoke at great length to God and over a number of days. His firmly established relationship with God meant that he knew he could speak to his heavenly father at any time. Like Nehemiah, God wants us to enjoy spending leisurely time with him in prayer but also offering the briefest of prayers on busy days.

QUESTION

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When have arrow prayers been particularly important for you?

PRAYER

Thank you Lord that you love to hear our prayers, both on those days when we have plenty of time to spend with you and on those days when we are in a constant hurry. Amen

