

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Army Medics remembered



Image of the day

Army Medics remembered at service in St Patrick's Cathedral

The District President of the Royal British Legion Ireland, Ken Martin and Chairman Brian Duffy MBE represented the Legion in St Patrick's Cathedral on Sunday on the occasion of Corps Sunday of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Both are veterans of the Corps.

The gathering was organised by Brigadier John Graham and the Ulster Branch of the Association and was attended by representatives of the Royal Colleges in Dublin as well



The Royal Army Medical Corps memorial in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin

as colleagues of several Defence Forces Ireland associations.

100 year old WW2 Burma Star veteran Sister Wendy Geary attended with her daughter Carolyn and laid a tribute at the memorial.

CNI

People and places



Appreciation of Methodist ministry on Shankill

A service at Woodvale Methodist Church last Sunday morning marked the retirement of Rev Colin and Mrs Brenda Duncan from full-time ministry. It was an opportunity to thank them for eight years ministry in the Greater Shankill circuit and to wish them well and every blessing in the future.



Woodvale Methodist Church

52 years service on parish select vestry recognised

Sammy Nixon has served as a member of Magheracross Parish Select Vestry for 52 years. He stepped down from this particular role at the 2022 Easter Vestry.

On behalf of the Clogher parish, he was presented with a commemorative plate by Linda Hamilton (People's Warden) and Ernie Fisher (deputising for the Rector's Warden). Sammy and Olive were joined by their family and their son,

June 28, 2022

the Revd William Nixon, Rector of Drumbeg, was the preacher



June 28, 2022

Diocesan and Parish Readers commissioned in Armagh



On Sunday 26th June in St Patrick's Cathedral Armagh, four new Diocesan Readers and seven Parish Readers were commissioned for ministry.

The Diocesan Readers are: Sonya Barnes, David Carleton, Rhonda Dempsey and Jackie Carson.

The Parish Readers are: Richard Robinson, Elaine Thom, Michelle McGaughey, Samuel Neill, Harry Simpson, Samuel Douglas and Alan Cousins.



Clogher Mothers Union branch's first banner dedicated

At Derrybrusk parish the Bishop of Clogher Rt Rev. Ian Ellis dedicated the first Mothers' Union banner... and MU hospitality ensured a lovely tea afterwards.

Derry schools annual 'Fan the Flame' Mass

Over 3,000 year seven and sixth class pupils who are to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in Derry diocese gathered to celebrate on June 9.

June 28, 2022

Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown was the principal celebrant at the annual 'Fan the Flame' Mass, which also marks the end of the student's time in primary/national school.

"It was a joy filled occasion and the young people left reminded, as St Paul said, to 'fan into flame' the gift that God has given them," a spokesperson for the diocese said.

Presbyteries encouraged to embark on 2 year 'listening exercise'

On the final day of the 2022 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland one of its largest Councils, the Council for Congregational Life & Witness, were encouraged by Members to embark upon a two year presbytery listening exercise.

The Council has a wide remit to support the on-going life, mission and witness of PCI's 500-plus congregations across Ireland in their work with all age-groups. With today's backing of the Assembly, the Council will embark upon a two-year listening exercise across all the denomination's 19 regional presbyteries to enable it to better resource the whole church. It will also be an important opportunity to more fully understand the impact of the pandemic on congregations.

The main feature of the Council's work this year has been to accompany congregations on their journey beyond lockdowns and pandemic. As its Report states, 'As the council continues to walk with congregations still experiencing a wide variety of realities as they emerge from

the worst effects of the pandemic and its impact on church life, it does so looking forward to God's leading of his people out of the captivity of restrictions into the liberty of an experience of new life as the children of God. Remembering that lifts our mood, stimulates movement and creates momentum.'

Addressing the General Assembly, Rev Colin Morrison, minister of Eglinton Presbyterian Church in north Belfast, and CCLW Convenor, said that the Council's focus would be to continue to accompany congregations who find themselves on a variety of journeys beyond the impact of the pandemic. Speaking about the forthcoming 'listening exercise', Mr Morrison said, that Presbyteries had always been crucial partners in the Councils' work. "Before the pandemic the Council invited a number of presbyteries each year to identify an aspect of church life that required particular attention by congregations within their bounds. Having done so, an event tailored to exploring that area was then co-constructed and delivered.

"These events proved well attended and often enabled fresh thinking, energy and encouragement. All of this was interrupted by the pandemic. As yet, it does not feel like the right moment to try to resume this initiative.

"Instead, to help gain a wider perspective on particular challenges and opportunities in congregational life and witness across our 19 very diverse presbytery situations, the Council is bringing a proposal to this year's Assembly to begin a presbytery listening exercise from September 2023. This will help the Council further nuance its work, tailoring it

to a variety of congregational realities, starting points and capacities,” he said.

Speaking of another initiative, he said that over 500 leaders from nearly a third of congregations across Ireland had taken part in the recent ‘Coming Back: Going Forward’ events, 7 in-person and 1 online, which were “intended to encourage congregations in this moment in which they find themselves to both regather and reshape ministry for the future. Despite the challenges congregations continue to face, it has been great to see an increasing sense of hope and anticipation among so many key leaders,” he said. The final event took place just before the General Assembly in Newtownards earlier this month.

As the Council seeks to get its work back towards more regular patterns of activity, there are a number of important balances to be struck. As the Council’s report states, ‘There is a balance between gaining momentum and setting a sustainable pace which is realistic about capacity, as well as watchful concerning the wellbeing of those charged with doing the work. There is a need to restore some previous activities, but also to take time to reassess priorities and to reshape for the future, rather than impatiently revert to previous patterns of activity. Timing is crucial, as it is possible to be doing the right thing too early as well as too late.’

This theme was picked up in the speech made by CCLW Council Secretary, Rev David Thompson, “A variety of core areas of congregational life will need to be examined and addressed as we further emerge from the pandemic,” he said.

“A freshness is something the Council is committed to as it goes forward. We don’t want to simply return to what we have always done in the way that we have always done it. Experiments during the pandemic with webinars, podcasts and other new ways of engaging congregations and their leaders in-person have generally proved fruitful. We will want to build on them, in so far as they continue to line up with any new realities congregations find themselves facing as they regroup and travel on. Some things have been easier to get back on track than others,” he said.

Mr Thompson also highlighted some of the events the Council would be organising over the coming 12 months, which include six regional events for leaders in the areas of children and youth ministry designed to encourage, envision and equip for the circumstances in which they find themselves. There would also be ‘Youth Night style’ gathering for young people on the Saturday night of the October school half-term, a regional Kids’ Big Day Out for children of primary school age, and Family Big Day Out intended particularly to be something that churches can invite families on the edges of church life to come and be part of.

A major eight session Bible Study resource entitled ‘Expressions’ will be launched in September in time for new church year. A ‘Back Together Again’ booklet that captures some of the learning from the period of the pandemic around the crucial area of the community of the church will be launched in August.

June 28, 2022

The Council presented 'The Turning of the tide', this year's General Assembly alternative presentation, which allow PCI's Councils, to focus on a particular aspects of their work, mission and ministry, or specific issues relating to them. During CCLW's presentation, Assembly Members heard how congregations were emerging from the pandemic, with stories focusing on pastoral care, discipleship and leadership for this season. Moving forward, it also looked at opportunities and challenges for youth, children's and women's ministry and new resources to help and support congregations.

News reports

Church of England to vote on wealth-sharing plans

Wealthy church dioceses will be allowed to share funds with their poorer counterparts under plans to be voted on by the Church of England.

If passed, the proposals, which have been submitted before the General Synod, the Church of England's legislative body, will mean that for the first time, money can be more evenly distributed, removing the current legislative barriers to dioceses sharing resources amid concerns about the sustainability of poorer and more rural parishes.

In papers published last week and submitted to the Synod for consideration at its conference in July, David White, deputy director of finance for National Church Institutions,

June 28, 2022

said that the amendment he proposed would, “in effect, enable a Diocesan Board of Finance to grant funds from its income account for use by other dioceses in the Church of England if it wished to do so”.

Based on 2020 accounts, the diocese with the largest value of historic assets is Oxford (£171 million).

The diocese with the lowest value is Liverpool (£1.5 million).

Mr White said that this demonstrates “the huge range of historic wealth held by the dioceses” and that many of the poorer dioceses are in industrial and northern areas, “reflecting the historic reasons for the disparity”.

He added that the draft new measure would provide opportunities for richer dioceses to be “explicitly generous to other dioceses ... if they wish to do so, having taken account of their own financial position”.

New CEO appointed at CPAS

The Rev Jon Scamman, vicar of St Thomas’ Lancaster, has been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer at CPAS, the Anglican evangelical mission agency.

The Rt Rev Mark Tanner, Bishop of Chester and the Chair of the CPAS Trustees, said:

'On behalf of the trustees of CPAS, I am delighted to announce the appointment of the Rev Jon Scamman as our new Chief Executive Officer. Jon has had a long association

June 28, 2022

with CPAS; he is an Arrow Leadership Programme graduate, has been vicar of St Thomas' Lancaster, a CPAS patronage church, for the last 12 years, and his children have attended various Venture holidays over the years.

'In recent weeks as we have been prayerfully considering this appointment, my personal devotions seem to have circled around two stories of succession in the Old Testament: from Elijah to Elisha, and from Moses to Joshua. The work we are doing at CPAS is the Lord's work: we have been seeking to discern his call and believe this to be for Jon. We continue to pray for the Lord's commissioning for Jon as he takes up this role later in the year, and for all needful gifts of grace as he ministers among us. Such succession must arise from prayer and worship, and be rooted in our fellowship in Christ.

'In preparing this announcement, I discovered that the first ever vicar of St Thomas' Lancaster, the Rev Joseph Armitage, left there in 1845 to become what was then called the 'Secretary of the Church Pastoral Aid Society'! Jon is following in his illustrious predecessor's footsteps. More importantly, Jon is a man of deep biblical faith, rooted in leadership of the people of God in a local context, and oriented to and around the lost with a compassionate heart. We look forward to welcoming him as he leads us into the mission of God, clinging to the Christ he loves, and teaching us to do the same.

'I commend him to your prayers and thank you for all your support.'

The Rev Jon Scamman joins CPAS in October 2022.

In the media

The problem is that people don't understand US law

Tim Stanley in the Daily Telegraph

Much of the UK media's coverage of Roe v Wade has been obsessive, hysterical and inaccurate. According to one radio host (I won't say which because I'm a pundit and these people pay my bills), the Supreme Court might now outlaw interracial marriage. One of the most conservative justices is Clarence Thomas, and he is black. And in an interracial marriage.

The problem is that people don't understand US law, or their own. This decision was not about the morality of abortion but the process of how it is governed, and the Court concluded that it isn't in the Constitution so it should be decided by the states.

As a result, America takes the position of, say, Ireland, where the matter was settled by referendum, or the UK where it was decided by Parliament. The French president declared himself appalled, but if you take the example of Mississippi, which was effectively the test-case for Roe, the new cut-off for abortion will be 15 weeks of pregnancy. In France it is 14.

The justices who voted down Roe are all "devout Catholics", said Simon Schama on Twitter (he's not quite right: one was raised Catholic, but is now a member of an Episcopalian

June 28, 2022

church) – yet two of the dissenters are also Catholic, as are President Biden and Nancy Pelosi, all of whom believe in the right to choose.

Some states will almost eliminate abortion; others will tolerate it up to birth. Justice Brett Kavanaugh, also an anti-Roe papist, argued that women cannot be stopped from seeking a termination outside their home state “based on the constitutional right to interstate travel” – and employers, including Disney, have said they’ll pay for them to do it. Old Walt must be spinning in his cryo-chamber.

The point is that Americans now need to hammer out a compromise that balances competing values. Those of us who believe that this precious being the media insists upon calling a fetus is actually a baby, with a right to life, are going to have to fight as hard as ever for our cause.

Three of Ireland’s main churches take part in Dublin Pride parade

First-ever Catholic and Church of Ireland Pride ecumenical prayer service in Dublin

Patsy McGarry in the Irish Times

Three of the main churches in Ireland were represented at Saturday’s Pride march in Dublin while the first-ever Pride ecumenical prayer service took place at two churches in Dublin.

June 28, 2022

St Teresa's Catholic Church at Donore Avenue Dublin 8 in conjunction with Church of Ireland neighbours at St Catherine's and St James held a prayer service on Thursday evening to mark the end of Pride month and to celebrate a statement by Pope Francis that members of the LGBTQ+ community were "always welcome and belong within our churches and faith communities".

The service was hosted by St Teresa's parish priest Fr David Corrigan and the Rev Mark Gardner rector at St Catherine's and St James's.

Colm Holmes of the Catholic We Are Church Ireland group said they had taken part in the Pride parade "to show support for LGBTQ+ people as, despite the successful 2015 same-sex marriage referendum, there is still a lot of homophobia out there".

He and other members of the group were heartened to see so much support for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in recent reports from Catholic dioceses all over Ireland as part of a consultation process in the church prior to a synod in Rome next year.

Taking part were members from Dublin's 10 Presbyterian congregations. They "were not going to be cowed by dogma from Assembly buildings [Presbyterian Church headquarters in Belfast]. Too many lives have been destroyed," he said.

Mr Smyrl, who is in a same-sex marriage and was removed for that reason by church authorities from his position as elder at Church Sandymount in Dublin, also took issue with an address by the church's outgoing Moderator the Rev Dr

June 28, 2022

David Bruce at the Presbyterian General Assembly in Belfast last week.

“To suggest that gay people wanted to rewrite the Bible was shocking. All we ask them to do is listen to our lived experience,” he said. He also accused the Clerk of the General Assembly the Rev Trevor Gribben of “ordering people to toe the party line” on the 2018 decision banning gay people from the church.

In his address to the General Assembly, the Rev Dr Bruce said the church was being portrayed as “rigid, unchanging and even unloving. We have been described as a people who exclude rather than include” with views that were “incomprehensible, or even dangerous.”

He advised delegates “we need to state with loving clarity to the world around us that we are not minded to redefine our relationship with the Bible, which as our supreme standard we consider to be the word of God. We will not rewrite it, re-edit it or reframe it”.

They should “be confident in the calling we have received to be the church of God, and especially when to do so means swimming against the tide”, he said.

Clerk of the General Assembly the Rev Gribben warned against publicly undermining the church’s position. “In the church alone resides the right to interpret her standards under the word of God. So when the General Assembly of the church comes to a mind on a position, that is the position of the church, and those who’ve taken ordination vows on big issues shouldn’t be undermining that position in

June 28, 2022

public and shouldn't be ignoring and doing the opposite to what the assembly has decided," he said.

It was "not legitimate for ministers who have promised to yield submission of the Lord to the courts of the church to deliberately and proactively, in an organised way, go out and seek to undermine that", he said.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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