



Image of the day - Truro Cathedral

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100 years of service to church youth ministry



Two Officers from the Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade (CLCGB) in Connor Diocese have chalked up more than 100 years of service between them.

David Gamble (Left) joined the Brigade in St Paul's Company, Lisburn, in 1968. In the 1970s, he played on the Company's successful football team which won the CLB League three years in succession. He represented the Ulster Regiment in cross country and athletics at National Competitions and set a Brigade record for the 800m in the late 1970s. He also played the flute in the Company's Marching Band.

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David was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1980 and promoted to Lieutenant in 1984. From 1990 until 1994 he was Captain of the Company, but had to stand down due to a work commitments. He continued to act as an Officer in the Company, right up to the present day, working with the Y Team, the section for 7 to 10 year olds. He was presented with a fourth 'five year rose' for his 30 years medal at a 'virtual service' by the rector, the Rev Arthur Young, assisted by present Captain, Andrew Maze.

Johnny Conn has been awarded the Officers' Service Medal. Johnny joined the Senior Corps of the Carnmoney CLB Company, Newtownabbey, in 1970. He too enjoyed the Brigade's sporting programme, and competed in handball, football and athletics competitions. For teaching in the parish Sunday School, Johnny was presented with the Brigade's Church Service Award at a display night in the early 70s. After attending Officer Training, Johnny was



Officers with chaplains

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commissioned as Second Lieutenant, promoted to Lieutenant. He was Captain of the Carnmoney Company from 1977 until 1998, and in 1992 established a Church Girls' Brigade unit for the parish. With the help of an enthusiastic group of leaders, the Brigade in Carnmoney became strong and successful. Johnny played the bass drum in the Company's Marching Band.

He also worked at Battalion and Regimental level. He was Publicity Officer under the late Harry Anderson, Ulster Regiment CO, and assisted the Training Officer to organise courses.

In 1991, he was appointed Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion. He recently did a second term as Publicity Officer under Melvyn Lockhart, the present CO, and has always had a passion to record the Brigade's fascinating history.

Pope Francis appoints more women to Vatican posts

Pope Francis has appointed two women to Vatican posts previously held only by men, in back-to-back moves giving women more empowerment in the male-dominated Holy See.

He appointed Nathalie Becquart, a French member of the Xaviere Missionary Sisters, on Saturday as co-undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops, a department that prepares major meetings of world bishops held every few years on a different topic.

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The previous day, Francis named Italian magistrate Catia Summaria as the first woman Promoter of Justice in the Vatican's Court of Appeals.



Xaviere Missionary Sister Nathalie Becquart

Becquart's position, effectively a joint number two spot, will give her the right to vote in the all-male assemblies, something many women and some bishops have called for. She is 52, relatively young by Vatican standards.

Women have participated as observers and consultants in past synods but only "synod fathers", including bishops and specially appointed or elected male representatives, could vote on final documents sent to the pope.

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During a synod in 2018, more than 10,000 people signed a petition demanding that women get the vote.

"A door has been opened. We will see what other steps could be taken in the future," Cardinal Mario Grech, the synod's secretary-general, told the official Vatican News website.

While upholding the Church's tradition barring female priests, Francis has set up commissions to study the history of women deacons in the early centuries of the Catholic Church, responding to calls by women that they be allowed to take up the role today.

Last year, in one fell swoop, Francis appointed six women to senior roles in the council that oversees Vatican finances.

He has also appointed women to the posts of deputy foreign minister, director of the Vatican Museums and deputy head of the Vatican Press Office.

Debt help needs to be simplified, says Christian charity

Christians Against Poverty (CAP) is calling for changes to the debt help on offer so that more people can qualify.

The charity says the "difficult" eligibility criteria for Debt Relief Orders (DRO) is leaving many people in debt with little option but to file for bankruptcy, which is far more expensive and carries much more stigma.

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It wants the process to be simplified so that more people can obtain a DRO instead of having to file for bankruptcy.

“DROs are more affordable, take less time and there’s less stigma attached, compared to bankruptcy,” CAP’s Social Policy Manager, Rachel Gregory, explained.

“They are designed for people on low incomes who have no other option to get out of debt. To apply for a DRO costs £90 but a bankruptcy application is £680. This is money people

in debt do not have.



Snowman built by clergy children

“Over half of our clients who enter bankruptcy are the target demographic for a DRO, this highlights why change is desperately needed as soon as possible.



Church at Binnevenagh with backdrop of Foyle and Donegal

“They should be allowed to go through a DRO but can’t because of the difficult eligibility criteria.”

CAP also wants the debt limit raised from £20,000 to £50,000.

The call comes in response to proposals from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Insolvency Service to increase the debt limit to £30,000.

Gregory said the proposal was a “positive step in the right direction” but that the changes “do not go far enough” as

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they would still exclude thousands of people who could otherwise be eligible.

“Changing the debt limit from £20,000 to £50,000 will allow 90% of CAP clients, who’re wrongly excluded from a DRO, to be able to apply for one,” she said.

“So many people will need to access a DRO because of pandemic debts, it’s vital we simplify the solution so they can do this and start to rebuild their lives.

“It would also be beneficial for creditors. They wouldn’t have to waste resources trying to collect debts that cannot be repaid. Many would also save money by avoiding unnecessary investigations undertaken in the bankruptcy process.”

Bunclody rector instituted

The Reverend Trevor Sargent was instituted as rector of Bunclody Union of Parishes on Friday night, February 5th, 2021.

Trevor moves to Bunclody from his post as Curate Assistant in Waterford Union of Parishes where he served for almost three years. He succeeds Canon Michael Stevenson who retired in February 2020.

Bunclody Union of Parishes includes St Mary’s Church, Bunclody, St Paul’s Church, Kildavin, St Fiac’s Church, Clonegal and St Brigid’s Church, Kilrush.

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The online institution service – a first for the Diocese – was attended by over 200 invited parishioners, family members and well-wishers.

Speaking at the service Michael Burrows, Bishop of Cashel, Ferns & Ossory, said he was delighted to welcome Mr Sargent to Bunclody and he hoped that Trevor and his wife, Áine, would have many happy years there.

He also thanked Valerie Power and the Reverend Margaret Sykes and all those who held the fort during the one-year vacancy.

Speaking about the new online format institution, necessitated by Covid restrictions, he suggested that, rather than thinking of holding a service in this way as ‘a technological puzzle’ we should instead think of it as ‘a theological reality’.

“With so many people attending from so many different places,” he said, “we are, in Biblical terms, surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.”

The preacher was the Very Reverend Maria Jansson, Dean of Waterford who spoke of how Trevor had brought imagination, initiative and hard work to his curacy in Waterford Union and referred to how the world and the church will have changed considerably following this pandemic.

“As people of faith our task is to enable a conversation develop, that can relate God to the mess of life, to the

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potential for good in mankind,” she said, stating also that the seeds of a new church are taking root.

“As individuals and as communities we have to learn to witness in a way that makes sense to people who long for a radical and authentic faith,” she said.

Referring to the new Rector and his wife Áine Neville’s interest in organic growing she said that it was no accident that they were coming to Bunclody in the spring.



“You have a few months before the end of this pandemic,” she told Trevor in relation to his ministry, “to prepare the soil, to begin the conversations, so that you will know what needs to be weeded, protected, nourished and planted.”

Many prayers during the service were read in Irish, reflecting the new rector’s love and commitment to the language and his involvement with Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise (the Irish Guild of the Church) which promotes the use of the Irish language.

On You Tube - The Institution to The Incumbency of The Reverend Trevor Sargent. Friday February 5 2021
<https://youtu.be/7BxgFFJYiA4>

Broadcasts, resources and webinars

Eco–Congregation Ireland’s latest newsletter is now available, highlighting examples of environmental projects undertaken by churches across the island of Ireland. This includes:

- the story of how Carrigrohane Union (Cork, Cloyne and Ross) has been working intentionally towards being a sustainable congregation;
- bird–nesting boxes in nearby Carrigaline Union;
- the Revd Trevor Sargent’s ecological notes as spring approaches.

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Eco–Congregation Ireland is an initiative of the Irish Inter Church Meeting, and includes members from the Roman Catholic Church, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church and Religious Society of Friends.

[[] www.ecocongregationireland.com]

Questions of our Times: Join Jonathan Aitken, Rowan Williams and other speakers for a series of free webinars exploring the challenges of fake news, Covid-19, race inequality, climate emergency and unanswered prayer. Starting 23 Feb <https://bit.ly/39LbxOR>

12 Ignatian Tips for Mental Health. A video of a Zoom talk by Brendan McManus SJ for Gardiner Street Parish in Dublin.

<https://youtu.be/r-ltgTz0mGo>





Opinion - If President wants to see America's Irish roots, he should come to Co Down, James Dingley writes

Photo - US President Joe Biden at his inauguration as 46th US President on January 20, 2021 in Washington DC.

It appears that America now has an 'Irish' president, which makes one wonder on whose behalf he is going to govern America for, or whose Ireland he represents.

Consequently it is worthwhile recalling for President Biden just what America's Irish heritage is. If America has an Irish heritage it is fundamentally that of Ulster-Scots (Protestant Dissenters) who, like their fellows from England and Wales,
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established the American colonies to be free from Episcopalian (clerical hierarchy) rule, James Dingley writes in the News Letter.

They sought freedom from the religious intolerance of Anglican and Roman Catholic hierarchies, the liberty to worship in their own way, something that Anglican and Catholic Episcopalian persecution denied them in Europe.

It was this 'dissenting' tradition that became the basis for modern liberal democracy, something opposed by Rome in particular. And it was these dissenters who fought for American independence, whilst Catholics and Germans fought for the Crown.



Dr James Dingley is a Belfast based academic and chair of the Francis Hutcheson Institute

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Indeed, in 18th century Ireland the government twice seriously considered arming Catholics to help put down Ulster Dissenters and their libertarian creed, leading many to flee to America.

Further, the Universities of Harvard, Yale and Princeton were all dissenter foundations, whose graduates played a major role in the American Revolution, Declaration of Independence and Constitution. All their ideals were heavily inspired by the Ulster dissenter and philosopher Francis Hutcheson, 'Father of the Scottish Enlightenment' and teacher of Adam Smith.

Hutcheson's works were core reading at American universities and for America's founding fathers.

It was Hutcheson who taught the right to rebel against unjust government and advocated the separation of church and state.

For Hutcheson, religion should become a purely private affair, excluded from the public realm and discourse (as adopted by America) and advocated in Ireland (a prophet in his own land?).

These dissenters constituted one of the three legally defined religious groups in 18th century Ireland and Britain.

Protestant only referred to Anglicans, Dissenters were non-Anglican Reformation churches (in Ireland mostly Presbyterian), whilst Roman Catholics constituted their own legal category.

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The latter two both suffered similar legal, economic and political disabilities (Penal Laws for Catholics, Test Acts for Dissenters).

This gave dissenters a fear of episcopacy, since they were mostly tenant farmers under Anglican/Protestant landlords and aristocrats, just like Catholics, whose Episcopalian hierarchy had also persecuted dissenters. This, unlike the Catholics, gave them a burning desire for non-hierarchical (aristocratic or ecclesiastical) self-government, individual freedom of conscience and religion — the cornerstone of liberal democracy.

Consequently, 'Irish' American dissenters fought against the British and Irish Catholics for Britain. In the 1770s the burning issue in America was the fear of episcopacy, after Westminster had recognised a Catholic episcopacy in Canada (French Quebec) and George III sought to introduce an Anglican episcopacy into the American colonies.

This was the dominating public debate behind the revolution, with Ulster dissenters to the fore in creating a liberal democratic America that Irish Catholics fought against. What America is and made her so successful was the fulfilment of dissenter ideals.

If President Biden wishes to recognise America's true 'Irish' roots he should visit Hutcheson's home town of Saintfield, Co Down.

Courtesy of the News Letter 03.02.2021

Pointers for prayer

Pray for all teachers and parents involved with students or their children. We ask for stamina and creativity as they seek to educate in less than ideal circumstances.

Matana Diocese in Burundi -Give thanks for the confirmations that took place across the diocese last Autumn and for safety in travel for Bishop Seth. Ask God to bless the parish pastors as they nurture and disciple these young people in faith.

It has been announced that on Ascension Day - 13 May 2021, Bishop Hosam Naoum will be installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, bearing the title Archbishop. Please pray for Bishop Naoum, his family and the Diocese.

Pray that the right person will be appointed to lead Church Army in the next chapter. Pray for wisdom for the Board members as they meet to decide who will be appointed.

We think today of families who are struggling to cope with the ongoing restrictions to normal life, especially those who live in small homes with no outside space. We pray for an abundance of tolerance to help ease their less than ideal circumstances.

Today we give thanks for young climate activists. A UN survey shows that demand for green business and jobs is particularly high among young people, who have been a driving force behind getting the issue onto the political agenda.



We remember with thanks the numerous Mothers' Union members who, over the years, have used their God-given gifts to change the world. We pray that, in our day, we'll also be willing to use our gifts to help transform lives and communities

Today we pray for Mozambique. A cholera outbreak combined with a growing humanitarian crisis after fighting in a northern province displaced more than 500,000 people last year has led to the UN calling for help in the region.

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and

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persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.

Lord Jesus, you prayed that we would all be united together so the world would believe and experience your love. Help us to put aside that which keeps us apart and work together to share your love through our actions and our lives.

Almighty God,
you have created the heavens and the earth
and made us in your own image:
teach us to discern your hand in all your works
and your likeness in all your children;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all
things,
now and for ever.

Speaking to the Soul

And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT

Nothing stands still for long. If you need proof of that, then have a look at a photo of yourself from ten years ago. We are constantly changing, whether we like it or not! Here Paul speaks about the way in which we change as Christians. If our lives as followers of Jesus look exactly the same as they did in the past then something has gone desperately wrong.

Being a Christian is very different from belonging to a club, where you can normally tailor your involvement to suit

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yourself. Many people, we are told, belong to gyms but never attend! By way of contrast, Christianity is a relationship within which God's desire is that we change. Time and again Paul talks about the importance of growing in faith and becoming more mature, and here in 2 Corinthians he speaks of us changing so that we look more and more like Jesus.

I am sure that we would all be eager to point out that we have a long way to go to resemble Jesus, but that's the road we're on. The Holy Spirit, day by day, is working the miracle of changing us into the likeness of Jesus. Probably the best way of seeing this process at work is by looking at other people around you. As you see their gentleness, kindness, compassion, joy and peace give thanks to God for the way in which he is developing these beautiful qualities in them. And as you give more of yourself to the Lord, these amazing fruits of the Spirit will be growing steadily in your own life.

QUESTION

In what ways have you grown as a Christian over the past year, and what growth are you seeking in the coming year?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you that you love me so much that you want me to change. Help me to welcome your Holy Spirit more fully into my life so that, amazingly, day by day I become more like Jesus. Amen.



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