



Rev Fran Grasham with Father Seamus Madigan, Head Chaplain to the Defence Forces

First female Chaplain to the Irish Defence Forces appointed

Rev Fran Grasham is joining the diocesan clergy team in Meath & Kildare. She will be also the first female Chaplain to the Forces in Ireland.

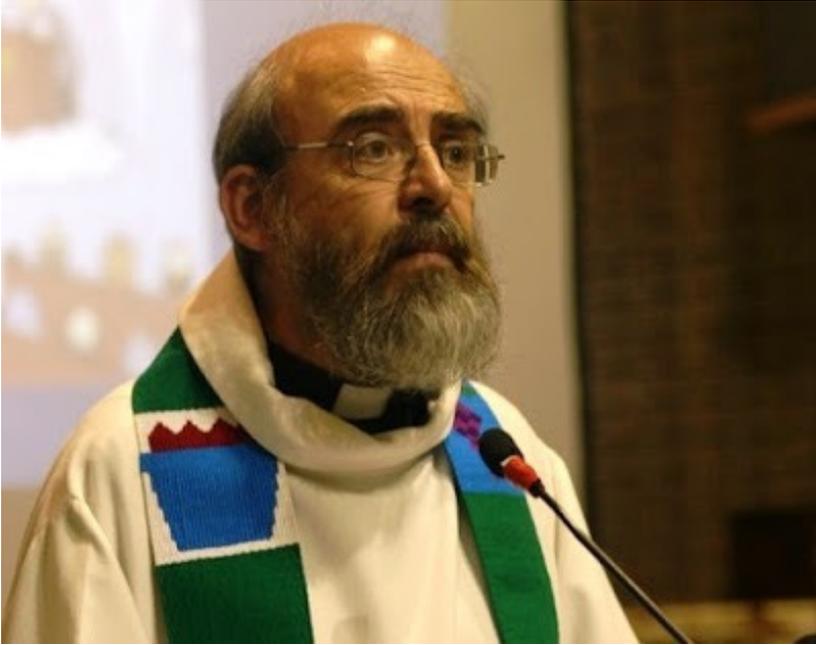
Fran will serve as an Non-Stipendiary-Minister - 1½ days a week across the Kildare and Newbridge Group of Parishes and as Chaplain to the Curragh for ½ a day a week. Father Seamus Madigan, Head Chaplain to the Defence Forces said, "On behalf of the Service I wish to express a very warm welcome to Rev Fran and I hope that she will have a long and fulfilling ministry within the Defence Forces". Rev Grasham will be based in the Curragh in the DFTC

Originally a primary school teacher she was previously a priest in the Church of England. Fran is married to Steve (CIYD Youth Ministry Development Officer for the South of Ireland). They have two children - Katherine (23) and Joseph (20). Fran enjoys reading, knitting, the countryside and American crime drama!

Her service of Introduction will be held in St Brigid's Cathedral, Kildare on 19 January 2017.

New Limerick post for CITI staffer

The Rt Revd Dr Kenneth Kearon is to appoint Revd Canon Patrick Comerford to a joint position in the Diocese of Limerick and Killaloe with effect from January 2017. Canon Comerford will be both Director for Education
churchnewsireland@gmail.com



and Training in the diocese and also priest-in-charge of Rathkeale Group of parishes, and will take up his parochial responsibilities on January 20th. Canon Comerford will see through his teaching and supervision responsibilities within the Church of Ireland Theological Institute (CITI) for both residential and non-residential programmes in a part-time capacity over the remainder of this academic year and will leave CITI in the spring of 2017. He will commence as Director of Education and Training in the diocese in April.

The Director of CITI, Revd Canon Dr Maurice Elliott, commented, 'Patrick has been a loyal colleague within first CITC and then CITI since 2006. Prior to that he was a visiting lecturer for a period of four years. Over my time of working with him I have come to appreciate his professionalism, his personal warmth, his strong faith and his engaging sense of humour. He and Barbara have made a very significant contribution to the ministry and community life of the Theological Institute. As Patrick now prepares to move towards a very different sphere of pastoral duty I join with other staff and students in wishing him and Barbara every blessing for fruitfulness and fulfilment.'

As Chair of the Governing Council, the Archbishop of Dublin, said, 'Canon Comerford has served the Church of Ireland in a wide variety of capacities throughout a career which has concentrated on communication and engagement with a wide array of ideas and situations at home and abroad. Most recently he has applied these talents in the life of the Theological Institute. I welcome his appointment by the Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe to a fascinating and responsible new

role and wish him and Barbara everything that is best as a new phase of life unfolds for them and for others.'

The Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe welcomed the appointment. 'Rathkeale Group of Parishes is a warm and welcoming parish and I know Canon Comerford will be happy there. We've long had a need for a focus for education and training in the diocese, and Canon Comerford's vast experience in this regard will be invaluable. I look forward to welcoming him and his wife Barbara to the diocese.'

Live Crib will support Cork charities

The parishioners of Saint Mary's Church, Carrigaline, in the Church of Ireland Diocese of Cork, are mounting a live crib next weekend - on Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th December (2 p.m. to 6 p.m. each day).

The event, called 'The Road to Bethlehem', is open to all and the admission charge of €5 for adults (children free) will go to local charities

including Cork Penny Dinners, Cork St Vincent de Paul and Cork Simon Community.

As well as the Nativity Pageant with live animals there will be carol singing, music, teas, coffees, mulled wine and lots more.

Pepper Pot Carols by Candlelight

A **Carol service** will take place in the beautiful Georgian surroundings of the Pepper Canister Church, one of Dublin's most famous churches. Call in on your way home from work or bring the family for a real festive treat, a traditional service of nine lessons led by clergy from the local churches, and carols from Classicus Youth Choir followed by seasonal refreshments.

Now established as an annual tradition in one of Dublin's landmark churches, this free service is enormously popular. The Pepper Canister Church is an 18th century church which is not very big and has limited capacity. Seating for the service is unreserved and people will be seated until the church is full. To avoid disappointment come early. Date: Monday 12th December. Time: 6pm. Cost: Free Event

Achievements and challenges, 40 years after the first ordination of women in Canada

Four decades after the first women were ordained in the Anglican Church of Canada, much progress remains to be made, say female priests who profess to have struggled with everything from unequal pay to inappropriate touching by some parishioners. Last week (28 November to 1 December), 40 female priests from the Anglican Church of Canada gathered at St James Anglican Church in Stratford, Ontario, for “Unmasking the Feminine,” a conference marking the 40th anniversary of the ordination of women in the church. For participants, the event seemed an occasion both for celebrating the achievements made in advancing the rights of women and being mindful of the challenges many say yet remain.

“The progress we’ve made over those years has made life significantly better than it was for our mothers and grandmothers, but oh my, it has been a very hard row to hoe,” said Canon Judy Rois, executive director of the Anglican Foundation, in a keynote address opening the



Forty females priests gather at St James Anglican Church in Stratford, Ontario, for the 40th anniversary of the ordination of women in the Anglican Church of Canada.

event. “All of us know the strain of a white collar around our neck, and all of us know the sting and the pain of opposition. But thank God, thank God, we also know the indomitable spirit of hope.”

“We have much to be grateful for in Canada,” Linda Nicholls, installed as Bishop of Huron the previous Saturday, said in her introduction to a conference workshop. “It doesn’t mean we’re finished, but it means we’re on the way.”

Asked what they felt were the continuing challenges of women in the church, some noted that female priests are still being paid less than their male counterparts.

- *Read Tali Folins' full in-depth report on the Anglican Journal [website](#).*

British Baptists issue call for unity over same-sex marriage

Senior British Baptists have issued a call for denominational unity in the face of challenges posed by the issue of human sexuality.

Signed by pastors, academics and the general director of BMS World Mission, the denomination's overseas mission agency, the document entitled *The Courage to be Baptist: A Statement on Baptist Ecclesiology and Human Sexuality* is billed as "a call to Baptist churches to face our present disagreements over same-sex marriage by being faithful to a Baptist way of being church".

Some signatories hold a traditional view of marriage and sexuality, while others affirm the theological validity of same-sex relationships.



The Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) has previously urged its member churches **not to register** to conduct same-sex marriages, though it has acknowledged it cannot prevent them doing so if they wish. It has also said its ministers have the freedom to conduct such marriages, though they are prohibited from entering into same-sex marriages themselves.

While most Baptist churches are theologically conservative on the issue, the question of how inclusive the denomination can be has caused debate in recent years.

The BUGB is not a centrally organised or hierarchical denomination and the principle of congregational independence is central to its identity. The first of the three clauses in its "Declaration of Principle" says that "our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws".

An introduction on **The Courage to be Baptist** website says: "This Baptist way of being church allows us to maintain unity even when we disagree about certain issues. We believe this is a gift of God, allowing us to witness to our true unity in Christ even when we disagree about serious matters."

Among the signatories are Rev Dr Ruth Gouldbourne, minister of Bloomsbury Baptist Church, Rev Dr Steve Holmes, senior lecturer in systematic theology at the University of St Andrews, and BMS general director Rev David Kerrigan.

The **statement** acknowledges that every Western Christian denomination is struggling with ethical questions about human sexuality. However, it notes that British Baptists have "united around a minimal statement of shared principles and so modelled living together in unity and love despite differences". Among these, it suggests, are the ministry of women and the remarriage of divorcees. It rejects the idea of seeking unity by "imposing uniformity, tying the body of Christ to a procrustean bed to distort and dismember it".

The statement calls for local churches to engage together "much more deeply and honestly than before" and for a "serious, open-ended and respectful conversation". It says: "We call for shared trust and good faith, a commitment to believe that those churches with whom we disagree take their positions out of a desire to shape life according to the gospel, and to follow faithfully the laws of Christ disclosed in Scripture."

Among those commending the statement is Rev Dr Nigel Wright, a former principal of Spurgeon's College, who says: "Were it up to me I would wish our denomination to hold fast fearlessly, publicly and with a good conscience to a

traditional understanding of marriage and sexual relations. I hope it will go on doing so. However, respect for the freedom of informed (and sometimes dissenting) consciences is a high priority for any Baptist, a proven way of holding together when there are deeply-felt disagreements, and a moral strength. This statement offers a thoughtful and compassionate rationale for such an approach and as such is to be commended."

Principal emeritus of Regent's Park College, Rev Dr Paul Fiddes, says: "Since its authors differ on the issue of same-sex relations, their writing models, in an extraordinarily helpful way, the love and unity that should be possible among Baptists at this critical moment in their story. Read widely, this statement could transform attitudes and strengthen Baptists to share in the mission of God."

News briefs

+++ Youth Facebook site launched - Connor Youth Forum is going from strength to strength as young people from across the diocese have an opportunity to share their voices on issues

regarding church, their faith and living life as a young person. The Youth Forum met again on Saturday November 19 to plan an event for other young people, as well as chatting about their priorities as a Forum. Members launched a Connor Youth Forum Facebook page which can be seen at <https://www.facebook.com>

+++ Youth leader training - Invest Youth aims to help develop Continued Professional Development for those involved in youth work. Youth Link NI hosts training on January 26 which will be delivered by Flourish. For more details visit: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/invest-youth-cpd-event-mental-health-awareness-tickets-28726605049>

+++ New rector for Julianstown - Rev Roy Taylor has been appointed to the Parish of Julianstown in the diocese of Meath & Kildare. Roy is English and has served in England, Geneva, Tenerife and Poland. As well as a background in ministry he has also worked extensively in education. He is married to Monika, who is Polish, and they have a grown up family. Roy and Monika will be coming to the Dioceses in mid March.

+++ The Priests are live - in the Diamond Hall, Coleraine University, 13 Feb 2017; for tickets call 028 703 57149 <https://t.co/THx8O9RqDD>

+++ After ebola - The C of I Bishops' Appeal funded €2000 for the production of KMF Productions' "What in the World?" series. The second in the series, looking at Sierra Leone following the Ebola outbreak was on RTE One last night.

+++ First female organ scholar - Eleanor Carter has joined Clare College, Cambridge as its first female organ scholar. She will assist Graham Ross in his work with the choir, including three services a week during the academic terms, and a number of external concerts, tours, recordings and broadcasts. Carter has played the organ since the age of nine, and has studied with Katherine Dienes-Williams, Anne Marsden Thomas and Peter Holder. Former Clare organ scholars include Ivor Bolton, Stephen Farr and James McVinnie.

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

The old boys' club: Ireland's most influential privately educated men and the elite schools that spawned them

Irish Independent

<http://www.independent.ie/entertainment/the-old-boys-club-irelands-most-influential-privately-educated-men-and-the-elite-schools-that-spawned-them-35139477.html>

What the North can teach the South about welcoming refugees

Andy Pollak writes - The Irish government seems to be finally and belatedly moving to make its small contribution to tackling the worst humanitarian crisis faced by Europe since the Second World War: the influx of millions of refugees from war-torn countries in the Middle East and Africa. 14 months ago - following the international outcry caused by the

<http://2irelands2gether.com/2016/11/24/what-the-north-can-teach-the-south-about-welcoming-refugees/>

Catholics less likely to breastfeed, research suggests

Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/catholics-less-likely-to-breastfeed-research-suggests-35271359.html>

Police probe claims of historical sex abuse at Northern Ireland football clubs

Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/police-probe-claims-of-historical-sex-abuse-at-northern-ireland-football-clubs-35272022.html>

Times

Diary item about the Archbishop of Canterbury's new book *Dethroning Mammon* and how there is 'no escaping our modern materialist culture'. In the book, Archbishop Justin writes about how even his copy of the Bible wants him to spend money in the Christmas sales - a discovery he made while struggling with a malfunctioning app which enables him to have a Bible on his tablet.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/a-biblical-black-friday-kfx3zkkkj>

Politics Home

Reports that the Archbishop of York has called on churches to join him in supporting WaterAid's 2016 Christmas Appeal, *Made of the same stuff*, to help give water as well as hope to those most in need. Archbishop Sentamu is supporting the fundraising appeal, which aims to unite us all using the theme of water. WaterAid aims to help bring taps and toilets to everyone, everywhere, by 2030.

Christian Today

Further coverage of an interview with the *Radio Times* in which Theresa May said she will keep to the same traditions she has had for the last 20 years on Christmas Day including visiting a lunch for the elderly, which is put on by the local churches in her Maidenhead constituency. She told the *Radio Times* that throughout her life she has been going to Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve and church on Christmas Day morning.

Premier

Report that churches across Hull have created a city-wide Advent calendar, with the buildings themselves representing each daily door. The project called *Christmas Adventure* has been spearheaded by Believe in Hull, a team of different churches which are working together to represent and contribute to the area as it becomes City of Culture for 2017. The Bishop of Hull, Alison White is quoted.

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Hull-churches-create-real-life-Advent-calendar>

BBC

Report that a man has been found guilty of stealing Chester Cathedral's 19th Century Greek icon, The Raising of Lazarus. Vasilij Apilats, 61, of Edleston Road, Crewe, stole The Raising of

Lazarus painting from the cathedral in 2014 and left a cheap Christmas toy angel in its place, Chester Crown Court heard.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-38213899>

Mail

Report that a row has broken out over a new 42-storey London skyscraper, Manhattan Loft Gardens, which campaigners say will ruin the view of St Paul's Cathedral. The skyscraper is in the process of being built in Stratford, east London.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4000892/Fury-new-London-skyscraper-spoiling-celebrated-ancient-view-St-Paul-s-Cathedral.html>

Times

Further coverage of three archbishops from war-torn Iraq and Syria who were refused visas to attend the consecration of the UK's first Syriac Orthodox Cathedral last month despite being invited to London to meet Prince Charles.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/archbishops-are-denied-visas-over-asylum-fears-fl38292qb>

Times

Further coverage that skeletons unearthed at a site said to have been visited by King Arthur are the oldest example of monasticism found in the UK, archaeologists have said. Carbon dating revealed the remains, discovered at medieval Beckery Chapel, near Glastonbury, were from the 5th or early 6th Century AD.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/remains-are-uks-earliest-known-monks-kqjmk03s8>

Comment

Times: "May must abandon her faith in faith schools", writes Rachel Sylvester. In the wake of a new report on social integration which links religious education and division and prejudice.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/may-must-abandon-her-faith-in-faith-schools-cdffxd02>

Times: Matthew Syed says, "The chimes of church bells can be so appealing".

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-chimes-of-church-bells-can-be-so-appealing-dgv6vsc3n>