

Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – Mothers Union re-imagining
at Hope University**

July 12, 2022

Image of the day

Mothers Union re-imagining at Hope University

A' Mothers Union 'Re-imagining Conference' was held from 8th-10th July at Liverpool Hope University .



Entrance to Hope University (above) and the University chapel.

Participants said - "It was so exciting to see everyone's passion towards

July 12, 2022

Mothers' Union reflected in their ideas, suggestions and conversations" ...and...

"I have been in Liverpool Hope University from Friday 8th July to Sunday 10th July to share with members across Britain and Ireland to take part in the 'Reimagining Mothers' Union' Conference. It has been amazing!"

People and places

Three August events in CMSI Kingdom Voices programme

Church Mission Society Ireland (CMSI) is busy preparing for a series of events in August as part of its Kingdom Voices programme.

Taking place from August 8-15, this is a joint initiative from CMSI and SAMS Ireland, who will welcome and host 36 world church leaders from Africa, Asia, and South America. It follows on from the Lambeth Conference.

During the week, Global church partners will share stories of how their local churches are demonstrating God's love in practical ways and how lives and communities are being transformed through the good news of Jesus.

There are three key Kingdom Voices events:

Listening Together – a day conference for Church leaders on Wednesday August 10



Kingdom Voices

‘Kingdom Voices: making our mark’ is structured around the Five Marks Of Mission, and the main aims of the event are:

To provide an opportunity for engaging together as leaders within the worldwide Church.

To hear from – and learn from – the practical experiences of our Global Partners.

To explore God’s Word together as we consider our shared calling to mission and to seeing God’s Kingdom Come in our own communities.

The event will take place between 10am and 4pm in St Donard’s, Belfast.

Registration essential, limited places. Suggested donation towards conference fees is £20. (Hosted jointly CMS Ireland with SAMS Ireland).

July 12, 2022

Kingdom Voices Celebration – Friday August 12 **A multicultural evening celebration 7.30pm in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.**

An evening celebration hosted by CMSI and SAMS Ireland, featuring worship and 'Kingdom Come' stories from the global Church. The main programme begins at 7:30pm, but there will be opportunities to engage with Church leaders from Africa, South America and Nepal from 6:45pm and again after the event, when refreshments will be served. This event is open to all and no registration is required.

Kingdom Voices Global Family Fun Day – Saturday August 13

This takes place from 2- 4.30pm in Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park and includes a BBQ, drumming circle, bouncy castle, Irish dancing, acrobats. An afternoon of Games, Fire Engine, BBQ, Bouncy Castle & Drumming hosted by CMSI, All Nations Ministries and SAMS Ireland. It is a great family event & opportunity to meet our global guests. This event is open to all and no registration is required.

Find out more about Kingdom Voices and other CMSI events at -

<https://www.cmsireland.org/events>

Warm welcome for the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly 2022

Bishop Denis Nulty, chair of the Bishops' Council for Marriage and the Family has welcomed Pope Francis'



**WORLD DAY FOR
GRANDPARENTS AND
THE ELDERLY
SUNDAY 24 JULY 2022**

WWW.CATHOLICBISHOPS.IE

THEME: 'IN OLD AGE THEY WILL STILL BEAR FRUIT (PS 92:15)

Message for the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly 2022 on the theme 'In old age they still bring forth fruit' (Ps 92:14).

Bishop Nulty said, "In his message, Pope Francis says that old age is no time to give up and lower the sails, but a season of enduring fruitfulness: a new mission awaits us and bids us look to the future. I am very encouraged by Pope Francis' words as I look around our Church and see the long and faithful service offered by our elderly priests and religious and the decades long commitment of so many lay faithful to our parishes.

"The World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly is taking place this year against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine and conflict in many other parts of the world. Pope Francis

addresses this in his text and invites Grandparents in particular ‘to teach the women and men of our time to regard others with the same understanding and loving gaze with which we regard our own grandchildren. Our grandparents held us in their arms and carried us on their knees; now is the time for us to carry on our own knees – with practical assistance or with prayer alone – not only our own grandchildren but also the many frightened grandchildren whom we have not yet met and who may be fleeing from war or suffering its effects.

“My favourite line from the Pope’s message is when he invites us to be poets of prayer:

‘Let us too become, as it were, poets of prayer: let us develop a taste for finding our own words, let us once again take up those taught by the word of God. Our trustful prayer can do a great deal: it can accompany the cry of pain of those who suffer, and it can help change hearts. We can be “the enduring ‘chorus’ of a great spiritual sanctuary, where prayers of supplication and songs of praise sustain the community that toils and struggles in the field of life.’

“What a wonderfully uplifting challenge to all of us to become poets of prayer!

“Pope Francis concludes his message by asking us all to make this World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly known in our parishes and communities. I echo his words and I invite parishes across the country to celebrate grandparents and elders – not forgetting our older priests and religious – on the second last Sunday of July. I would

July 12, 2022

also encourage parishes to ensure that their local nursing care home is included in this annual celebration.”

Appointment of Associate Minister in Carrigrohane Union of Parishes

On Sunday past it was announced that Revd Abigail Sines, currently serving as Dean’s Vicar in Christ Church Cathedral Dublin was appointed as Associate Minister in Carrigrohane Union of Parishes.

Speaking about the appointment Revd Robert Ferris said- It is a joy and a delight to have Abigail join the team in Carrigrohane Union. To have a colleague in ministry with the creativity and insights, experience and knowledge which Abigail will bring is such a blessing . I look forward to welcoming Abigail and her husband Karl to Blarney in the near future.

The Revd Abigail Sines said

I am excited and honoured to be joining the ministry team in the Carrigrohane Union of Parishes. While I will greatly miss the community of Christ Church Cathedral, I am looking forward to new experiences and opportunities to contribute to the dynamic mix of ministries that make up the life of the union of parishes.

Abigail hails from Hampton, Virginia, in the United States. In university she studied international relations and Chinese, with hopes of a career as a diplomat in the US Foreign Service. After graduation she spent a year in China teaching English before undertaking postgraduate studies at the



The Revd Abigail Sines

University of Hawai`i, continuing her academic interest in China and eventually taking up a position at the East–West Centre, the Honolulu–based organisation that had sponsored her studies.`

While there she launched a leadership development programme for young women professionals from around the region and assisted in programmes bringing together mid–career journalists from the region to talk about issues of the day.

After six years Abigail felt the call to study theology and in 2008 began studies at Belfast Bible College and completed an MTh there in 2010. She then began her studies at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute in 2012

Abigail has been Dean’s Vicar in Christ Church Cathedral since August 2016, prior to this she was Curate in the Christ

July 12, 2022

Church Cathedral group and Intern Deacon in Glenageary, Diocese of Dublin.

The date for a service of Introduction has yet to be arranged.

Down & Dromore's newest team member

Kelly McCullough has been appointed to the post of Diocesan Administration and Finance Officer. She will join the diocesan team on 1 August 2022 in a full-time capacity.

Kelly has been the part-time Administrator for Ballyholme Parish for the last 10 years and part-time Sexton since 2019. She worships in the parish and co-leads a home group.

Kelly has a background in pharmaceutical account management and health club administration. She will be responsible for a range of administrative tasks which support the smooth running of the diocese and its ministries. She says, "I'm looking forward to becoming a part of the diocesan team and using my administrative skills to serve and support churches."

Home is Bangor where Kelly lives with her husband Gareth and two teenage children. She has a keen interest in writing and reading books by her favourite Christian author, Max Lucado, and enjoys long walks with takeaway coffee, watching a good movie and going to the beach to learn how to stand up on her paddle board.



Kelly McCullough

Kelly’s favourite Bible passage is Matthew 5:13–16 and she describes being ‘salt and light’ as a key theme and cornerstone of her faith.

World news

Church has no official definition for ‘woman’, C of E Synod hears

Previously ‘self-evident’ meanings of the word now need ‘additional care’ to be taken, senior bishops say

The Church of England has said that there is “no official definition” of a woman.

In a written reply to a question submitted to the General Synod, a senior Bishop said that although the meaning of the word woman was previously “thought to be self-evident”, “additional care” was now needed.

July 12, 2022

The question was posed as institutions grapple with the ongoing debate surrounding trans rights, and what defines “a woman”.

While the new stance has been welcomed by liberal wings of the Church, the comments have also provoked criticism with gender-critical campaigners saying that “whether your starting point is biology or the Bible”, the answer to the question of what is a woman remains the same.

The Rev Angela Berners-Wilson, England’s first woman priest, said that she was “not totally happy” with the answer, but added that the issue was “sensitive”.

Church officials are engaged in Living in Love and Faith (LLF), the institution’s ongoing and landmark project aiming to tackle how questions about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage fit with the Church.

The issue of defining what a woman is emerged in written questions to the General Synod, the Church’s legislative body, in which Adam Kendry, a lay member of the Synod and a representative of the Royal Navy, asked: “What is the Church of England’s definition of a woman?” The Rt Rev Dr Robert Innes, the Bishop in Europe, who was also replying in his role as chairman of the Faith and Order Commission, said in his written response: “There is no official definition, which reflects the fact that until fairly recently, definitions of this kind were thought to be self-evident, as reflected in the marriage liturgy.

“The LLF project however has begun to explore the marriage complexities associated with gender identity and

July 12, 2022

points to the need for additional care and thought to be given in understanding our commonalities and differences as people made in the image of God.”

The Rev Berners-Wilson said in response to the Bishop of Europe’s answer: “I’m not totally happy with it. I mean, I do think certain things like men can’t have babies, just to say the complete obvious thing. But I think we need to be very sensitive and maybe we need to re-examine our boundaries.”

Maya Forstater, executive director of the Sex Matters campaign group, described the Bishop’s answer as “shocking”, saying that “the concepts of male and female did not need to have a formal official definition” because “they are older than human life itself”.

“When the Government redefined women through the Gender Recognition Act, the Church of England could have stuck with its long-established understanding, which makes sense whether your starting point is biology or the Bible. It is shocking that they so readily gave up the definition of man or woman for the state to amend, as if this fundamental truth did not matter.”

However, Jayne Ozanne, a Synod member, described the question as “passive-aggressive”, “designed to upset the LGBT+ community”. She added: “It’s time these anti-LGBT attacks stopped and that we learnt to acknowledge that life is not quite as black and white as some appear to think it should be.”

Presiding Bishop outlines what he wants the agenda of the Episcopal bishops to be

In a proposed Mind of the House resolution on Saturday, July 9, The Episcopal Church House of Bishops addressed many threats to democracy and deep divisions in the United States, including the rise of Christian nationalism.

The Rt. Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis, asked Presiding Bishop Michael Curry what he wants the agenda of the Episcopal bishops to be.

This is how he responded:

“I’m very concerned about a country that I do love, and about us potentially being on the verge of living out the opposite of unselfish, sacrificial love. And I don’t mean that as rhetoric: I mean that as the only way that we will live together and have life together because the opposite is self-destruction. I say that as a follower of Jesus and as a human being. How can we help this country--and help our people to help this country--to bind up our wounds, to learn to live democracy, and to truly be a country where there is liberty and justice for all. That’s at stake. I never thought I would think this in my life. As a child of the Civil Rights movement—those who fought for equal rights and justice, and freedom for all, never questioned the fact that the democracy itself would hold. We have been forced to ask the question: Is e pluribus unum really possible? Is

July 12, 2022

democracy possible? Is human equality possible? And I just believe that if we can help our people—and this is not partisan—if we can help our people to find their voice and claim the values and the ideals that most people probably believe, then maybe we can help find their voice and they can help others, and we can help to heal this land, and help this country join with others and heal God’s creation. That is the calling of the God who called us into being in the first place.

So, yeah, being an extrovert, I probably just thought out loud. And I just believe this house, the people in this room, you are so smart and capable and able, and faithful. And there may be the capacity to find our voice—not a partisan voice, but a follower of Jesus voice—that may help our people and our churches, and then maybe, in turn, the sensible center that is in this country and this world, to find its voice. I’m sorry for confusing you, but that’s part of what’s going on in me. Jennifer, I can’t sit back and watch this country self-destruct, and neither can we. And I was looking for a way to help us find the voice that can help.”

Climate protesters interrupt General Synod over Cof E fossil fuel investments

A group of Christian climate protesters interrupted proceedings at the Church of England’s General Synod in York on Friday, urging the Church to end its financial backing of the fossil fuel industry.

Seven members of Christian Climate Action called on all dioceses still investing in fossil fuels, the Church

July 12, 2022

Commissioners and the Pensions Board to commit to divest, and to invest in clean energy before UN climate summit COP27 in November.

While the Church's governing body was discussing endorsing a plan for the Church to reach its net zero carbon goal by 2030, protesters went to the front of the assembly holding a banner with the words: 'Churches Divest Now'.

80-year-old retired vicar Rev Sue Parfitt attempted to give a two minute talk on behalf of the group, but the charity said she was prevented from doing so by security.

Christian Climate Action said a member of Synod, Rev Robert Thompson, not related to Christian Climate Action, took to the podium and requested that Rev Parfitt be able to speak.

He was instructed to stop talking by the Synod chair and the meeting was abruptly adjourned for ten minutes so bishops could speak with the group.

Most Rev Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury approached Rev Parfitt while the meeting was adjourned and agreed to speak to the group when the session had come to a close.

WCC urges Biden to listen and respond to voices of churches in Holy Land

In an 8 July letter sent to President Joe Biden, World Council of Churches acting general secretary Rev Prof

July 12, 2022

Dr Ioan Sauca appealed for Biden's attention to the plight of churches and Christians of the Holy Land.

Biden is scheduled to visit Israel, the West Bank, and Saudi Arabia on 13-16 July.

"Your visit take place in a time of ongoing and escalating dispossession and displacement of Palestinian families and communities from their homes in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the West Bank, and of expanding settlements and settlement enclaves that threaten the multi-religious and multicultural identity of Jerusalem and undermine any remaining prospect of a viable two-state solution to secure peace with justice for Palestinians and Israelis alike," Sauca wrote.

"In addition to the expropriation of properties, recent years have seen a marked rise in discrimination, abuse, vandalism, arson and hate crimes against Christians, clergy and churches."

Saucu urged Biden to listen and respond to the voices of the churches of the Holy Land.

"The rich religious and social diversity, the historic status quo and heritage of the Holy City of Jerusalem are in imminent danger," said Sauca. "I appeal to you and to all people of good will who recognize Jerusalem as sacred to three religions and a city of two peoples, to speak and act to secure this vision and this hope, against those who seek to displace, exclude and marginalize others."

July 12, 2022

Sauca asked Biden to help end the displacement and marginalization, and to restore hope in a just peace in the region. "I pray that you will be inspired with this vision of inclusive peace as you undertake your visit, and that you will be granted wisdom and fortitude to seek this peace and to pursue it."

Read the full letter here:

[www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-letter-to-president-biden-on-forthcoming-visit-to-israel-and-the-west-bank]

Perspective

Pope Francis' Message for World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly

"In old age they will still bear fruit" (Psalm 92:15)

Dear Friends,

"In old age they will still bear fruit" (Ps 92:15). These words of the Psalmist are glad tidings, a true "gospel" that we can proclaim to all on this second World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. They run counter to what the world thinks about this stage of life, but also to the attitude of grim resignation shown by some of us elderly people, who harbour few expectations for the future.

Many people are afraid of old age. They consider it a sort of disease with which any contact is best avoided. The elderly, they think, are none of their concern and should be set



apart, perhaps in homes or places where they can be cared for, lest we have to deal with their problems. This is the mindset of the “throw-away culture”, which leads us to think that we are somehow different from the poor and vulnerable in our midst, untouched by their frailties and separated from “them” and their troubles. The Scriptures see things differently. A long life – so the Bible teaches – is a blessing, and the elderly are not outcasts to be shunned but living signs of the goodness of God who bestows life in abundance. Blessed is the house where an older person lives! Blessed is the family that honours the elderly!

Old age is not a time of life easily understood even by those of us who are already experiencing it. Even though it eventually comes with the passage of time, no one prepares us for old age, and at times it seems to take us by surprise. The more developed societies expend large sums on this

stage of life without really helping people to understand and appreciate it; they offer healthcare plans to the elderly but not plans for living this age to the full. [1] This makes it hard to look to the future and discern what direction to take. On the one hand, we are tempted to ward off old age by hiding our wrinkles and pretending to be forever young, while on the other, we imagine that the only thing we can do is bide our time, thinking glumly that we cannot “still bring forth fruit”.

Retirement and grown children make many of the things that used to occupy our time and energy no longer so pressing. The recognition that our strength is ebbing or the onset of sickness can undermine our certainties. The fast pace of the world – with which we struggle to keep up – seems to leave us no alternative but to implicitly accept the idea that we are useless. We can resonate with the heartfelt prayer of the Psalmist: “Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent” (71:9).

Yet that same psalm – which meditates on how the Lord has been present at every stage of our lives – urges us to persevere in hope. Along with old age and white hairs, God continues to give us the gift of life and to keep us from being overcome by evil. If we trust in him, we will find the strength to praise him still (cf. vv. 14-20). We will come to see that growing old is more than the natural decline of the body or the inevitable passage of time, but the gift of a long life. Aging is not a condemnation, but a blessing!

For this reason, we ought to take care of ourselves and remain active in our later years. This is also true from a spiritual standpoint: we ought to cultivate our interior life

July 12, 2022

through the assiduous reading of the word of God, daily prayer, reception of the sacraments and participation in the liturgy. In addition to our relationship with God, we should also cultivate our relationships with others: first of all by showing affectionate concern for our families, our children and grandchildren, but also for the poor and those who suffer, by drawing near to them with practical assistance and our prayers. These things will help us not to feel like mere bystanders, sitting on our porches or looking out from our windows, as life goes on all around us. Instead, we should learn to discern everywhere the presence of the Lord. [2] Like “green olive trees in the house of God” (cf. Ps 52:10), we can become a blessing for those who live next to us.

Old age is no time to give up and lower the sails, but a season of enduring fruitfulness: a new mission awaits us and bids us look to the future. “The special sensibility that those of us who are elderly have for the concerns, thoughts and the affections that make us human should once again become the vocation of many. It would be a sign of our love for the younger generations”. [3] This would be our own contribution to the revolution of tenderness, [4] a spiritual and non-violent revolution in which I encourage you, dear grandparents and elderly persons, to take an active role.

Our world is passing through a time of trial and testing, beginning with the sudden, violent outbreak of the pandemic, and then by a war that is harming peace and development on a global scale. Nor is it a coincidence that war is returning to Europe at a time when the generation that experienced it in the last century is dying out. These great crises risk anaesthetizing us to the reality of other

July 12, 2022

“epidemics” and other widespread forms of violence that menace the human family and our common home.

All this points to the need for a profound change, a conversion, that disarms hearts and leads us to see others as our brothers or sisters. We grandparents and elderly people have a great responsibility: to teach the women and men of our time to regard others with the same understanding and loving gaze with which we regard our own grandchildren. We ourselves have grown in humanity by caring for others, and now we can be teachers of a way of life that is peaceful and attentive to those in greatest need. This attitude may be mistaken for weakness or resignation, yet it will be the meek, not the aggressive and the abusive, who will inherit the earth (cf. Mt 5:5).

One fruit that we are called to bring forth is protecting the world. “Our grandparents held us in their arms and carried us on their knees”; [5] now is the time for us to carry on our own knees – with practical assistance or with prayer alone – not only our own grandchildren but also the many frightened grandchildren whom we have not yet met and who may be fleeing from war or suffering its effects. Let us hold in our hearts – like Saint Joseph, who was a loving and attentive father – the little ones of Ukraine, of Afghanistan, of South Sudan...

Many of us have come to a sage and humble realization of what our world very much needs: the recognition that we are not saved alone, and that happiness is a bread we break together. Let us bear witness to this before those who wrongly think that they can find personal fulfilment and success in conflict. Everyone, even the weakest among us,

can do this. The very fact that we allow ourselves to be cared for – often by people who come from other countries – is itself a way of saying that living together in peace is not only possible, but necessary.

Dear grandparents, dear elderly persons, we are called to be artisans of the revolution of tenderness in our world! Let us do so by learning to make ever more frequent and better use of the most valuable instrument at our disposal and, indeed, the one best suited to our age: prayer. “Let us too become, as it were, poets of prayer: let us develop a taste for finding our own words, let us once again take up those taught by the word of God”. [6] Our trustful prayer can do a great deal: it can accompany the cry of pain of those who suffer, and it can help change hearts. We can be “the enduring ‘chorus’ of a great spiritual sanctuary, where prayers of supplication and songs of praise sustain the community that toils and struggles in the field of life”. [7]

The World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly is an opportunity to proclaim once more, with joy, that the Church wants to celebrate together with all those whom the Lord – in the words of the Bible – has “filled with days”. Let us celebrate it together! I ask you to make this Day known in your parishes and communities; to seek out those elderly persons who feel most alone, at home or in residences where they live. Let us make sure that no one feels alone on this day. Expecting a visit can transform those days when we think we have nothing to look forward to; from an initial encounter, a new friendship can emerge. Visiting the elderly who live alone is a work of mercy in our time!

July 12, 2022

Let us ask Our Lady, Mother of Tender Love, to make all of us artisans of the revolution of tenderness, so that together we can set the world free from the spectre of loneliness and the demon of war.

To all of you, and to your loved ones, I send my blessing and the assurance of my closeness and affection. And I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me!

Francis

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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