



The team, from left to right, Mike Barnett (Rector's Warden), Nigel Quinn (Parishioner), Rev Willie Nixon, Richard Spratt (Chief Executive of Fields of Life), Leo Rossi (Select Vestry) and Rosie Steele (Parishioner).

Drumbeg Parish is building a school in Uganda

The Rector of Drumbeg, Rev. Willie Nixon, and a team from the parish recently spent a week in

Nyapeya Northern Uganda where they are partnering with Fields of Life to build a school.

Rev Willie Nixon writes this report on the project

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In June last year the Select Vestry were offered £40000 from a Parish Family to spend on a Mission Project in Africa. The only stipulation was that project would have an educational and gospel element to it.

As a Vestry we began to look at the possibility of partnering with Fields of Life to build a school in Gulu, Northern Uganda at a cost of £80k.

The trip to Uganda was to visit the project in Gulu. We will partner in the project with Bishop Johnson Gakumba and the Diocese of Northern Ugandan. We spent two days with Bishop Johnson and his clergy during the trip.

We hope to see a 7 classroom school built plus a borehole well sunk at the school which is in Nyapeya Parish. It was good to discover that the beginnings of a church building structure and a 'Rectory' have already been built at the proposed site of the school. Nyepeya is one of 17 new Parishes which have been established in the Diocese of Northern Uganda since Bishop Johnson was consecrated as Bishop in 2009. He

has an evangelical missional heart making him a perfect partner for our vision at Drumbeg Parish. We hope he will visit us at Drumbeg Parish in May this year.

Whilst in Uganda we also had the privilege of attending the annual Fields of Life Head-Teachers conference in Mukono, Kampala. Over 100 delegates attended which afforded us a good insight into the good governance etc which Fields of Life demands from their partners both in the local churches and school management.

We are now left with the task of financing the project, entering into child sponsorship for 45 children (20% of the whole school population), and becoming involved in a preacher training project, a school teacher training project and an ongoing sending and receiving in mission.

Methodist Church gears up for Balmoral Show 2017

The Methodist Church in Ireland is taking a stand at the Balmoral Show in May 2017. The decision to do this came out of a review by the Lisburn and Dromore Circuit Executive of their Stand at the show in 2015 which concluded it was a good experience from which lessons could be learnt.

THIS IS
BALMORAL SHOW.
N.I.'S LARGEST
AGRICULTURAL
EVENT



One of these lessons was that an MCI presence rather than a 'local circuit presence' would be more relevant to what is a national show. Plans subsequently emerged for a joint venture between the Circuit and the Home Mission Department for a Stand at the 2017 show.

The plan is to have a bigger Stand than before, a wider vision for the Methodist presence and 'quiet space' in the midst of the bustle of the show. A spokesperson said, "The Stand and literature available will represent who we are as a Methodist community across Ireland. In addition, those who are staffing the stand will be trained to offer a welcoming presence in the name Christ and we hope that will create the environment for an informative chat or a moment to pause and reflect."

Recognising that Balmoral Show is a national show the Home Mission Department is inviting circuits that have significant links with the farming community to support this initiative. Two specific ways that support can be given is either churchnewsireland@gmail.com

financial support or to offer suitably gifted people to volunteer to give some time to staff the stand. The Lisburn and Dromore Circuit has already pledged fifty percent of the cost of the stand and also to undertake the planning and management for the event.

This year the show runs for four days, the 10th - 13th May 2017 at Balmoral Park, Maze Long Kesh, Lisburn, Co. Antrim, BT27 5RE. If you are planning to visit the Show you will receive a warm welcome at the MCI stand at Balmoral show 2017.

If you would like more information, contact the Chairman of the Steering Group Tom Millar - Tel.: 07711 928786, or email at emailthm40@gmail.com

New C of I Parish Handbook available online

The Church of Ireland has produced a new Parish Handbook which is available online.

The Parish Handbook is a manual to support select vestries, parish officers and all members of the Church in the administration and organisation of parish life. It explains how

requirements of the Constitution relate to today's parishes, offers solutions to typical parish issues, and provides clear guidance to select vestry members on what is expected of them and tools to help them in their role. The last time the Church published a guide with a similar purpose was in 1982 so it is hoped that an update will be of value to today's Church members.

The Handbook is currently available online, organised by topic and available on a new section of the main Church of Ireland website, called Parish Resources. The guidance notes can be found under the relevant topic areas – e.g. Select Vestry, Parish Finance and Generous Giving – at www.ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources

Welcoming the Handbook on the website, The Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, remarked: “I believe that the new Parish Handbook is a superb resource, fulfilling a dual function of showing – in a very readable form – how the different components of the Church of Ireland's structures mesh together, and also outlining clearly the duties and privileges that attach to all leadership in the local parish community.”

The Handbook will be a 'living' project; additions and amendments will be made to ensure the content continues to be relevant and useful. Digital content can easily be updated in line with changes in civil law, Church governance and best practice guidelines. All documents can be printed and select vestries and Church members are encouraged make use of them in their own parishes. The Parish Resources section of the website is a very new 'work in progress' and, just like the Handbook, will continue to be added to and updated to meet the needs of Church members.

Those with parish leadership responsibilities should be well-informed and feel confident in their governance roles. The Parish Handbook serves to support them as they uphold Christian values, act in accordance with the Constitution, and strengthen their parishes into the future. In today's ever-changing society with increasing legislative pressure and compliance requirements, the Parish Handbook provides an effective way for every parish to be supported by the central Church.

Cork youth workers training weekend



Youth workers who took part in the the recent weekend in Clonakilty

The annual Cork Diocesan Youth Council (CDYC) leaders' weekend took place in the Quality Hotel, Clonakilty from Friday 27th to Sunday 29th January.

Steve Grasham, newly appointed to the role of Regional Development worker for the Church of Ireland Youth Department, covering the south of Ireland, led sessions on the importance of youth groups, how to develop a youth programme, different models of youth ministry and how to engage young people in the programme. Simon Henry, National Youth Officer was also present and spoke about what the Church of Ireland Youth Department (CIYD) is doing in developing

youth ministry across the Church. It was a great time of sharing and learning.

On Saturday evening clergy from the area were invited to join the group for dinner. On Sunday morning the group attended morning worship in Kilgariffe Church.



Geneva's Reformation Wall commemorates the great Reformers.

Reformation 500: Evangelical Alliance warns against compromise with Catholicism

Evangelicals have been urged to celebrate the Reformation as "essential" to Christianity and resist attempts to dilute differences between Protestants and Catholics.

The [Evangelical Alliance's statement](#) to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, headlined on the Evangelical Alliance press release as "500 Years of Protest", praised the split as a recovery of Jesus' teaching. It emphasised ongoing "points of divergence" between the two traditions as well as acknowledging efforts at reconciliation and convergence after centuries of mistrust.

"As evangelicals, we owe a great deal of our doctrinal, spiritual and cultural identity to the Reformation," the statement read.

"The Reformation was not so much an innovation as a recovery – a recovery of the essential content of the 'evangel' or 'good news' of salvation proclaimed by Jesus Christ himself, and by his apostles. That work of recovery is reflected in our own designation as evangelicals."

It insists the "core distinctions" between Luther and the 16th-century Roman Catholic church "remain between modern-day evangelicals and Catholics despite efforts at reconciliation".

The statement marked a notably different tone to that of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York who called for repentance for the division. They lamented the "lasting damage done five centuries ago to the unity of the Church, in defiance of the clear command of Jesus Christ to unity in love".

The build-up to the 500th anniversary since, according to a tradition that is disputed by some scholars, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the cathedral door in his town of Wittenburg has been marked with strengthening ecumenical relations between Catholics and Protestants.

The statement from the EA said "some will regard these initiatives more positively than others" and emphasised "additional points of divergence" on top of the "foundational issues" of "biblical authority and justification" it says Luther raised.

The eight-page document points to the Catholic's high view of Church authority, the Pope's infallibility, the importance of sacraments such as confirmation and the devotion of Mary as having no "biblical grounds".

Rev Dr David Hilborn, chair of the Evangelical Alliance's Theology Advisory Group, said they amounted to "significant differences in doctrine

and practice" between evangelicals and Catholics.

But the statement did go on to emphasise "points of convergence" including in particular the shared opposition to gay marriage, abortion and euthanasia.

Steve Clifford, general director of the Evangelical Alliance, said: "It has been in the area of public policy especially that evangelicals and Catholics have come together over the last 40 years to put pressure on the government and work for the common good."

A spokesman has since added: "The statement does not call for celebration of the split, but carefully looks at the areas of divergence – many of which are important hallmarks of evangelical faith. We have also sought to ensure that we are not driving a wedge between the differences that do exist. We want to recognise the importance of the reformation, but also seek ways that we can work together with the Roman Catholic church."

Ecumenism in Music in Rome

Last week saw the visit of the [choir of Westminster Abbey](#), for a joint concert with the

Sistine Chapel Choir, Sally Axworthy writes in the F & C's UK & Holy See blog.



The Choirs of Westminster Abbey and the Sistine Chapel

This was a wonderful concert, with the two choirs combining to fill the Basilica of St John Lateran with music from both the Catholic and Anglican traditions: pieces by Giovanni Palestrina showcased the Catholic style, and Westminster Abbey brought a selection of English Church music including pieces from Thomas Tallis, William Byrd, Orlando Gibbons, William Harris and Philip Moore. The sight of the two choirs, intermingled, singing together “Tu es Petrus” by Palestrina, or Charles Parry’s “My Soul” was uplifting.

This was ecumenism at its best. There were no discussions about theology, or arguments about the ordination of women. It called to hearts, rather than heads. And it reflected a salient fact – to much of the world the difference between the different Christian faiths does not matter. If a Church is attacked by a mob somewhere, they do not stop to ask whether the people are Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox or Methodist. If Christians are persecuted for their faith there is often no special treatment for one over another. A Christian is a Christian. Pope Francis has referred to this as “ecumenism of blood” – all suffer together.

That is not to downplay the differences. Some are very important issues which speak to the core of the religion. Over the centuries, many have been persecuted and died because of them. Fortunately nowadays these questions can be debated quietly, using words rather than swords or flames. Joint Commissions are carefully considering these issues, and there has been recent progress to report for example on joint recognition of baptism between Catholic and Orthodox. There is more desire to celebrate what unites, rather than concentrating on what divides.

For Pope Francis and the Holy See, 2016 was a year rich in ecumenism. Highlights included his meeting the Russian Orthodox Patriarch in Havana, visiting Lesbos with the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Athens, joint Vespers celebrating the 50th anniversary of the historic meeting of Pope Paul VI and the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, and attending the commemoration of 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Sweden. We can expect this movement towards greater practical cooperation to continue. As Martin Luther actually pinned his thesis to the door of Wittenburg Church in 1517, there will no doubt be other occasions this year for ecumenical events.

Rather fittingly, in the week of Christian Unity, the last item of the concert was the two choirs singing together the Palestrina arrangement of the “Credo”, raising their voices together to celebrate God.

Divisions deepen in Catholic Church over Communion for remarried couples

A senior Catholic cardinal has set himself at odds with bishops in his home country of

Germany by speaking out against allowing divorced and remarried people to receive Holy Communion.

Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, has described liberal bishops who advocate change as "the blind leading the blind".

He says in an interview with the Italian Catholic magazine [Il Timone](#): "We are called to help people, little by little, to reach the fullness of their relationship with God, but we can not make concessions. The Church is a living body, the development is a movement to better understand the depths of the mysteries. But you can not exceed the magisterium statements when it comes to statements that relate to the divine Catholic faith revealed."

In the interview, translated by [L'Espresso](#), Müller warns Catholics not to fall into the trap of believing that "if love dies, then the marriage bond is dead."

He says: "These are sophistries: the Word of God is very clear and the Church does not accept the secularisation of marriage. The task of priests and bishops is not that of creating confusion, but of bringing clarity."



Pope Francis embraces Cardinal Gerhard Müller of Germany

The cardinal, who is from Germany, spoke out as a group of his fellow German bishops endorsed Communion for the remarried.

In a [new statement](#) reported by the [Catholic Herald](#), agreed by the permanent council of the bishops' conference, the bishops say that the remarried can receive Communion without resolving to live "as brother and sister". They say

this is possible through "differentiated solutions which are appropriate to the individual case".

An accompanying statement [says](#) the solution will be found through "a decision-making process, accompanied by a priest", the Herald reports.

It notes that the permanent council does not include Müller.

The split between the German bishops is the latest fall-out from the Pope's synod on the family and his resulting exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*. Earlier this week, Catholic laity in Malta [condemned their own bishops](#) for appearing to endorse a relaxation of the traditional rules that remarried Catholics cannot receive communion unless they live as brother and sister.

See -

<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2017/02/01/cardinal-muller-communion-for-the-remarried-is-against-gods-law/>

Lord Carey praises potentially 'Outstanding' President Trump and condemns 'reprehensible' protests

The former Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey has hit out at "hysterical" and "baying"

critics of the potentially “outstanding” President Donald Trump, and said that he would “of course” attend a state banquet were he still Anglican leader, James Macintyre writes in Christian Today.



Lord Carey of Clifton, who was Archbishop from 1991-2002, told Christian Today that while he did not “by and large” agree with the new President, the choice of the American people should be “honoured and respected” and that Trump “has the strength of personality to be an outstanding President”.

He added that the “extraordinary and hysterical reaction” against Trump is “reprehensible” and could “damage the fabric of democracy”.

The Prime Minister, Theresa May has announced that Trump has been invited by the Queen to a state visit of the UK later this year, and has reiterated this despite more than 1.6 million people signing a petition against such a visit.

A former head of the Foreign Office has said that the Queen has been put in “a very difficult position” by the invitation.

Local schools take part in Unity Week service in Castecaulfield

St Michael & All Angels' Church, Castlecaulfield, was the venue for this year's Christian Unity Week service in Donaghmore parish. The church was filled to overflowing with Christians of all denominations and traditions praying, singing and worshipping together. The guest preacher was Fr Brian D'Arcy, the well-known journalist and broadcaster, who held the large crowd spellbound as he reflected on his life and ministry, and challenged everyone to follow

the commandment of Jesus, “love your neighbour as yourself.”

The service was led jointly by the Rector of the church, the Revd Dr Peter Thompson, and by Fr Gerard McAleer PP. Readers were from all of the local schools: Blessed Patrick O’Loughran Primary School, Donaghmore Primary School, St Patrick’s Primary School, Walker Memorial Primary School, and St Joseph’s Grammar School; and also from Castlecaulfield Horticultural Society and each of the local churches. Music was provided by the group McPeake and by the parish choir, and the collection was donated to the work of Cancer Choices in Donaghmore. Introducing the service, Dr Thompson observed that the shooting of a police officer in Belfast the previous night highlighted the fragility of the peace process, and highlighted the importance of celebrating all that binds Christians together in a common inheritance of faith.

The service began with a Bible being carried forward by pupils from Dungannon Royal School and St Joseph’s Grammar School, symbolising the shared inheritance of scripture in the Old and New Testaments. During the prayers of penitence children from each of the local primary schools placed bricks in a wall, symbolising the

barriers we build in our lives, in our communities and in our nation. Following the sermon this wall was dismantled and remade in the shape of a cross, challenging everyone to seek reconciliation through Christ, who has broken down all walls that divide us one from another. This powerful symbol was followed by the congregation sharing the light of Christ, passing light from one person to another until the church was alive with the light of hundreds of candles.

News briefs

+++ Church Music Dublin - Living Worship with Tom Gordon takes place on Saturday 4 February at Mageough Hall at 10 am. Please see this link for more details: <http://www.churchmusicdublin.org/living-worship/> PS Please follow this link to view CMD's latest video: <http://www.churchmusicdublin.org/choir-training-videos/>

+++ Aware Resilience Lecture in St Patrick's, Dublin - The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, The Most Revd Dr Diarmuid Martin, will speak at the Aware Resilience Series Lecture, in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, on Thursday, 16th February. A reception will take place from 7pm. The Resilience Lecture will start at 7.30pm,

followed by Q&A. For tickets (€25) and further information, please visit www.aware.ie or contact Drew Flood, Fundraising Department, Aware, on 086 606 9736 or 01 237 4919. All funds raised go to Aware's Nationwide Support, Education, and Information Services.

+++ Christian Unity in Tuam - The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was marked by Services throughout the diocese of Tuam, Killala and Achonry. Of the many gatherings, one was held in Straide Parish Church in Foxford. Taking part were Fr. John Durkan, Rev. John Farr, Fr. Martin Convey, Fr. Gerry Davey, Fr. Pdraig Costello, Bishop Rooke, Canon Andrea Wills, Monsignor Tommy Johnston (representing Bishop Kelly), Fr. Tommy Mulligan, Fr. Richard Gibbons, Fr. Steve Gibson, Fr. Des Kelly, Fr. Stephen O'Mahony. Another Service of Prayer was held in The Cathedral of the Assumption, Tuam where the preacher was Archdeacon Gary Hastings.

+++ Tuam walks for water - An absolutely sterling effort was made by clergy and people in to raise awareness and funds for water supplies in the developing world. There is an excellent account of these endeavours on the diocesan web site at - <http://www.tuam.anglican.org/2017/02/01/walking-for-water/>

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