



Image of the day - Dixon Park, Belfast

People and places

‘Joseph’ Music Summer School an amazing success in Belfast Cathedral

Belfast Cathedral’s Joseph themed Music Summer School was a huge success, with 60 children stepping into the amazing space of St Anne’s Cathedral to sing, make music, and have fun.

The summer school ran from August 16-20, concluding with a fantastic in-person concert for family and friends. Precautions against Covid-19 ensured a safe week for everyone involved.

The scheme was organised by directors India Chapman Webb and Alison Darragh, and musical director Matthew Owens who is Director of Music at St Anne’s. They were supported by Lorraine Stanley, course accompanist and music tutor; Ethan Darby, music tutor; and group leaders Eibhlin Eddy, Donna Johnston, Susie Hunter, Katie Lyons, Garbhan McEnoy, Tania Murphy, Valerie Prosser and Adam Reaney.

Seasoned singer/actor Caolan Keaveney played the role of Joseph, and the project had the backing of the City of Belfast School of Music; Belfast Philharmonic Choirs; the City of Belfast Youth Orchestra; NI Opera; and the Ulster Orchestra, whose members Richard Ashmore, Rozzie



Belfast Cathedral Music Summer School organisers India Chapman Webb, Alison Darragh, and Matthew Owens, the Cathedral's Director of Music.

Curlett and Tanya Houghton gave instrumental demonstrations to the children during the week.

Director Alison Darragh said, "The children were amazing and so happy to be doing something different. Some of them really hadn't sung for a good year and a half.

"They enjoyed daily sessions from members of the Ulster Orchestra, made Joseph's Coat from felt squares, did canvas paintings and even had a mini Olympics." Day four's activity was a trip to historic Clifton House, where the

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children had the opportunity to sing outside the windows much to the enjoyment of the home's residents.

During the course of the week, the children worked on their performance of Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat and also learned a number of other pieces including an Irish Blessing, Chumbara and Circle of Life.

“On Friday evening they sang the whole concert off copy which was really great as they were able to engage so much more with the conductor this way,” Alison said.

“The concert was a great event. Parents, siblings and other family members joined the Dean, the Deputy Lieutenant of Belfast and sponsors for vocal warm-ups, which was great fun. The feedback we have had has been extraordinary. I think it lifted the spirits of everyone and the cathedral was festooned with balloons and art work and looked really lovely.”

The children received video messages from Jason Donovan, who previously played the title role of Joseph in the West End, and actress Maria Friedman, and they all took home a certificate signed by the musical's renowned composer, Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, who wished them all the best for their performance.

The organisers expressed special thanks to others who supported the summer school including Dean Stephen Forde and the cathedral staff; Tesco, Newtownbreda, whose community champion Arnette was a huge help; Confetti, Belfast for the balloon display; Gwyneth Cockcroft and Jackson Greens for the treats; cathedral members David

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and Helen Alexander for sorting the refreshment breaks; and Connor Diocese's own Children's Ministry Development Officer Victoria Jackson.

St Patrick's Pilgrimages – Journey to Place, Journey to God

The latest title in the series of Braemor Studies, which highlights the best dissertations produced by students of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, is now available. St Patrick's Pilgrimages – Journey to Place, Journey to God is written by the Revd Karen Salmon, who is currently curate at Willowfield Parish Church, East Belfast, in the Diocese of Down and Dromore.

The Very Revd Henry Hull, Dean of Down, and the Revd Karen Salmon pictured with 'St Patrick's Pilgrimages – Journey to Place, Journey to God' at St Patrick's High Cross, a replica of the 8th Century original, at Down Cathedral, Downpatrick.

The book explores the relationship between people and pilgrimage in Ireland in the 21st Century, incorporating reflections and interviews with pilgrims as well as a detailed look at the scholarship and history of pilgrimage in the Christian Church.

Ms Salmon remarks: 'The geographical diversity of St Patrick's pilgrimage sites attracted me to include a traditional walk, an island and a mountain in my study. I was interested in the impact these places had on the lives of The



Very Revd Henry Hull, Dean of Down, and the Revd Karen Salmon pictured with 'St Patrick's Pilgrimages – Journey to Place, Journey to God' at St Patrick's High Cross, a replica of the 8th Century original, at Down Cathedral, Downpatrick.

pilgrims and the revelation of God associated with each place. Pilgrims said the benefits of pilgrimage were physical slowing, stilling, strengthened faith, perseverance, changed perspective and transformation through an encounter with God and others.'

The Revd Canon Dr Maurice Elliott, Director of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, says: 'The practice of pilgrimage is becoming increasingly important across a broad range of Christian traditions as a means of

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strengthening discipleship. In this thoughtful study, Karen Salmon deftly explores the particular Irish heritage of St Patrick's pilgrimages, and offers a rich digest of both theological themes and pastoral insights. In many ways the potential of his book is best captured in the author's chosen sub-title – journeys to sacred places, rightly embraced, can enable those who undertake them to discover a true sense of journeying deeper in their own walk with God. I wholeheartedly commend this work.'

Dr Bridget Nichols, the supervisor for the dissertation and Lecturer in Anglicanism and Theology at the Theological Institute, adds: 'This original and illuminating study has grown from a splendid seminar paper into an exciting and valuable contribution to understanding the place of St Patrick across the ecumenical spectrum in Ireland, and even beyond faith communities. Karen Salmon's journeys to pilgrimage sites and interviews with both pilgrims and site



curators provide a richly textured and authentic picture of the motives for pilgrimage and the experiences of those who undertake them.'

Portrait of Dame
Mary Peters. by
Colin Davison

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The Braemor series is published with support and assistance from the Church of Ireland's Literature Committee and the Representative Church Body Library, Dublin. St Patrick's Pilgrimages, along with other titles in the series, is available to purchase from the Church's online bookstore: [<https://store.ireland.anglican.org>] for £5.00/€6.00.

Ireland: Study finds Catholic pupils are being bullied for their faith

Practising Catholic pupils and even staff members are sometimes targeted for bullying in Irish schools, according to a major new report. Teachers see evidence of pressure on students to hide their religion. It is a sure sign of just how aggressively secular Ireland today can be.

The survey of 214 Religious Education teachers, conducted by the National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre in Dublin City University, found that students of faith, particularly Catholic ones, are a vulnerable group. "Holding a religious worldview can be a lonely experience in modern Ireland", said one of the respondents.

According to the "Religious Inclusive Education" report, authored by Dr Amalee Meehan and Derek A Laffan MSc, students who are open about their faith can experience hostility from other students and even from staff.

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"Expressing religious based convictions can lead to low level bullying by staff members ... e.g. expressing anti-abortion views", noted one of the participants.

The report refers to secondary school students. Those who identify as Catholic are the group most likely to be associated to negative stereotypes, while those who identify as atheist are at the opposite end of the spectrum.

Read more about the report -

[[] <https://ionainstitute.ie/new-study-finds-catholic-students-and-teachers-being-subjected-to-bullying/>]

Reports

Bishops urge Catholics to act to stop Meacher Bill on assisted dying

The bishops of England and Wales have urged Catholics to write urgently to peers to ask them to speak against the Assisted Dying Bill when it comes before the House of Lords in the autumn.

In the first major intervention by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales since the introduction of the Private Member's Bill in May, the bishops encouraged the faithful to share personal stories with peers in the hope they may be persuaded to act against it.

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“Please consider writing to Members of the House of Lords or Commons and asking them to oppose this Bill,” said a statement posted on the website of the bishops’ conference

“Whilst there are good rational arguments for defeating this legislation, this is a battle for hearts and minds and so don’t be afraid to share your own experiences of ‘dying well’ and ‘end of life care’ if you have them through your work or personal life.”

The bishops tell Catholics that the Bill, introduced in May by Baroness Meacher of Spitalfields, the chairman of Dignity in Dying – formerly the Voluntary Euthanasia Society – offers “textual vagueness” in place of robust safeguards.

They say it raises “a number of serious questions about law and society’s ability to protect the most vulnerable”.

“When does a right to die become a duty to die?” the statement asks. “How can we be sure that a person is free from pressure from ending their life prematurely due to societal attitudes and perceptions about a person’s ‘quality’ or ‘worth’ of life? How we be sure a person is acting voluntarily and not out of a sense of ‘being a burden’ to family, friends, health and social care services and to society?”

The bishops express fears of extension of scope experienced in all jurisdiction which have introduced assisted suicide or euthanasia with so-called safeguards and which have witnessed the erosion of legal protections at

the same time as numbers of doctor-assisted deaths have risen incrementally.

They say that assisted suicide represents “false compassion” denounced by Pope Francis and warn Catholics that such a law would erode high-quality palliative care that offer seriously and terminally ill patients genuine choice at the end of their lives.

“Assisted dying could be seen as a quick and cheap alternative to proper end-of-life care,” they say. “Can we expect a full range of choice to be given to us, in the event of terminal illness, should this Bill make the statute books?”

They continue: “The Catholic Church remains opposed to any form of assisted suicide and we will scrutinise and continue to challenge this proposed legislation in the months ahead. We reaffirm our support for high quality end-of-life care, which includes spiritual and pastoral support for the one who is dying and their family.”

The Bill seeks to “enable adults who are terminally ill to be provided at their request with specified assistance to end their own lives”.

It would license doctors to supply lethal drugs, on request, to terminally ill patients so they can commit suicide, an act which at present is punishable by up to 14 years in jail under the Suicide Act of 1961.

Proposed safeguards include limiting assistance to people who are terminally ill and with a prognosis of six months of life remaining, who have mental capacity and a settled wish

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to die. Provision of the drugs must be authorised by two doctors and a High Court judge.

But Baroness Finlay of Llandaff, the palliative care specialist and former president of the British Medical Association who is at the forefront of the fight against the Bill, said the safeguards were effectively meaningless.

She said: “What appear at first to be safeguards are nothing of the sort, but instead are vague and empty assurances that will provide, at best, only a symbolic function.

“They present an unworkable ideal which will be virtually impossible to codify and which will be frequently and easily circumvented, misinterpreted, ignored, overlooked and



Paddle boarders and dolphins at Portstewart

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rejected before they are replaced or expanded, as has been witnessed every other jurisdiction which imagined that assisted suicide or euthanasia could be controlled or contained.”

The Bill is almost identical in form to the Bill of Labour MP Rob Marris, which was overwhelmingly defeated by 330 votes to 118 in the House of Commons in 2015.

This time, it has the support of an increased number of politicians and of the Sunday Times among other media.

Conservative Bishop to assist in Albany during search

The Diocese of Albany, a partner diocese of Down & Dromore, is seeking a new bishop because the Rt. Rev. William H. Love left the Episcopal Church after refusing to comply with General Convention’s 2018 decision on same-sex marriage rites. In the interim, the diocese has appointed an assisting bishop who shares Love’s theological views on marriage, writes Kirk Petersen.

In the historically conservative diocese, Smith is prepared to listen to both sides. “Since I identify as a theological conservative, I believe I have a special responsibility to reach out across the aisle to theological liberals,” the Rt. Rev. Michael G. Smith told TLC by email. “I think I have a good track record of genuine relationships of friendship and respect with people with whom I disagree in the House of Bishops.”

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The diocesan Standing Committee announced August 16 that Smith, who retired in 2019 after 15 years as Bishop of North Dakota, will serve as assisting bishop during the search. He and Love were two of the eight diocesan bishops who vetoed access to same-sex marriage liturgies in their dioceses, before Resolution B012 was passed in 2018 to change the veto power.

Smith, 65, will not be leading the diocese, as a provisional bishop would — the Standing Committee will continue to be the ecclesiastical authority. “Bishop Smith will walk alongside us to provide episcopal ministry focusing on Sacramental and Pastoral responsibilities including regular regional Confirmations. Bishop Smith will also assist the diocese with other duties that are reserved for a bishop,” the committee wrote in the announcement.

Smith has played a role in multiple dioceses since his retirement, and has joked that his business card should read “Have Mitre, Will Travel.”

In addition to spending one week per month in Albany, he said he will continue in his role as a part-time assistant bishop in the Diocese of Dallas, where he also spends about one week per month. Smith teaches “Ascetical Theology and Spiritual Practices” through the diocese’s Stanton Center for Ministry Formation. He also will continue to serve as a part-time assisting bishop for the Navajo Area Mission, supporting Indigenous leadership formation there and in Alaska.

Adding two more states to the mix, he is an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation of Oklahoma, and churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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when he is not on the road he lives in Minnesota. His wife, the Rev. Lisa White Smith, is the rector of Church of the Epiphany in Plymouth, a western suburb of Minneapolis.

Smith chairs the steering committee of the Communion Partners, a group that supports the traditional teachings of the Church regarding marriage and other subjects, and is a frequent contributor to the Daily Devotional for TLC.

“As one of the original members of the Communion Partners, I can tell you that the ministry of reconciliation has been one of our highest priorities whether at the local, national, or international level,” he said.

A bishop search typically takes 18 months or more, beginning with extensive internal discussions and discernment, and the development of a diocesan profile. The process formally started in June, indicating a possible election around the end of 2022.

The search in Albany will be closely watched, in the wake of Bishop Love’s solitary two-year defiance of the General Convention’s decision on same-sex marriage. Resolution B012 says that diocesan bishops who oppose same-sex marriage shall invite another bishop to provide pastoral support to couples, clergy, and congregations in these cases.

Love refused to comply, and an ecclesiastical trial found he had violated his vow to “conform to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church.” He resigned as Bishop of Albany before a sentence was imposed. He subsequently relinquished his orders in the Episcopal

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Church, and is now a bishop in the Anglican Church in North America.

Love's departure after taking a conservative stand prompted at least four priests and four deacons to leave the diocese in protest. These departures could collectively affect the theological balance of the diocese, and the election of the next bishop diocesan will be an indicator. The membership of the profile and search committee was elected by churches in each of the eight geographic deaneries of the diocese, and social media posts indicate it includes some diversity of opinion on same-sex marriage.

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

Book: Welcoming the Stranger

With the UK Government's New Plan for Immigration threatening to criminalise some asylum seekers and even those who try to help them, this book could hardly be more timely. In the UK today, the welcoming of strangers is a highly contentious issue.

We might, however, expect a Bible study on the subject to be fairly predictable and potentially anodyne. Even the least religious person will probably have some idea that the Bible would instruct us to welcome strangers, just as it instructs us to feed the hungry, visit the sick, and generally be kind to anyone who is suffering or in need. But what makes this book far from predictable, and hence so valuable, is that it gives real attention and empathy to everyone involved in the

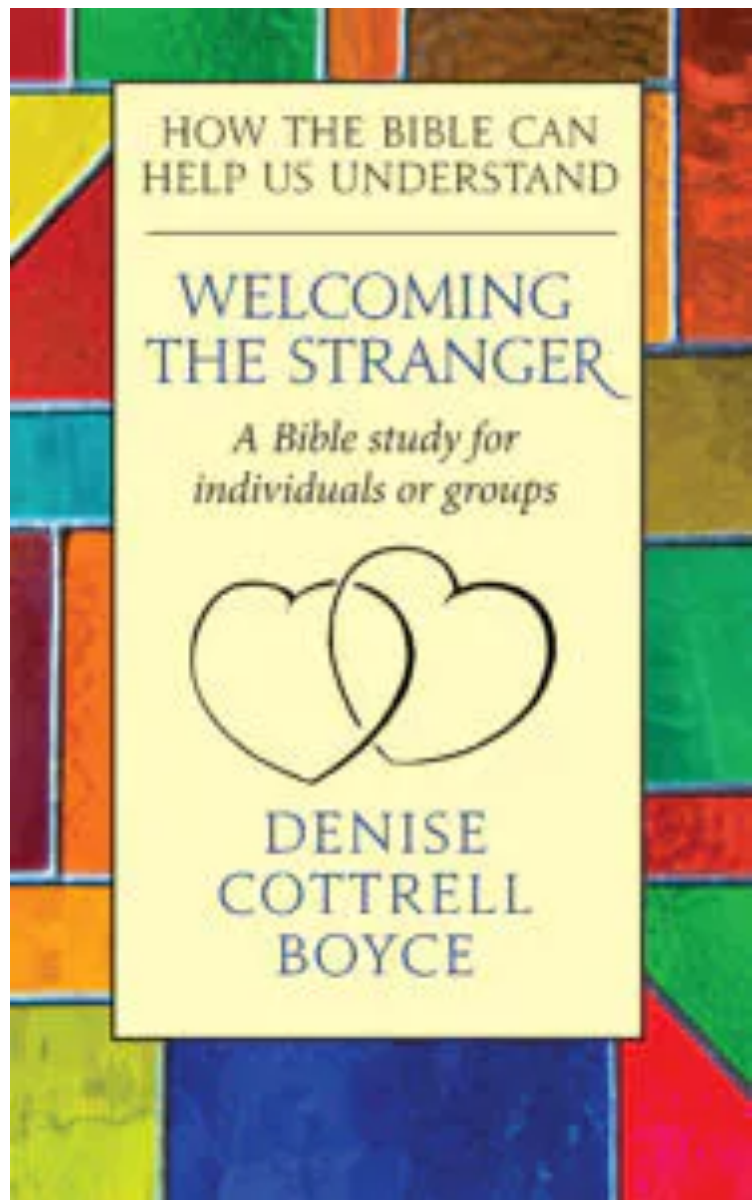
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migration and refugee crisis, both migrants and host communities - even those in host communities whom we may be quick to dismiss as racist or xenophobic.

In the first chapter, 'How Shall We Sing the Lord's Song in a Foreign Land?' the author empathises strongly with the desolation of people who have lost everything, and who find themselves in an alien environment with no control over their own lives. For the past

13 years Cottrell Boyce has volunteered in Liverpool with a charity for pre-and post-natal asylum-seekers, supporting and accompanying women through often traumatic situations, offering emotional and practical support. Her personal deep commitment to welcoming strangers is a very significant part of her own life.

But in the second chapter, 'Who Is Not My Neighbour?', Cottrell Boyce examines the undeniable reality that in many places and at many times, strangers and outsiders have been used to create a sense of community cohesion - the fear of the outsider can strengthen our sense of who we are.



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That way of thinking, of inclusion and exclusion, insiders and outsiders, is rendered obsolete by the gospels. She writes, "One piece of Good News that Jesus has for us is that we don't need to play that game anymore. There are no outsiders in the Kingdom of Heaven. In the Kingdom, no one has to be out for someone else to be in."

This does not however, mean a resort to platitudes and easy answers. In the next chapter, 'Fighting for the Scraps From the Table' the author highlights the fact that due to government policy and brutal economics, asylum seekers are usually dispersed to the poorest and most deprived communities in the UK, where housing is cheap, facilities are poor, and services are already stretched to their limits. So it is hardly surprising that whilst there are many examples of extraordinary generosity and hospitality, some in these communities may see new arrivals as just one more threat to their already stressful and precarious existence.

Cottrell Boyce is respectful about the fears these host communities may feel, the cultural clashes which may occur, and the sense of loss that can be felt when a long-established, familiar neighbourhood changes. Xenophobia, we are reminded, is not a hatred of foreigners, but a fear of them, and in some circumstances that fear can be understandable. With characteristic honesty she admits, "I cannot say for sure whether the concern I feel for the fate of asylum-seekers and migrants would be as uncomplicated if my well-being or my children's needs were compromised by their presence."

In the next chapter, 'Everything in Common', the author goes on to explore the fact that in reality the lives of asylum-

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seekers and their neighbours living in poverty have many similarities, and that addressing inequality is the answer - in effect, no justice, no peace.

As Cottrell Boyce writes: "We live in a society that habitually reduces complicated issues to binary choices. In its crudest terms our responses to migration, both personally and nationally, can boil down to, 'Good high-minded people welcome and cherish all incomers without question. Racist bigots reject, vilify and persecute them.'

"This isn't helpful nor is it an honest response to the gospel of love. The Sermon on the Mount invites us to think beyond our normal moral code to think the unthinkable and love the unlovable."

The Old Testament stories of exile, which include welcome and hostility, acceptance and suspicion, are employed to examine the complexity and ambiguity of our attitudes to the arrival of strangers in our communities. Cottrell Boyce is also honest enough to reveal the times when she herself has unthinkingly harboured stereotypes and preconceptions. Middle class people of her age tend to pride themselves on having left the racism of their parents' generation behind - but have no compunction in sneering at the stereotypical Sun reader, who may themselves be living very difficult lives.

The combination of Bible texts, anecdotes from the author's own life and Irish migrant heritage, and a variety of cultural references, make this a highly readable and engaging study. The prose is perfectly clear, there is a blessed absence of theological jargon, and the honesty with which the author at

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times reveals her own faults is admirable and refreshing. Readers may not agree with every point made, indeed they may strongly disagree at times, but this is what makes the book a genuine and meaningful contribution to the debate on these difficult issues.

In her conclusion, Cottrell Boyce quotes the John Donne poem, 'No man is an island'. With the climate crisis and the pandemic making our interconnectedness ever more apparent, it is clear that to create a harmonious society we must address not only the needs of asylum seekers and migrants, but the problems that cause them to leave their homes, and the concerns of the communities in which they settle. The UNHCR, in advocating for equitable distribution of Covid vaccines has said, 'No-one is safe until everyone is safe'. It is perhaps also true that migrants and asylum seekers will not really feel safe and secure until everyone in their host communities feel safe and secure.

As an individual reader I found this book a challenging, thought-provoking and occasionally surprising read, and used as the basis for a study group I think it would lead to lively, honest, and fruitful discussions. Its great strength it is that it could be used in communities where immigration is a controversial issue, and both host community and migrants would feel that their concerns were equally respected. It really is a book for our times.

Welcoming the Stranger, by Denise Cottrell Boyce is published by Darton, Longman and Todd. Price £7.99.

Think imaginatively about mission

New course starting Oct 2021. Do you have a heart for mission & evangelism? This course is designed by Irish Methodist teams to equip us for mission in the 21st century. Join us to think imaginatively about mission! More info <https://buff.ly/3zEfwGV>

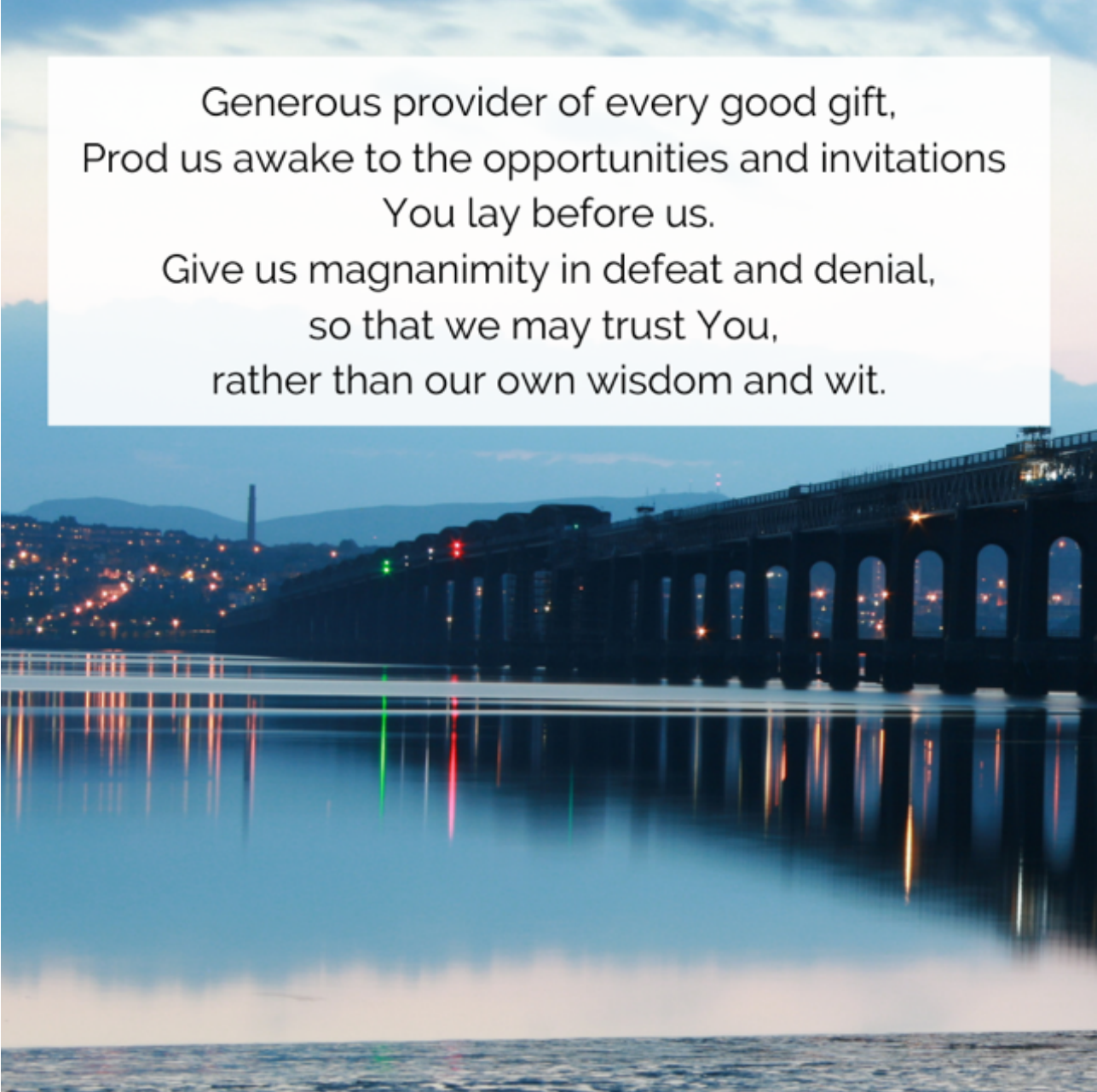
Poem for today

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.

Pointers for prayer

Creator God,
you call us to love and serve you
with body, mind, and spirit



Generous provider of every good gift,
Prod us awake to the opportunities and invitations
You lay before us.
Give us magnanimity in defeat and denial,
so that we may trust You,
rather than our own wisdom and wit.

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

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

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage.
Life-giving God,
heal our lives,
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds
and offer you thanks from generation to generation
through 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

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not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

But when Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arab heard of our plan, they scoffed contemptuously. “What are you doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” they asked. I replied, “The God of heaven will help us succeed. We, his servants, will start rebuilding this wall.”

Nehemiah 2:19-20 NLT

Everything seemed to have been going so well. Not only did King Artaxerxes give Nehemiah the leave that he requested but supplied him with wood for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Nehemiah had then made the 1000-mile journey to the city and inspected the broken walls and found it just as he had been told. He called the people together and challenged them to rebuild the walls and they were eager to start. Surely everything would now flow beautifully – but no! Even before the building work started the opposition got going. The builders were mocked and ridiculed and had to face the dangerous allegation that their work would be an act of rebellion against the King.

I love Nehemiah’s confidence. He brushed off the opposition. He knew that God was on his side and that his work was bound to succeed. The waspish criticisms and threats weren’t going to be allowed to delay an undertaking as important as this. Throughout the Bible we see men and

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women of God facing opposition. Moses continually battled with opposition from his own people. Joshua faced fierce opposition on all sides when he entered the Promised Land. The Judges, Kings and Prophets all faced a continual barrage of obstacles and in the New Testament it is no different. Jesus' own ministry was opposed from the outset and led to his total rejection through his death on the Cross, and he assured his followers that it would be no different for them.

It should never surprise us when we face opposition. It is never pleasant but it should never divert us from following God. It is an integral part of the privilege of serving God in a world that is fundamentally opposed to him.

QUESTION

What opposition have you faced and how have you coped with it?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, keep me strong, gracious and loving however obstructive people might be. Amen

