



**Image of the day - Cork diocese to mark Centenary**

## Reports

# Changes and challenges of Covid can cultivate new clarity in Connor - Bishop George Davison

**The Covid-19 pandemic and the changes it brought about in how the Church and specifically parishes in Connor Diocese connect with people were the focus of Bishop George Davison's Presidential Address at Connor Synod 2021.**

Held online via the Zoom platform on Thursday afternoon, June 24, Bishop George paid tribute to the 'remarkable' way clergy and parishes responded to the challenges posed by the pandemic, and the creative way they had continued to offer worship and serve their communities.

Speaking of those who have lost loved ones to the virus, the bishop said his thoughts and prayers were with all who mourn. He made special reference to the Rev John Anderson, rector of Billy and Derrykeighan, whose death in April from Covid-19 had been such a great shock.

The bishop paid tribute to those members of Connor Diocese who played a part in responding to the crisis and whose professions brought them to the frontline.

And he said that parishes, forced to change routines and learn new skills, had discovered that doing things differently



provided new opportunities to reach out with the good news of Christ to a wider range of people.

Covid-19 was not the only challenge, Bishop George told Synod. “Demographic changes and an increasingly secular outlook on the part of wider society bring their own difficulties and sometimes we have struggled to respond effectively. Increasingly the Church is seen as out of touch and irrelevant in the world of today – ‘nice if you like that sort of thing’ at best and ‘a threat to people’s freedom’ at worst!” the bishop said.

But he stressed that when the gospel is proclaimed, lives are changed. “We simply need to discover ways of connecting effectively with the community around us so that people will want to know more of what it is that motivates us

and take us seriously when we share our story of life and hope,” the bishop said.

“Perhaps however, the same openness to trying new things that has enabled us to respond to the challenges of Covid will also enable us to consider ways of addressing those challenges too. We have learned that sometimes it is when we have to step out of our comfort zones that we start to see new and exciting things happen!”

Concluding his address, Bishop George spoke of the work of the diocesan staff team, including changes in personnel. Team Connor, however, was not just staff, but every member of the clergy and every parishioner in the diocese, he told Synod.

“It’s my desire as your bishop to nurture a sense of fellowship and belonging across the diocesan family so that we may better support one another as together we hold out ‘the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all’ (Acts 10:36). Please pray for me in that work, as I will pray for you,” Bishop George concluded.

You can read the bishop’s full presidential address at - <https://connor.anglican.org/2021/06/24/bishop-george-delivers-synod-presidential-address-online/>

## **Reek Pilgrimage on Croagh Patrick to be four days per week in July**

The annual Reek Sunday Pilgrimage on Croagh Patrick, which was cancelled last year due to the Covid-19



pandemic, will be going ahead this year albeit in a much extended format from Wednesday to Saturday, 1- 31 July.

Announcing the good news, Administrator of Westport Father Charlie McDonnell said, “It’s been a different and a difficult year, a year in which we have had to hand so much over to the Lord, to place so much in His hands. Pilgrimage has always been a strong vehicle for both petition and thanksgiving and, in 2021, above any year, we are delighted to offer an extended Reek Pilgrimage acknowledging and giving thanks for the fact that we journey very much under the protective hand of God.

“Each year, while all of the spiritual benefits of the Croagh Patrick pilgrimage have been available to pilgrims from June to September, up to now the Sacraments have only been available on Reek Sunday. This year, due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, it would be impossible to facilitate the pilgrimage on one day only so I am arranging to greatly extend provision of the Sacraments for pilgrims throughout the month of July. It is my dear hope that this unprecedented and adventurous undertaking will provide all those who wish to come to Ireland’s Holy Mountain as pilgrims to do so safely and in their own time.

“For generations, the annual Croagh Patrick Pilgrimage has held a central place in the life of the Church in Ireland and I am delighted that an extended version will be available next month. Reek Pilgrimage 2021 is an exciting and ambitious project to undertake and will require great generosity on the part of lay volunteers and priests alike. It is wonderful to be in a position to go ahead under very clear health

management guidelines and I encourage all pilgrims to enter into it in a way that makes it a success for all involved.

“I am especially grateful that, as in previous years, Archbishop Michael Neary will celebrate Mass at 6.30pm on the eve of Reek Sunday, 24 July, in Saint Mary’s Church, Westport. I would like to appeal to priests from all over the country to become involved so as to make Reek 2021 a truly national pilgrimage. The extended plan this year will involve three times the number of priests than would normally be needed, so help is very much required throughout July. It is important that all priests who wish to participate in the pilgrimage book in as early as possible and they can do so on [frchaz@me.com](mailto:frchaz@me.com).

“To be safe, I ask that pilgrims take care to plan their pilgrimage well in advance and try as best they can to choose a day that would traditionally be quieter on the mountain. Parishioners throughout the country are by now well familiar with restrictions and while this will apply in the same way it will involve numbers allowed for outdoor gatherings.”

Father McDonnell concluded, “As we have all come through so much over the last fifteen months, I anticipate that the 2021 Reek Pilgrimage on Croagh Patrick will be particularly memorable from a faith perspective. I offer this prayer of thanksgiving to God as the pilgrimage will be extended throughout the month of July: ‘In His Hand are the depths of the earth, the heights of the mountains are His also’ (Psalm 95:4)”.

## Cork service to mark Centenary

**On Sunday, 27th June next a Diocesan Service will be held in Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork, with ecumenical participation, to mark the upcoming Centenary (on 11th July) of the Truce and the End of the War of Independence in Ireland.**

Announcing the Service, the Bishop, Dr Paul Colton, said that the Service was part of the *Cork, Cloyne and Ross Diocesan Centenaries Commemoration and Reconciliation Project* which has been ongoing in the Diocese since 2012 and continues until 2023.

‘We also wanted to avoid clashing with possible civic or official commemorations on 11th July itself’ said Bishop Colton, ‘which is why we have chosen the earlier date.’. Because of current pandemic restrictions attendance at the Service is limited to 50 people only and is by invitation only. The attendance will be led by the new Lord Mayor of

Cork, Cllr Colm Kelleher together with representatives of the City Council, as well as representatives of State and civic life in this region.



June 25, 2021

Bishop Paul Colton will be joined by the Most Reverend Dr Fintan Gavin, Bishop of Cork and Ross, as well as representatives of the Protestant churches in Cork, and of the Society of Friends.

## **Why hundreds of people are joining the ‘Spiritual Gym’**

Once a week, at 7.40am, children on their way to school, office workers and all kinds of local people attend the Spiritual Gym at Marylebone Church in London.

The Spiritual Gym invitation is simple: a gospel reading, a time of silence and then Eucharist. It draws all ages to a time of quiet reflection before work, school, or whatever the day may bring.

“We are good at thinking about our physical health,” said Assistant Priest and Chaplain to Schools, Father Jack Noble.

“Increasingly, we’re good at thinking about our mental health – but we are less good at our spiritual health.

“We wanted to help with that.”

During lockdown, the service went online, and became an instant hit with between 200 and 300 people joining in from around the world, from Nigeria to the USA.

Spiritual Gym helps “begin the day in the right way” explains Fr Jack.



June 25, 2021

“You just come before Jesus – and stay there.

“There’s no more precious thing in the world.”

One of those who has found the Spiritual Gym a helpful addition to life is classical singer Louisa Beard.

“At the Spiritual Gym I feel grounded” she said.

“It’s a beautiful idea. It can be very hard to be still and be with God and to make time to pray,” she said, “it’s amazing how powerful it is.”

After a few months online, the Spiritual Gym is back in real live form, at least for now. Fr Jack said that he is “really surprised” by its popularity.

“I thought I might be here by myself,” he laughs.



But he is not.

Families, including babes-in-arms, and every kind of city worker and dweller attends.

“It’s not novel, or jazzy, and yet it seems to be something that people can grasp,” says Fr Jack.

## People and places

### Dublin curate to take part in World Council of Churches’ conversation

Taney Curate, the Revd Christopher West, will take part in an online intergenerational conversation to mark the 50th anniversary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation Programme on July 1.

Christopher will be among five young people—the winners of a recent WCC essay competition on “The Future of Interreligious Dialogue”—will speak the with Revd Dr Wesley Ariarajah, former deputy general secretary of the WCC and director of the Dialogue programme, and Dr Clare Amos, former WCC programme coordinator of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation.

The essay contest winners are Lea Schlenker from Germany, Kritisno Sapttenno from Indonesia, Ioannis Christodoulakis originally from Greece, Nicole Kallsen from



the United States and Christopher West (Photo) from Ireland.

They will have an opportunity to briefly share salient points of their prizewinning essays as a starting point for the conversation. The essays in their fuller form will

subsequently be published in *Current Dialogue*, the WCC's journal for interreligious encounter.

“The journey of the WCC's office of Interreligious Dialogue since its setting up in 1971 has been marked by faithfulness and fruitfulness as the WCC has prayerfully and practically discerned what it means to be stewards of God's mysteries and servants of Christ in a multi-religious world,” said the Revd Dr Peniel Rajkumar, WCC programme coordinator for Interreligious Dialogue.

“This event, entitled ‘Reminiscing the Past and Rethinking the Future,’ will provide an opportunity to revisit the rich legacy of the WCC's engagement in interreligious dialogue as well as envisage new paths for interreligious engagement in the future.”

June 25, 2021

Register here to join the webinar, which will take place 1 July, 3 pm CET (2pm Irish time). All are welcome to join - [\[\[\] https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_dwi\\_li4JTI6FRzEaqGegvw\]](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_dwi_li4JTI6FRzEaqGegvw)

See also sermon later in this issue from WCC Central Committee worship this week.

## **Cork's kindness reaches East Africa**

Christian Aid Ireland has thanked the people of the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross for their support for the fundraising efforts of a Carrigaline clergyman who recently completed a sponsored walk around the county, raising around €12,000 for the agency's work in Burundi, a country affected by poverty, hunger and conflict.

The Rev Tony Murphy's month-long pilgrimage began in Bantry on 1st May and concluded in Youghal on 27th May. His challenge saw him visit each of the 22 parishes in the Church of Ireland diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, walking for at least 5 kms at each location while collecting sponsorship for Christian Aid's projects in the East African country.

Tony was joined by local rectors and parishioners and supported on many of the walks by Andrew Coleman, Christian Aid Ireland's Bandon-based Church and Community Officer. On the final day of his walk, he was joined by the Mayor of County Cork, Councillor Mary Linehan Foley, who came along to congratulate him for his fundraising efforts.





Cap - Cllr Mary Linehan Foley, Mayor of County Cork, and parishioners of Youghal greet the Reverend Tony Murphy on the final day of his 100km walk.

The small Church of Ireland community of County Cork, comprising just 14,000 people, is the sole funder of three Christian Aid–supported farming cooperatives in Burundi on which hundreds of poor families depend to boost their incomes, enabling them to pay school fees and medical bills.

Tony, who was born in Clonmel, County Tipperary, visited Burundi in October 2019 to see for himself how the support of Cork diocese is enabling farmers in Burundi to move from subsistence farming, where they grow food to survive, to a

business model where they grow food for sale, in order to thrive.

Local farmers, most of whom are women, receive training in good farming techniques and are given access to a harvest storage facility as well as a small maize processing plant.

Speaking in 2019, one member of the cooperative, Esperance Kigongwe (44), a maize farmer and mother of eight children, explained the difference the cooperative had made: “Because of the cooperative, my harvest has increased. Before we had a storage room, our harvest would spoil. Now I get high quality maize flour from the processing plant. With the extra money, I have bought goats and also land for myself. I can pay for school materials for my children.”

Tony’s pilgrimage brings to more than €70,000 the sum raised within the diocese since 2017 to fund the project. The cooperatives were established by Christian Aid’s local partner, the Anglican Church of Burundi, in the south of the country and Cork diocese has committed to funding them for this year and next year. Funding levels declined due to the coronavirus pandemic while churches were closed and the Rev Tony Murphy is delighted that his pilgrimage has helped achieve the yearly target for 2021.

Christian Aid Ireland Chief Executive Rosamond Bennett paid tribute to the people of Cork diocese. She said: “Cork’s kindness is reaching all the way to East Africa, bringing hope and opportunity to people living in poverty. Where once the members of these cooperatives were merely surviving, now they’re thriving. We’re very grateful to Rev

June 25, 2021

Tony, and to Bishop Paul Colton and all the local rectors and parishioners who supported his walk so generously.”

The Rev Tony Murphy recalled his visit to Burundi: “The support of Cork diocese was hugely appreciated by the people in Burundi, a people with spirit and resilience who are working hard to move from subsistence living. The cooperatives are doing so well that the hope is that they will have become self-sustaining by the end of next year and won’t require further support.”

If you would like to sponsor Tony’s walk, you can make an online donation here or you can post a cheque to Rev Tony Murphy, 9 Riverside, Carrigaline, County Cork, P43 FP11 marked ‘Burundi’ on the reverse.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/walking4burundi>

## **Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars**

### **Six new Diocesan Readers commissioned**

Six new Diocesan Readers were commissioned by the Bishop of Down & Dromore, Rt Rev David McClay in Dromore Cathedral on Tuesday 22 June. The bishop, who also gave the address, was assisted by the Diocesan Warden of Readers, Revd Willie Nixon.

The new Readers join the existing team of 60 and nine more are in training. Pictured above they are, left to right:

June 25, 2021



Iain Slater (Mount Merrion)  
Ruth Mulligan (St. John's, Lurgan)  
Melanie Houston (Newtownards)  
Charlene Harwood (Willowfield)  
Wendy Jenkins (Gilnahirk)  
Jonathan Hassin (Hope Community Church Craigavon)

The event was live-streamed from the Down and Dromore Facebook page and may be viewed here.

[[]] [https://www.facebook.com/pages/Dromore-Cathedral/261120627342034?hc\\_ref=ARRYJgOdKKqqLRe9HYBR2rxOioKnkJqtPXpN92pNnRsr11ub9W0SqfR2MEy5XsZ\\_kAQ&ref=nf\\_target&fref=tag&\\_tn\\_=kC-R](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Dromore-Cathedral/261120627342034?hc_ref=ARRYJgOdKKqqLRe9HYBR2rxOioKnkJqtPXpN92pNnRsr11ub9W0SqfR2MEy5XsZ_kAQ&ref=nf_target&fref=tag&_tn_=kC-R)

## **Sermon- during opening prayer for the WCC central committee, by Most Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit**

Sermon at the opening prayer for the WCC central committee on 23 June 2021: Most Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit,



June 25, 2021

## Church of Norway, former general secretary of the WCC 2010 - 2020.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, dear members of the WCC central committee!

Peace be with you from God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, our Creator, Reconciler and Lifegiver! Amen.

I thank the moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom, and the acting general secretary, Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, for inviting me to address you at this profound moment, at the opening prayer of this meeting of the central committee in 2021.

You come together reading from the Holy Scripture the words of 2 Cor 5:11-21, and under the theme of the upcoming 11th Assembly of the WCC: “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity”.

Something has moved the world. It has not only moved the world, but changed the world significantly since the central committee met last time in 2018. Then we celebrated and marked the first 70 years of the World Council of Churches together. We did so acknowledging that the ministry of the WCC has always been to address what is challenging, even wrong, sinful and unjust. The call we share is not to polish the surface, but to be honest – and hopeful that change is possible.

This “something” this time is a virus. It is, however, much more than the virus. It is all the effects of a pandemic on health, on economy, on increasing injustices and poverty, on

separation and isolation; it affects our lives as individuals and our lives together.

Today you come together as the central committee online to address the effects of this global crisis for the work of the ecumenical movement and the WCC as an organisation, and to discern how to take the next steps together.

Together we mourn with our member churches who have lost significant numbers of their members and many leaders. Some of you have lost your colleagues, friends and family members. We have lost members of the central committee and other co-workers in the ecumenical movement.

Many of you live in contexts where the conditions have become significantly worse. People all over the world are waiting for a fair and effective production and distribution of vaccines.

The second letter to the Church in Corinth from the Apostle Paul is written to comfort the local church, giving thanks to “God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who comfort us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (1:3 f).

“So we do not lose heart” (4:16) - “for we walk by faith, not by sight.” (5:7). That is the reason why we as well can and should in times like these have a theme for our next Assembly like we have decided: “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity”. We believe – even if we do not see it every day or everywhere - that Christ’s love moves the world.

The way forward we find by believing more than what we see.

The Biblical context of the theme for the Assembly reminds us why there is a call to reconciliation and unity. It is not for the sake of keeping church diplomacy or any other decent multilateral work going and busy, but because the world is like it is and because the churches are having the needs they have. To work is to be “ambassadors for Christ”. On behalf of Christ. Because the world need what Christ gives: Reconciliation with God. Nothing less.

Your work is a holy calling to show how God in Jesus Christ has made a difference and reconciled the world with God. Therefore, God can through Christ create a chain of comforting, of bringing something else and something really new into the world – through the fellowship of the Church. This is a fellowship that is connected through the love of Christ, and therefore can be so much more than what we are by ourselves. Therefore, the Church needs to be moved by, even controlled by and compelled by Christ’s love.

The need for multilateral, faith based, justice-seeking and hope-creating work is even greater than before. It happens through people that are not perfect, but who are keeping “this treasure in earthen vessels” (4:7). So it always was in the 72 years of work as WCC, and so it is today.

Let me take this opportunity to express my thanks - and even admiration - to the leadership and all the colleagues in the WCC for your resilience in the ministry for the WCC and continuing the holy call of the ecumenical movement in this



**World Council  
of Churches**

**#WCC #PRAYTOGETHER**  
**WCC CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**23-29 JUNE 2021, ONLINE**

very critical time. You continue to share the love of Christ through your work and your communication in many new forms. The ministry of reconciliation bringing justice and righteousness has not become obsolete, it has not been terminated, it has not lost its urgency. It is more needed than ever.

As there has been no opportunity to report back to you from the work of the last period of my tenure, neither to share my



reflections after more than 10 years of service as GS, I value this special invitation to address you today.

We all need an ecumenical movement of love. We all need the comfort of God through one another. I also know from those more than ten years that we all need the forgiveness of sins, the reconciliation and the righteousness that is given in Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection.

I thank you for the richness of relationships and experiences of Christ's love you gave to me and my family during my time as general secretary. I thank you for the many encounters, meetings and visits that brought me into the reality of your lives, your struggles, and your remarkable and inspired ministry of reconciliation in your many contexts. I thank you for the friendship and collegiality. I thank you for the many expressions of belonging together, in mutual accountability to one another. I thank you for having the honour of representing this fellowship in a world in need of love, in deep and urgent need of reconciliation and unity.

May God, who gave us the ministry of reconciliation, continue to comfort you and give you the courage and wisdom to fulfil your calling.

## Pointers for prayer

O Lord,  
we beseech thee mercifully to hear us;  
and grant that we, to whom thou hast given  
an hearty desire to pray,  
may by thy mighty aid be defended and comforted



in all dangers and adversities;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God,  
you have broken the tyranny of sin  
and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts  
whereby we call you Father:  
Give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,  
that we and all creation may be brought  
to the glorious liberty of the children of God;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jesus' homecoming was attended by enthusiastic crowds  
but also by dissenters, who attributed his good works to  
Satan. That we might be faithful to the One who calls us his  
"family", blessing his goodness and striving to follow his  
example, we pray "True Son of God and Son of Man," and  
respond, "Keep us faithful, keep us true."

That the Christ's church would remain faithful in its witness  
to the truth of the gospel, we pray: True Son of God and Son  
of Man.

Keep us faithful, keep us true.

That where the church of Jesus Christ finds itself a minority in the midst unfaith, it may not succumb and accept defeat. True Son of God and Son of Man.  
Keep us faithful, keep us true.

That homes of the church that are afflicted with violence, anger, or abuse, may find refuge and counsel in God's Word. True Son of God and Son of Man.  
Keep us faithful, keep us true.

That our congregation may be enabled to embrace the lost, the fallen, and the wayward of our community. True Son of God and Son of Man.

Keep us faithful, keep us true.

That those who participated in baptismal and confirmation preparation , may be blessed with increasing faith and strengthened in continued, regular worship we pray: True Son of God and Son of Man.

Keep us faithful, keep us true.

Pardon us, O God, when we are so concerned with ourselves and those near to us that we fail to pray for others. Instill within us your compassion. True Son of God and Son of Man.

Keep us faithful, keep us true.

Let your loving Spirit, O God, announce again the "Abba" word of our divine parentage and our sure inclusion as members of your family. Amen.

## Speaking to the Soul

**Come, wild animals of the field! Come, wild animals of the forest! Come and devour my people! For the leaders of my people—the Lord’s watchmen, his shepherds—are blind and ignorant. They are like silent watchdogs that give no warning when danger comes. They love to lie around, sleeping and dreaming. Like greedy dogs, they are never satisfied.**

Isaiah 56:9-11 NLT

As a church leader I find these words incredibly challenging and agonisingly sad. I am sure that we have all known church leaders who have worked extremely hard and they have rightfully earned people’s love and respect. But there are lazy leaders as well. Here Isaiah depicts the way in which spiritual leaders in his own day had totally missed the point. They were the opposite of shepherds. They didn’t care for the sheep at all. Their only concern was to have a good time and Isaiah goes on to describe how they loved to party and get drunk, and then to plan even bigger parties.

If you are a church leader then, like me, you will want to hear the word of warning. None of us should think that we are incapable of laziness or distraction. We need to keep our eyes focused on the incredible God-given responsibility to care for the flock and to work hard to nourish and strengthen people in their spiritual lives. We should always be aiming to give the very best of ourselves to the Lord’s work, knowing that what we do has eternal importance.



If you are not a church leader then I want to encourage you to pray fervently for those who are called to this important task. To be a shepherd to God's people is an extraordinarily demanding calling. It is a massive privilege but, at the same time, it is physically, spiritually and mentally taxing to a huge degree. Remember that your church leaders are human, like you, and can have good days and bad ones too. They will need your love, understanding and prayerful support if they are going to be all that God wants them to be.

## QUESTION

In what ways could you be more effective in supporting your church leaders?

## PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, that you have called men and women to be leaders of your people. Please grant them your daily inspiration and encouragement so that they will be effective shepherds. Amen

