



Image of the day - Mourne country

Reports

Major "mishandling" of sexual abuse allegations in breakaway US Anglican Church

The Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) has taken charge of an investigation into the "mishandling" of sexual abuse allegations.

A third party investigative firm was hired by the Diocese of the Upper Midwest in the spring to examine how it dealt with allegations of sexual abuse against lay catechist Mark Rivera.

Rivera was lay leader at Christ Our Light, an ACNA church in Big Rock, Illinois, when he was accused of abusing a 9-year-old girl.

In June 2019, he was charged with felony child sexual assault and abuse, and will stand trial in the autumn.

In a letter to members of the Upper Midwest Diocese, Bishop of the Diocese of the Upper Midwest, Stewart Ruch III, said "regrettable errors" had been made in his handling of the allegations.

"Let me begin by saying there are those who have been horribly victimized in these events," he said.

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"I desire to own where we have not served them as well as we should have and to care for any potential victims who may still come forward."

Ruch took a leave of absence on 8 July "to create any needed space for the Province to take next steps regarding this serious matter and to assure the people in the diocese as well as the survivors involved that there will be a transparent and independent process."

In a letter to ACNA members, the denomination's leader Archbishop Foley Beach confirmed the province would be taking up oversight of the investigation into the Upper Midwest diocese.

The process will be overseen by a Provincial Response Team formed of provincial leaders "committed to act with thorough professionalism and with deep care for the survivors".

"We are prayerful and hopeful that this will help bring forth truth and confidence so healing and restoration can be facilitated," said Beach.

"The Provincial Response Team will be responsible to select all appropriate entities for this investigation and for the care of survivors.

"The team will continue to engage with the survivors throughout the investigation and to conduct this investigation with transparency and integrity.

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"The Province takes this seriously and desires to 'walk in the light' (1 John 1:7) and to 'conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ' (Phil. 1:27)."

ACANA has strong links with GAFCON an organisation which attracts the support of a minority of bishops, clergy and laity in the Church of Ireland.

Tokyo churches cancel Olympic engagement over Covid

The Olympic Games get underway this week but this time round, they will be without spectators - and the usual spiritual support from churches.

The Olympics are normally a time when local churches roll out events, evangelistic outreach and chaplaincy for competitors and spectators.

But with a state of emergency declared in Tokyo and rising Covid cases, Catholic churches have been told to cancel all of their planned activities.

The Catholic Archbishop of Tokyo, Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi, confirmed the decision in a letter to churches in his archdiocese.

"For the past years, the Tokyo Archdiocese had originally been considering preparations so that each parish may be able to address the spiritual needs of the many people who would come to Japan for this international event," he wrote.

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"However, we have decided to cancel all plans and thus, will not take any special involvement in the Olympics and Paralympics."

The cancellation goes beyond planned events, as visitors to Tokyo during the Games are being "requested to refrain from visiting churches."

The measures are based on the commitment made by the Archdiocese of Tokyo at the start of the pandemic that "we will not be infected, nor will we allow others to be infected."

"Thus, we have implemented various precautionary measures and have taken seriously our responsibility to protect the lives of one another as we prevent the spread of infection to protect not only our own lives but also the lives of others," the letter states.

The Olympic Games get underway on 23 July, followed by the Paralympics on 24 August.

After a dip in cases in June, daily infections have been steadily increasing in the run-up to the start of the Games.

According to Sky News, as of Tuesday, 67 people involved in the games have tested positive for Covid.

They include US tennis player, Coco Gauff, who announced on Twitter that she was withdrawing from the games after a positive test.

And six Team GB athletes are isolating after a passenger on their flight to Tokyo tested positive.

Embarrassment for Vatican over an unholy racket at its exclusive London address

Neighbours of the luxury £30,000-a-week Chelsea property have complained about a ‘hellish noise’

The Vatican has been embroiled in a row with neighbours of a luxury flat it owns in London over what has been described as “hellish noise” caused by parties.

The property, in one of London’s most exclusive addresses, was bought by the Vatican in 2014 and is advertised for rent by an intermediary company for £30,000 per week.

Now, however, neighbouring residents at Hans Place in Chelsea, have been forced to complain to the council and the Holy See’s ambassador to the UK about late-night events, including one reportedly involving a DJ.

‘We have made it clear that the embassy cannot interfere in that matter’

It came after several top former officials, including the former saint-making chief Cardinal Angelo Becciu, were indicted by the Vatican on a string of financial charges in relation to a £300 million investment in a London real estate venture.

The financial corruption charges – against five Vatican officials and five external consultants – centre on the

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purchase of a separate building in Chelsea, 60 Sloane Avenue, in 2018.

Cardinal Becciu, who denies any wrongdoing, previously oversaw the purchase of the flat in Hans Place when he was the chief of staff in the Vatican's secretariat of state, the body that performs the political and diplomatic functions of the Holy See.

Stretching across three floors, the 9,000 sq ft property has an indoor swimming pool and a large garden. It is understood noise enforcement officers at the Royal Borough of Kensington have received four complaints this year about the property, relating to two parties. Police and council officers had to remove partygoers from the flat on the first occasion, at 1am on May 30.

The second incident took place on June 27, but the noise was said to have stopped before council officers arrived.

Correspondence between residents and the council, seen by the Financial Times, showed the neighbours complaining of a "hellish noise".

There is no suggestion that any Vatican employees were present at, or involved in the organising of, any parties held at the flat, nor did Cardinal Becciu have any role in overseeing the rental or management of any of the Holy See's London properties.

A spokesman for the Apostolic Nunciature of the Holy See said: "We have made it clear that the embassy cannot

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interfere in that matter, we have informed the local authority but it is a matter of local discipline.”

People and places

Connor Connections online

The summer issue of diocesan magazine Connor Connections is now available as an e-paper and for download as a pdf.

The magazine was distributed free to all parishioners in the diocese, but if you have not been able to pick up your copy, or are not a parishioner in the diocese, you are invited to catch up with the news and features in our virtual magazine.

The cover of the summer Connor Connections features Antrim parishioners Victoria McClements and Conor Taggart, whose doorstep singing during the first Covid-19 lockdown last year led to the birth of Bello Duo, an album, and international recognition. Victoria and Conor share their story on in a two page feature inside.

In his message to the diocese, Bishop George Davison reflects on the joy of being able to worship together in person once again.

New Children’s Ministry Officer, Victoria Jackson is introduced – though for some, no introduction is needed as



Victoria, former Chief Executive of the Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade, is a very familiar face in the diocese.

Some of the children benefiting from the North Belfast Centre of Mission Transforming Lives for Good (TLG) project are featured with some of the mentors who volunteer their time to help.

The magazine explores how the summer may look for young people in parishes across the diocese.

The death of HRH Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh earlier this year was particularly poignant for three generations of one Connor family – Donald, Stephen and Alex McBride, all holders of the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award.

A garden is blooming in the heart of Ballymoney – the Quiet Garden near St Patrick's Parish Church is an eco-friendly initiative from Ballymoney, Finvoy and Rashsharkin Parish Caring Association as part of its mission to 'build bridges of hope' into the community. A visit to the garden behind the wall awaits readers.

Paddy Wallace, a parishioner in All Saints', Antrim, was honoured to receive the Maundy Purse from Her Majesty the Queen, and you may read a little of Paddy's life and work. Sharon Cummings, a member of Magheragall Parish, tells how long covid continues to impact her life, and the Rev Canon Kevin Graham shares the story behind his marathon walk in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support.

This past year has been different from the norm for all of us – including Connor's six deacon interns. Revs Andrea Cotter, Sarah Crawford, Alan McCracken, Nathan Irvine, Brendan O'Loane and Janet Spence tell how they have found these last months.

The Bishop's tribute to the late Rev John Anderson, rector of Billy and Derrykeighan is reprinted.

Links at - <https://connor.anglican.org/2021/07/20/connor-connections-summer-issue-now-online/>

New trustee for Garryduff Sports Centre

The Bishop of Cork, Dr Paul Colton, who is Patron of the Incorporated Church of Ireland Cork Young Men's



Association (ICICYMA), known as Garryduff Sports Centre, at Garryduff, Rochestown, Cork, has announced that he has appointed Amanda Welch to be a trustee of the Association and Club. She will fill a vacancy among the trustees following the retirement of Sybil Fuller. The other trustees, previously appointed by Bishop Colton, are: John Jermyn (Senior) and Roger Flack.

Amanda Welch (left) was elected President of the Club and served from 1997 to 1998. Her association with the Club

goes back much further, however, to the 1960s and her earliest memories are of the Club when hockey was played at the club grounds on Glasheen Road in Cork.

Bishop Colton said: We are fortunate indeed that we have so many people in Cork, Cloyne and Ross who are willing to fulfil voluntary roles in our Diocese and community. I am most grateful to Sybil Fuller for her years of service and am delighted that Amanda Welch has accepted my invitation to become a trustee alongside both John Jermyn and Roger

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Flack. Garryduff Sports Centre, which is a great asset to both our Diocese and within the wider community, is not only a large sporting complex but is also a truly excellent one.

Ulster Scots writing competition

A promotional poster for the Ulster-Scots Writing Competition. The background features a large, faint image of a harp. In the center, the text "Ulster-Scots Writing Competition" is written in a bold, black, serif font. Below this, "Deadline 10 September!" is written in a bold, red, sans-serif font. To the left, there is a small portrait of a man in 18th-century attire. A speech bubble next to the portrait contains the text "Everybody kens a wee bit o' Ulster-Scots". To the right of the portrait, the text "Funded by:" is followed by the Ulster-Scots Agency logo, which consists of a stylized red and blue 'X' shape. Below the logo, the text "Ulster-Scots Agency" and "Boord o' Ulster-Scotch" are written in a small, black, sans-serif font.

The deadline for The Linen Hall's Ulster-Scots writing competition is looming! Winner receives £500! Organised in partnership with the Ulster Scots Agency Full details: [bit.ly/2QXsH58]

Media review

Croke Park: Eid celebrated by 500 Muslims at GAA HQ

BBC News

The festival of Eid has been marked at Croke Park in Dublin with the biggest gathering of Muslims in Ireland since the pandemic began.

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-57901923>]

Georgian groups urge EU to help defend democracy after far-right violence

Irish Times

... with nationalists and the ultra-conservative Georgian Orthodox Church, and EU states including Ireland said the government had failed to protect the ...

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/georgian-groups-urge-eu-to-help-defend-democracy-after-far-right-violence-1.4624978>]

C of E green recovery investment following the pandemic

Insurance Investment Exchange

Report on the need for a green recovery following the pandemic. Includes quotes from Michael Pratten, Chief Investment Officer, Church of England Pensions Board.

[[] <https://www.insuranceinvestmentexchange.com/news-commentary/453-green-transition-top-of-post-covid-agenda-but-don-t-take-your-eye-off-inflation>]

Royal visit to Exeter Cathedral

BBC News

Coverage of visit to Exeter Cathedral by the the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-57893068>]

The bells, the bells on Freedom Day

Daily Mirror

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Report of a change of heart from Chester Cathedral on ringing of bells to mark the easing of coronavirus restrictions.

[<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/cathedral-decides-not-ring-freedom-24566481>]

Sold - Hitler's secret plan to invade Ireland during World War 2

Irish Post

A copy of Adolf Hitler's secret plan to invade Ireland during World War 2 has been sold at auction for €1,100.

The intelligence handbook, which outlines plans of a Nazi offensive against Ireland, sold at an auction hosted by Purcell Auctioneers - who noted that the secret documents were "of the utmost rarity".

It reportedly features a detailed military study of the geographical landscape of the west of Ireland - where Hitler planned to land his army.

[[] <https://www.irishpost.com/news/adolf-hitlers-secret-plan-to-invade-ireland-sells-at-auction-for-e1100-216301?>]

Why the Scouts are launching a money badge after Covid

BBC News

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-57863156>]



Opinion

Why it's time for republicans to come clean about the past - Malachi O'Doherty

Truth telling about The Troubles needs to be across the board

Every armed organisation that was involved in the Troubles here defined and proclaimed its own standards — and all of them broke those standards.

No law entitled soldiers to open fire on unarmed civilians in Ballymurphy, Ardoyne, Derry, or Springhill, or in numerous other locations.

In the aftermath of mass killings at Ballymurphy and on Bloody Sunday, the Army and the government insisted that only identified armed targets were fired on.

Those claims have not held up and there have even been apologies from prime ministers. These are inadequate responses to murder by state forces, but they are something.

Loyalist paramilitaries proclaimed that they had standards, too. They often issued statements saying that they had no grievance against uninvolved Catholics. In one statement in 1972, they even — absurdly, but probably to impress the British — invited Catholics to seek refuge in loyalist areas for their own safety.

Yet, over and over again, those organisations killed Catholic men and women who had no links to the IRA and posed no threats to anyone.

In the 1994 ceasefire statement professing “abject remorse”, the loyalists maintained the supercilious bearing of people who felt they had done a good job and made a contribution as responsible people to war and to peace.

Actually, many of them were horrific barbarians. I once asked a UDA brigadier why they killed taxi drivers and the idiot said back to me: “Who was it drove away the two corporals to be killed? A taxi driver. Right?”

And the republican groups, the Provisional IRA, the Official IRA, the INLA and others, proclaimed that they also operated within an understanding of some targets being legitimate and some not.

They can rationalise the murder of Tommy Bulloch in Fermanagh because he was a soldier in the UDR, but why kill his wife, Emily, beside him? Who was the beast that did that?

Sometimes, the IRA flexed definitions to include people who were previously excluded. The bombing of the workers' bus at Teebane followed a decision to include within the legitimate target category people who worked for the security forces.

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All of those organisations should admit that they often murdered people who were outside their own proclaimed definitions of legitimate targets, just as the British did.

If we can't hold them to civilised standards, can we not at least hold them to their own?

Currently, the British Government is working to give all these groups and others — the IPLO, Tara, Saor Eire, the Red Hand Commando, the B Specials — an amnesty.

The Provisionals are likely to be the chief beneficiary of this, but say they do not want it and Sinn Fein even hopes to take the leadership of the political challenge to the plan.

They hope to do that without even taking their seats in Westminster to join the debate. But that's an old argument, so here's a new one.

At various stages of the peace process, the IRA, through Sinn Fein, asked the British for confidence-building measures.

These included prisoner releases, the lifting of restrictions like the broadcasting ban, the dismantling of Army bases and watchtowers.

What about the former paramilitaries offering some confidence-building measures now, too?

Two young women walked into the Abercorn with a bomb. They joined the queue at the counter until a table came free and then jumped that queue to take it.

They knew the place was crowded. They knew the time at which their bomb was set to go off and yet they left it and gave no adequate warning — not that there would have been time to clear the place.

Would it hurt the IRA to name the women who disgraced their own proclaimed standards in that way, particularly if they are dead, or are no longer part of their organisation? The IRA not only stands over its “legitimate actions”, but defends people who, by those standards, were war criminals within their organisation.

And many of those people are dead now. Joe Cahill is dead, Bobby Storey, Dolours Price, Pat McGeown and all the dead hunger strikers, who were bombers and killers before they were caught.

Jim Bryson, Tom Toland, Sean Convery, all dead and beyond suffering any harm if their actions are disclosed, and many of them rumoured to have been involved in atrocities which broke the IRA's own proclaimed standards.

How many people did Martin McGuinness kill? Were they all legitimate targets?

Gerry Adams has said there is no corporate IRA entity still existing. But when information was needed on the Disappeared, something like an honest effort was made to locate them.

It would do the IRA no harm to tell us now the names of the people on the Army Council that decided on the bombing of

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civilian targets, who approved sectarian murders like the bombing of the Four Step Inn. Some of them are dead now, too.

Who decided that the IRA would shoot people who didn't stop at their checkpoints during the 1972 ceasefire the way the Brits did?

The only way republicans can authoritatively demand truth from the British Government is by setting the standard themselves and they don't have to deny their own tradition to do it, but merely call to account those who betrayed that tradition through the murder and maiming of people the movement had determined were not legitimate targets.

Mary Lou McDonald could disown them, ask for their names to be removed from rolls of honour.

Some hope!

Courtesy the Belfast Telegraph 20.07.2021

Pointers for prayer

Lord God, raise up faithful pastors, priests, deacons and church leaders who love you more than all. Give to each of us the skill to be a shepherd in some small way, the will to be shepherded by other leaders, and to trust the Good Shepherd over all.

Loving God, you hear our prayers:
You live among us.



Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you sent your Son to be the Messiah, and to build your church. As members of His kingdom, fill us with joy for His resurrected presence, His loving rule, and His kingdom yet to come.

Loving God, you hear our prayers:

You live among us.

Holy Spirit, give us confidence when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Guard us from evil. Shepherd us with your rod and staff. Shower goodness and mercy upon us all the days of our lives.

Loving God, you hear our prayers:

You live among us.

Lord Jesus Christ, you are our peace, granting access to God the Father through the Holy Spirit, making us citizens with the saints in the household of God.

Loving God, you hear our prayers:

You live among us.

Lord Jesus, the apostles gathered around you and reported all that they had done and taught in your name. Help us see

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the good we do in your name and rejoice in being a helpmate of yours.

Loving God, you hear our prayers:

You live among us.

Lord Jesus Christ, you invite us not only to work with you, but to rest with you. Though the desires of this world tire us, touch us, that we may be healed. Hear our prayers for those in need of your healing _____.

Loving God, you hear our prayers:

You live among us.

The love of God has won. The new life has begun.

Amen

Speaking to the Soul

I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return.

Philippians 1:9-11 NLT

I'm sure that we are all members of lots of organisations. It may be the National Trust, a car breakdown service, a political party or a sports club. If I asked you whether your relationship with those organisations was growing you would probably think that was a very odd question. You would probably just think of yourself as being in or out – a member or not a member. The idea of having a developing

relationship with the organisations wouldn't seem relevant. The problem with the church is that many people look at it in exactly the same way. They are members of the church but would never think of it as a relationship that changed, or needed to change.

Throughout Paul's writing he sees his relationship with Christ as being something that is constantly developing and, in this letter, he describes particularly powerfully his desire that it should change more and more. Here at the beginning of the letter he describes his passionate desire that the Philippian Christians should move on in their faith. He wanted their relationship with Christ to become increasingly strong, because in that way their life together as a church would become more united and resilient.

Paul prays that the Philippians will overflow with love as they grow in knowledge and insight. In that way they will be able to make increasingly good decisions. It is right that we should pray for one another's illness and challenges, but we need to ensure that we also pray for one another to grow in our relationship with Christ. Standing still is never an option in any relationship, and it isn't one in our Christian lives. If we are not growing stronger in our faith, then we will be getting weaker and that makes us more vulnerable in every way. Let's listen to Paul's words and use them to inspire us to pray for one another with passion and commitment.

QUESTION

What is your prayer today for two of the Christians whom you know best?

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PRAYER

Lord God, give me a greater desire to grow in my love for you. Amen

