



Image of the day - Salisbury Cathedral

People and places

New appointments at Belfast-based charity Equipping for Life

Audrey Currie has been appointed Co-director with Equipping for Life, and Darrin Barr has been appointed Area Support Officer.

Equipping for Life, a Belfast-based charity established in 2018 by Bro David Jardine, a Canon in the Church of Ireland, has announced two recent appointments to senior management in the organisation.

Audrey Currie will take over the position of Co-director and Darrin Barr has been appointed Area Support Officer.

Equipping for Life aims to enable people of faith to equip others for life by partnering with existing initiatives which are seeking to improve education, employability and social cohesion.

Audrey began her teaching career in Orangefield Girls' School, and for the past 30 years has been part of the senior management team of Stranmillis University College.

She is passionate about seeing young people reach their full potential and is committed to helping Equipping for Life become a life-changing ministry that partners with churches, schools and communities across Northern Ireland.



Audrey Currie and Darrin Barr of Equipping for Life

Audrey is dedicated to building on the strong Christian foundation of the ministry, especially in regard to prayer.

Darrin has a PhD in organic chemistry and began his career in the pharmaceutical industry, later moving into education and serving for many years as Vice Principal of Victoria College. He was also Vice Principal of Bloomfield Collegiate in East Belfast, and was Principal for nine years.

Darrin is a member of the Belfast Vineyard Church where he plays an active role. His main responsibility will be to spread Equipping for Life throughout Northern Ireland.

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Welcoming the new members of the management team, Bro David said: “We are delighted to have two people of such calibre working with us.”

Connor Muddy Church fun for all the family on north coast



Muddy Church, organised by All Aboard, Connor Children's Ministry, in Ballintoy on Sunday September 26, will be a chance for all the family to get into the great outdoors and learn more about God's incredible creation!

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Muddy Church will be hosted by the Grouped Parishes Ballintoy and Dunseverick in the grounds of Mount Druid Rectory, starting at 2.30pm

Victoria Jackson, Children's Ministry Development Officer for the diocese, said the invite is extended to all the family.

"Come along as a family and follow the Muddy Church Trail around the grounds to explore and learn about God's incredible creation," Victoria said.

"Along the trail there will be opportunities to take part in crafts and even meet some special guests! We will finish up with a free ice cream van for all the family!"

Parking will be available in the rectory grounds at 2 Ballinlea Road, Ballintoy, BT54 6QN, and there is no cost for attending.

Victoria added: "Just bring your little explorers, plus your wellies, and you are set to go!"

'We are being tossed around in rough seas and we must survive' - Archbishop

Dublin Archbishop says the church must tackle housing and climate change, writes Alan O'Keeffe in the Sunday Independent

The housing and climate crises must be add-ressed with urgency, both nationally and globally, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell has said.

Dr Farrell spoke of the need to respond to pressing problems confronting humanity and how the church is being "tossed in rough waters" as religion is "more marginal than ever" in a changing Ireland.

"Nationally, we have to engage with a significant housing crisis. Housing has now become a huge challenge in many countries," he told the Sunday Independent.

However, the climate crisis is even more urgent, as it "threatens the existence of our planet as we know it. That is why I'm publishing a major pastoral on climate change in the coming days".

Dr Farrell spoke of how the church needs to speak out on the climate crisis, and said Pope Francis was giving leadership that was making a huge difference.

"The church in Dublin needs to reflect with greater depth, urgency and seriousness about what we must do," he said. "If the human race damages the planet — our common home — to such an extent it cannot recover, then we have destroyed our children's home.

"We are taking their lives away. No responsible person can allow that to happen."

Asked if the church itself was dying, he said: "The church is neither dying nor on life support, but the church in Europe is in a time of particular change. Remember, the church was born in crisis and is frequently renewed through them.

"This is not an easy road. Christianity has weathered many a crisis throughout its long history.

"Today, the church is being tossed in rough waters, which means decisions must be taken. As a church, we must continue to reform ourselves to best serve the Lord and his people for this generation and those yet to come."

He referred to projections three years ago pointing to a fall in the number of active lay people and priests. Those projections were thrown seriously off course by the Covid pandemic.

"When we finally put the Covid-19 crisis behind us, we may well find we have been fast-forwarded by at least several years in regard to numbers of both active laity and clergy," Dr Farrell said.

With some priests already over-stretched and serving two or more parishes, the archbishop indicated the sheer number of church buildings in the archdiocese, inherited from times when there were more church members to support their upkeep.

This must be addressed, he said, adding: "We must bite that particular bullet."

Priests are older and fewer and, in time, the number of masses will have to be reviewed.

Parishes must work closer together "with greater emphasis on adult faith formation and sacramental preparation programmes".

For faith to make a difference is a challenge for all, but particularly for young people whose worlds continue to change rapidly. "We might be better exploring spiritual hunger rather than telling people what they need to eat." Pastoral involvement is an important way to reach out to young people, he says.

"When young people volunteer to look after the homeless, the sick, the elderly or the poor, when accompanied, it may facilitate a dynamic where the Lord starts to speak and move the heart of that young person. We need to start here rather than telling them to go to mass or conform to a set of norms."

Dr Farrell quoted the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, who remarked to his Irish friend Maurice Drury: "Only if you try to be helpful to other people will you in the end find your way to God."

In his new role as archbishop, he said the first challenge is to build a praying community.

"To this end, we need to form lay women and men who will assist parents in handing on the faith in the full realisation the heart of faith is not in the words in which it is formulated but the God who speaks.

"Since our culture is concerned more with experience than with doctrine, we will have to speak to the heart. We have to make understandable, in a new way and in a new language, what the Christian faith is.

"It is only then that the deepest longings in the heart will be satisfied."

The real issue around the lack of vocations is "the crisis of faith in our parishes and in people's lives.

"We need to examine the quality of both our liturgies and our preaching of the word of God. For example, music in the liturgy is not just to entertain us — great music will always take us to the silence of the mystery from which it comes." Asked about his recent advice to Christians to not have "a sourpuss" face, he said: "One of the gifts of the spirit is joy. If joy is real, it will be visible in our faces and in our conversations. To so many, we appear only to offer a religion of rules and regulations.

"We need to talk about the good news of our meeting with Jesus far more than letting people know what we are against. We would be better served if we asked ourselves what we have to offer, rather than to issue warnings and condemnations."

The archbishop was asked about controversy arising from the funeral of Dean Maguire, who had convictions including burglary. During the service, held in a Dublin church last month, a torch and screwdriver were brought to the altar as symbols of his life.

Dr Farrell said he did not wish to comment on any individual, but said a person's funeral "demands solemnity and calm". The archdiocese has clear guidelines for funerals, but "it is evident there is little to no engagement with these guidelines at certain funerals".

When Christian funeral rites are requested, "no distinction is to be made regarding a person's background".

He added: "During the funeral mass, the celebrant relies on the bereaved and the mourners to respect the solemnity of the occasion.

"This clearly did not happen on a recent occasion to which you refer. It is this that disturbed people."

Courtesy The Sunday Independent August 22, 2021

Reports

Two Catholic Nuns killed in ambush in South Sudan

Sr Mary Daniel Abut and Sr Regina Roba were part of a group of nine sisters travelling together in a mini-bus when gunmen attacked them. Five other people were also killed in the attack which happened on the highway linking the capital Juba with Uganda on 16th August.

Sister Christine John Amaa, of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in South Sudan said, "Our former Superior General, Sr. Mary Daniel Abut, who served the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus from 2006 to 2018, and Sr. Regina Roba, were killed cold-bloodedly on their way back to Juba after celebrations of the centenary of the parish of the Assumption of Our Lady."

Following the ambush by unknown armed men, says Sister Amaa, the sisters "tried to escape and hid in the surrounding bushes. The criminals managed to find the two nuns and killed them in cold blood."

Sister Mary Daniel was the headmistress of the Usra Tuna School in Juba. Sister Regina was a tutor and administrator at the Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI) in the Catholic Diocese of Wau.

No militia has claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Sisters are the latest civilian casualties in a conflict which has claimed an estimated 400,000 lives since the country gained independence from Sudan in 2011.

Christian Aid launches emergency Haiti Earthquake Appeal

Following the devastating earthquake that hit Haiti on Saturday, Christian Aid has launched an emergency appeal to help people that have been affected.

The nation - which is still recovering from the 2010 earthquake that killed 300,000 people and Hurricane Matthew in 2016, and more recently dealing with Covid and the aftermath of the assassination of its president – has now been struck another blow.

Figures of those killed or impacted are still uncertain and are rising daily as assessments and the search for survivors

continue. Houses have been destroyed, roads are cut off due to landslides, power lines and communications have been damaged. People have lost their homes, belongings and means to make a living.

The Departments South, Grand'Anse, South West and Les Nippes are the worst affected. Christian Aid and its local partner organisations are currently working in Camp-Perrin, Maniche, Les Cayes, Saint Jean, Torbeck and Chantal. Women and girls, the elderly and people with disabilities are most affected by the crisis and are at the highest risk of being denied access to services and support in the aftermath.

Initially people will need emergency shelter, food, drinking water, access to healthcare and protection assistance but in the long-term they will need housing, livelihood and psychological support.

Marc Pascal Desmornes, Regional Programme Manager for Christian Aid in Haiti said: "The destruction and loss caused by the earthquake can affect multiple aspects of peoples' lives and well-being, both physically and socially. We see families moving to wherever they can to stay safe with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

"Swaths of Haitians are facing growing hunger and healthcare services are already overwhelmed by Covid-19. Access by road to the South region, where the quake struck, has been restricted by gang control of areas, raising questions over how aid will be delivered. Gang groups will be one of the main issues and risks for gaining humanitarian access in the days, weeks and months to follow.

“Right now, we don’t have figures on how many homes have been destroyed or how many people have been displaced but what we do know is that the people of Haiti are resilient. But how much more can we take?”

“Following the 2010 earthquake, contingency plans were put in place for similar natural hazards. However, given the current political and security situation it’s not always possible to implement them.”

“Our partners report that people are already questioning whether they will spend years in tents, as they did after the earthquake that hit the country eleven years ago.”

In the wake of the devastating earthquake in 2010, Christian Aid worked in collaboration with ACT Alliance members to rebuild the homes of 4,900 people. Following Hurricane Matthew in 2016, our partner KORAL (Kounbite pou Ranfose Aksyon Lakay) repaired and rebuilt the homes of families most severely affected. Christian Aid is working with



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KORAL and Service Jesuit aux Migrants (SJM) for this response.

To give to the Haiti Earthquake appeal, please visit www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/emergencies/haiti-earthquake-appeal

Pope Francis: Do not water down the truth of the Eucharist

Pope Francis on Sunday encouraged Catholics to not water down the reality of Jesus Christ's humanity and his teaching that the Eucharist is his Body and Blood.

"Indeed, Jesus affirms that the true bread of salvation, which transmits eternal life, is His very flesh," Pope Francis said during his Angelus message at the Vatican Aug. 22.

"To enter into communion with God, before observing the laws or satisfying religious precepts," he continued, "it is necessary to live out a real and concrete relationship with Him."

Pope Francis, speaking from a window overlooking St. Peter's Square, reflected on the day's Gospel reading from St. John.

The passage follows the story of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, when Jesus invited the crowd "to interpret that sign and believe in Him, who is the true bread come down from heaven, the bread of life;



and He revealed that the bread He will give is His body and blood,” Francis said.

“These words,” he stated, “sound harsh and incomprehensible to the ears of the people, so much so that, from that moment, many of His disciples turn back; that is, they stop following the Master.”

Even today the revelation of Jesus’ humanity, and the fact that the Eucharist is Jesus’ Body and Blood, can cause scandal, he said. It is something difficult for people to accept, he added, explaining that this is what Saint Paul calls the ‘folly’ of the Gospel in the face of those who seek miracles or worldly wisdom.”

“What sense can there be, in the eyes of the world, in kneeling before a piece of bread? Why on earth should someone be nourished assiduously with this bread?” he said.

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According to Pope Francis, we should be surprised if the words of Jesus Christ do not throw us into crisis, “because we might have watered down His message,” he stated.

He also urged Catholics not to seek God in “dreams and in images of grandeur and power,” but to recognize him in the humanity of Jesus and in the humanity of other people.

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

CPAS September training events for church leaders

CPAS is running a series of September training events to help resource church leaders as we come out of the pandemic and beyond.

Bookings for all events can be made at the CPAS website at www.cpas.org.uk/events.

Details are as follows:

Nurturing New Leaders

When: 16 September, 9.45am-4pm

Where: Online

What: In this reconstruction phase of the pandemic, how can we identify and develop new leaders? Part of the Refreshed Leadership for Reimagining Church series, but can also be attended as a standalone event.



Cost: £19

Leading with Confidence

When: 21 September, 9.15am-12.30pm

Where: Online

What: This morning event explores how to find appropriate confidence in our leadership, and plots a path to godly confidence. Part of the Leadership: Getting Below the Surface series, but can also be attended as a standalone event.

Cost: £9

CPAS Leadership Webinar FREE

When: 22 September, 10-11am

Where: Online

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What: Our popular free webinar to resource leaders through the pandemic and beyond. Topic will be decided closer to the time in order to enable us to be responsive to the ever-changing context we find ourselves in.

Cost: FREE

Shaping a Missional Culture

When: 28 September, 9.45am-4pm

Where: Online

What: The pandemic has led to significant culture change in churches. How might we build on this to facilitate a renewed commitment to Christ's mission and ministry? Part of the Refreshed Leadership for Reimagining Church series, but can also be attended as a standalone event.

Cost: £19

Poem for today

In Kerry

by John Millington Synge

We heard the thrushes by the shore and sea,
And saw the golden star's nativity,
Then round we went the lane by Thomas Flynn,
Across the church where bones lie out and in;
And there I asked beneath a lonely cloud
Of strange delight, with one bird singing loud,
What change you'd wrought in graveyard, rock and sea,
This new wild paradise to wake for me. . . .
Yet knew no more than knew those merry sins
Had built this stack of thigh-bones, jaws and shins.

Pointers for prayer



Young Child Feeding Best Practice Monitoring and Learning Group in Mauritania, February 2021. Unicef photo.

Pray for Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger

We are thankful for:

the heritage of ancient trade routes, rich oral traditions and nomadic practices of people in the lands these countries now occupy

humanitarian work to improve food security and livelihoods, especially for women

pro-active efforts to preserve the environment in these desert lands

welcome and provision for those who often must flee across borders.

We pray for:

those impoverished who lack basic needs and rights, that these will be met

desperate children and others who turn to crime or begging or become enslaved

effective response to the frequent droughts and hunger in this area

more stable political rule in these countries to stem violence and provide for all.

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Eternal God, we pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, for Mali, Chad, Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso.

We know that in our part of the world some people are getting carried away by hatred – people who are unable to think clearly, and turn furiously on the people whom you have placed in this part of the world to enjoy your creation and witness to you. We pray for girls and boys, women and men, children and adults, and the elderly, for you to grant them peace, your peace. In the name of Jesus Christ, Lord, change the hearts of all those who are carried away by hatred, that they may find in you the Hope of Salvation, and that they may become messengers of peace for ever.

We thank you, Lord, for you are faithful to your promise. Glory and praise be given to you for ever and ever. Amen



Speaking to the Soul

And the king granted these requests, because the gracious hand of God was on me.

Nehemiah 2:8 NLT

Nehemiah's appearance before King Artaxerxes went incredibly well. Not only did the King grant him all the leave that he wanted, but he gave Nehemiah letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates to ensure his safe travel, together with access to the royal forest for wood to help with the reconstruction of Jerusalem. Nehemiah's response was that this happened because the gracious hand of God was on him. When things go well in our lives it is so important that we immediately turn to God in praise. If we have succeeded in sport we need to praise God for the gift of our bodies and the strength he has given us. If we have done well in our studies or business then we need to praise God for the skills and abilities that he has graciously given us which have made the success possible. If our families are healthy and doing well then we need to praise God for the way in which he graciously gave them to us in the first place. Every day provides us with reasons to praise God.

What impresses me is that Nehemiah saw God's gracious hand upon him in the bad moments as well as the good ones. As soon as Nehemiah got to work the opposition started to kick off. Throughout his building programme he was dogged by fierce attacks from Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite and some of the Jewish nobles. He could have concluded that his opponents were proof that

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God had withdrawn his hand of blessing – but he didn't. Through it all Nehemiah was firmly persuaded that God's gracious hand was upon him, on the disastrous days as well as the successful ones. His relationship with God was so secure that he knew that, whatever the circumstances, the Lord would stand by him.

Whatever happens to you today I invite you to believe that God's gracious and loving hand is upon you giving you strength to face every challenge and blessing.

QUESTION

In what way do you recognise the gracious hand of God upon you at the moment?

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you that you are beside me every step of the way graciously providing for me through thick and thin. Help me each day to trust you more. Amen

