



The restored St Mel's Cathedral Longford.

30 million euro transformation of St Mel's Cathedral Longford

“Welcome back “ - These were the first words Bishop Francis Duffy of Ardagh and Clonmacnois greeted the parishioners of St Mel's in Longford after the cathedral officially reopened five years after it was gutted by a fire on Christmas Day 2009.

It was Bishop Duffy's first time celebrating Mass in the cathedral since he was ordained bishop of the diocese and his joy was palpable. "This is a story of transformation from a shell to the beautiful and elegant sacred place we have today," he said.

The most commonly heard metaphor for St Mel's Cathedral sees it as Longford's phoenix which has quite literally risen from the ashes.

On Christmas Day 2009, the historic 174-year-old cathedral was burnt to a cinder. After the initial shock, immediate efforts were made to secure what remained so that no one could be injured by falling debris.

A massive €30 million renovation programme was undertaken with the aim of reopening for Christmas 2014. In the meantime, Mass was held for the faithful in St Mel's College.

The inspiration and vision for the renovation was Bishop Emeritus Colm O'Reilly who in the midst of the ashes, flames and dilapidation said St Mel's would be rebuilt.

"There was a clear sense of devastation and sorrow among the people. One voice was clear about what would happen, Bishop Colm. He

said that St Mel's would be rebuilt," Bishop Duffy said in a tribute to his predecessor.

"That was the voice of leadership," he said and added that he wanted to thank Bishop O'Reilly for his vision and determination.

St Mel's will be rededicated on Sunday 17 May 2015. The original foundation stone of St Mel's was laid in the presence of 40,000 people on 19 May 1840 by the Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois, Dr William O'Higgins.

However, the neoclassical building wasn't completed until 1856 as the Great Famine delayed the progress of the work. The belfry was completed in 1860 and the portico in 1890 enabling the diocese to finally consecrate the cathedral on 19 May 1893.

Praising God through music hits the right note

For east Belfast woman Helen Mills, there's one particular moment which stands out in her mind as being representative of why she loves being involved in Belfast Community Gospel Choir.

News Letter - "We do a lot of singing in the Titanic Building and we were doing a gig there

one night,” says the 53-year-old, who is one of the organisation’s original members,



“Looking around the room, I could see there were a lot of people there from the Soviet Union and Muslim countries. We started singing and they just literally went crazy; they were dancing around. At the end we started singing Oh Happy Day, and as I was looking down, I could see this girl in a hijab. There she was singing ‘Oh happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away’, and I just thought - ‘right there! That’s what this is all about.’

“That’s what gets me excited about being in the choir, I just love it.”

Belfast Community Gospel Choir is the Province’s first and only multicultural gospel choir, performing at concerts, civic and charitable events, festivals and weddings.

It’s comprised of over 100 singers, who perform in various-sized ensembles, and are led by director Marie Lacey, an acclaimed performer with a wonderful voice, who set up the choir in 2009.

Mum-of-one Helen, who works in the human resources department of the South Eastern Education and Library Board, has been involved in choirs and musical groups all her life.

“Music has always played a big part of my life,” says the charismatic lady, who became a Christian when she was just 18, and currently attends Exchange Church on Belfast’s Albertbridge Road.

“My mother was a very accomplished singer, until recently singing with the Belfast Philharmonic. I have sung in choirs all my life – a key memory being singing in Joseph & His Technicolour Dreamcoat in P6! However my love was, and is, soul, gospel and contemporary

Christian music. In 1988 I became a backing vocalist with Robin Mark and that really built my confidence in singing in a smaller group and 'leading' worship. I love to worship God with my voice and be open to Him ministering through me while I sing so that I can encourage others to do the same. When Marie said she was starting a gospel choir I knew I had to be in it!

"I had just returned from three years missionary work in South Africa and was feeling a bit disconnected from church life. I was really nervous about the audition – which was pretty rigorous – that when the email came to tell me that I was in I nearly burst with excitement. I still get genuinely excited about singing with the choir both in concerts, corporate gigs and in rehearsals."

More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/features/praising-god-through-music-hits-the-right-note-1-6561214>

Musical conversations theme for Armagh organ recital

Alfred Casement will give the next organ recital in St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh on Sunday 15 February 2015 at 4.15pm.

Alfred is based at Gilnahirk Presbyterian Church on the outskirts of Belfast, and while he has given a number of organ recitals, he reveals that, "This is actually the first time I have crossed the River Bann to play in Armagh, so I am looking forward to this particular recital, to have the opportunity to play and to enjoy what is generally regarded as one of the finest instruments in Ireland."

The programme, compiled by Alfred, carries a theme of musical conversations, which explores how composers have looked at each other's work and tried to interpret what they heard in their own style. He gives the following examples, "We will have Herbert Howells' take on the work of Thomas Tallis, Petr Eben's view of Buxtehude's work, and we will blow the dust out of the organ loft at the end with Guilmant's majestic setting of the theme from the chorus 'Lift up your heads' from Handel's Messiah. Along the way there will be other examples of composers paying a musical tribute to each other and, in some cases, a chance to compare an example of the original composer's output with the tribute. The music will be wide and varied, and, I hope, suitable for all tastes on a Sunday afternoon."

Looking forward to the recital, the Dean of Armagh, the Very Revd Gregory Dunstan, said, “Alfred has put together a thoughtful and unusual programme. We shall be glad to welcome him to Armagh – but he should know that, after thirty months of recitals, there isn’t any dust in the organ loft to blow!”

As with all the recitals in this series, admission is free, with a retiring collection towards the further endowment of the Cathedral Choir through the Archbishop’s Choir Fund.

Training for the ministry of healing

Divine Healing Ministries is offering training to those who would like to be involved in the ministry of healing. This will take place on five Thursday evenings in St Anne’s Cathedral Hall from April 30th until May 28th, 8pm to 9.30pm.

Training will be taken by Brother David Jardine and members of the team of Divine Healing Ministries.

People can come if they wish to use the skills learnt in their own church, to work with Divine Healing Ministries, or just to learn more about the healing ministry. There is no fixed charge for

the course, but people will be able to make a voluntary offering on the last evening.

Contact - divinehealing@live.co.uk

East Belfast: Majority believe nationalists have fared better

People across East Belfast are deeply disillusioned about the peace process, with many believing nationalists have got the best deal.

Belfast Telegraph - Less than 6% said they felt unionists had fared better.

The discontent is most stark in working-class loyalist areas and among younger people, today's poll shows.

We asked if people felt the nationalist or unionist community had fared better, or if both communities had done equally well or badly from the peace process.

The majority - almost 60% - felt nationalists had benefited most, compared to just 5.7% who said unionists. Another 24.3% said there had been an equal impact on both communities.

When the 10.5% who didn't express an opinion were excluded, the result was even more stark.

Of those who gave a definitive answer, two-thirds (66.5%) felt nationalists had fared better.

The results indicate a widespread feeling that Protestants have been left behind nearly two decades on from the Good Friday Agreement. And they show the challenges still faced by political leaders in maintaining confidence among many grassroots unionists.

One of those surveyed, a previous DUP voter who may vote for the party again in May, said there was uncertainty about the future.

"There is a deep disillusionment and concern among the loyalist working-class about where all this peace process stuff is heading," he said. "Unionists feel they've been put upon."

The disillusionment is felt most deeply in working-class areas, the Belfast Telegraph/LucidTalk survey revealed.

More at -

www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/east-belfast-majority-believe-nationalists-have-fared-better-30965662.html



The Moderator of the General Assembly sold copies of the The Big Issue on the streets of Edinburgh to help raise awareness of the issues around homelessness and boost sales of this important publication.

Moderator experiences life as a Big Issue vendor

The Moderator of the General Assembly sold copies of the The Big Issue on the streets of Edinburgh this week to help raise awareness of the issues around homelessness and boost sales of this important publication.

It was part of the global [VendorWeek](#) – organised by the International Network of churchnewsireland@gmail.com

Street Papers - which is a week of paying tribute to the 14,000 men and women who are using street papers to work their way out of poverty and homelessness.

Rt Rev John Chalmers was able to sell six copies and received a donation for the magazine during his stint as a vendor on Rose Street.

He said: "That's been a real experience. The vendor jacket seems to be like a cloak of invisibility. People have their methods of avoiding you. I've had to work pretty hard to sell six copies and I've been here with a dog collar so people know that I'm here to help for the day.

"It's introduced me to the fact that is a difficult role and yet this is a good publication. I hope people who hear me talking about this will think about how they can become regular customers because every issue you buy helps somebody get from homelessness back on to the rungs of the ladder and I hope you will click on

the link to the page where you can donate to help a publication that helps put people back in homes."



New canon for Christ Church, Dublin

The Revd Dr Maurice Elliott has been appointed to the Chapter of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. Dr Elliott (pictured), who is Director of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, has been appointed to the Canonry vacated by the Rt Revd Kenneth Kearon when he became Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe.

The appointment has been welcomed by both the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson and the Dean of the Cathedral, the Very Revd Dermot Dunne.

Archbishop Jackson said he was delighted that Dr Elliott had accepted the appointment.

“Maurice Elliott has served the Church of Ireland as Director of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute since 2008. He is known to a very wide range of Readers, ordinands and clergy through the life of the Institute and through his commitment and contribution to its work and development. Together with the Dean I welcome Maurice’s membership of the Chapter of Christ Church Cathedral and wish him all that is best in this further opportunity he now has to serve the church of God,” he stated.

Dean Dunne has also welcomed the announcement saying: “I think that it is timely that Dr Maurice Elliott is appointed to the Chapter of Christ Church Cathedral in keeping with the old tradition of the Principal of the Theological Institute being on that Chapter of the cathedral. I know that Dr Elliott will have a lot to bring to the Chapter and the life of the cathedral”.

Dr Elliott said he was looking forward to the new opportunity. “I am genuinely honoured to have received this appointment to the chapter of Christ Church and look forward to becoming more involved within the worship and witness of the cathedral community. Whereas the

Theological Institute exists to serve all the dioceses of the Church of Ireland, its location continues to offer a particular association with the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough. In expressing my sincere gratitude, I am deeply aware that this new opportunity represents a recognition of all whose ministries are expressed through their faithful contributions within the life of CITI,” he commented.

Dr Elliott is married to Kirsten and the couple have three children, Alexandra, Timothy and Nicholas, who are all currently either working or studying in Wesley College. He commenced training in Dublin in 1989. He was ordained as deacon in 1993 for the curacy of Coleraine (Connor) and priested the following year. In 1998 he was appointed as Rector in Greenisland (Connor) and in 2002 moved to Shankill, Lurgan (Down & Dromore). The bishops of the Church of Ireland appointed him to the role of Director in the Theological Institute in 2008. Within the Church of Ireland he is currently a member of the Standing Committee of the General Synod, the Covenant Council, the Bishops’ Advisory Commission on Doctrine, the Commission on Ministry and the Anglican Consultative Council.

Archbishop Eamon Martin welcomes letter from Pope Francis to bishops on Protection of Minors

Archbishop Eamon Martin has responded to this week's Letter to the Presidents of Episcopal Conferences by Pope Francis, regarding the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors:

I welcome the letter of Pope Francis regarding the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. I look forward to discussing its importance with the other members of the Episcopal Conference at the next meeting of the Bishops' Conference. As the Holy Father points out, "Families need to know that the Church is making every effort to protect their children. They should also know that they have every right to turn to the Church with full confidence, for it is a safe and secure home." The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland has been working with our dioceses, religious congregations and missionary societies to ensure that there are in place robust and fair procedures in relation to child safeguarding. The commitment of volunteers in parishes and Church organisations throughout the country is a vitally important part of the Church working to build up a culture of credible safeguarding practice. It is my hope that the newly-established Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors will continue to build up and enhance this good work.

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