



Image of the day

**Mossley Parish Church celebrates 50th anniversary
on Sunday next**

Special events support local PCI congregations to get back to ‘normal’

In response to the gradual easing of restrictions and increasing opportunities to restore a more normal pattern of church life, as Ireland’s lockdowns continue to be unlocked, like other organisations, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has been looking at how it can begin to get back to ‘normal’ and move forward.

Acknowledging that this will take time, throughout May the Church has run a number of special online events for churches in its Northern Ireland presbyteries to support congregations come out of lockdown.

Called ‘Fanning the flame’, the initiative is part of PCI’s Refined series of resources that it has developed throughout the pandemic to support and develop ongoing congregational life. Explaining the rationale for the series, Rev David Thompson, Secretary for the Council for Congregational Life and Witness (CCLW), who organised the sessions, said that the each one sought to encourage congregations to be positive, set a sensible pace, while focussing on priority areas, and be open to new ways of doing things. He also said that it was important for congregations to retain flexibility for the road ahead.

“Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, it has been an extraordinarily difficult time for everyone. For our congregations in Northern Ireland, it has been a very stop – start journey. In the Republic of Ireland, our colleagues have

May 28, 2021

had to endure a prolonged closure that they are only just coming out of. Thankfully it does feel like we are turning a corner and entering a moment of greater hope, optimism and opportunity, but it won't be without its challenges. It is a time, however, to take small but significant steps as we try and build momentum within current restrictions, which is why we wanted to support and invest in this process." David Thompson said.

The title for the series comes from the Apostle Paul's second letter to Timothy, when he writes, "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God [...] For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:6-7). Key leaders from each congregation in Northern Ireland were encouraged to participate and nearly 800 did so. Fanning the flame events for presbyteries and congregations in the Republic of Ireland have been scheduled for June, which will mean all PCI's 500-plus congregations would have had an opportunity to take part.

David Thompson said that he was pleased that each presbytery has responded positively to the Moderator's invitation to be part of the programme. He also explained that one of the challenges of being an all-Ireland church during a pandemic has been that restrictions on church life have looked different in both jurisdictions.

"We are glad to see progress right across the island now, and look forward in anticipation to that continuing. Timing is key in building progress and trying to do so too early may lead to frustration. Leaving it too late, may mean we miss an important moment. This is why we began with our northern

May 28, 2021

presbyteries this month, with events for congregations in our southern presbyteries taking place in June, which seems about right given their setting and circumstances,” David Thompson said.

Running the events has involved a significant leap of faith and rapid learning by staff in how to harness the potential of digital technology and presentation. Lynne Herbison’ PCI’s Programme Development Officer added, “The team involved have learned a lot and those new skills will be invaluable in opening up a world of possibility in how we can now engage with congregations and their members in the future. Nothing compares to being physically together, but we hope our digital platform will be able to supplement that and improve the reach of what we can offer to our churches and their members. This is particularly true for those who often feel themselves marginalised, simply by their geographical location.”

Presbyterian Moderator, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce, took part in the events, either contributing live to each session, or by recorded video message, depending on his availability. “This has been a massive undertaking, delivered in a very short window so as not to miss this crucial moment as we continue to turn this long awaited corner. I really want to commend everyone who has made this important series possible.

“We have been through exceptionally challenging times and I don’t want to minimise that and the suffering that this pandemic has caused. In my contributions to each event, looking at how congregations can begin to move forward, I tried to convey a sense that change often forces reinvention

May 28, 2021

and reconsideration, opening up new pathways and patterns that overlay the old familiar foundations of church life that we cherish. Exploring this, I am looking forward to welcoming our Republic of Ireland presbyteries to ‘Fanning the Flame’ in June.” he said.

Dr Bruce concluded by saying, “In the long history of God’s people there have been many times like the months we have experienced, and in those dark days God was at work, and He is today. It is my earnest prayer that we will see tangible signs of His leading, so that we can press on with confidence into this new beginning.”

The Fanning the Flame initiative will be followed up in June with four webinars as part of PCI’s Refined series of resources. These are entitled: ‘Together again for children’s ministry’, ‘Together again for youth ministry’, ‘Together again as kirk sessions’ and ‘Growing our presence in the community’.

‘Keeping in Touch’ – new sustainable, ethical resource for young people

Connor Youth Officer Christina Bailie and Susie Keegan from Dublin and Glendalough Diocese have today launched a new resource to help parishes and young people stay connected.

The Keeping In Touch project is funded by the Church of Ireland Youth Department (CIYD) and the Education Authority Northern Ireland.

KEEPING IN TOUCH PROJECT

funded by CIYD and the Education Authority NI.

The hope for this project is to give Parishes a resource to keep in touch with young people, encouraging connection and providing a way to invite them to in-person events. The pack has been shaped to reflect the 5 Marks of Mission and has been planned to be as sustainable and ethical as possible.

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Susie said: “Young people have been through a lot over the past year so we must take the opportunity to reach out to them and seek to support them. The resource allows young people to connect with nature as they plant their postcard to grow wildflowers and a reminder of hope for them and their communities.

“We have worked really hard to ensure the packs are comprised of sustainable elements and are ethically produced.”

May 28, 2021

Christina added: “As restrictions ease, we have the opportunity to reconnect with young people. We believe this resource will support local leaders to rebuild those connections and remind young people that we are here for them.

“By reflecting the Five Marks of Mission, this provides a helpful starting point for young people and leaders in their conversations.”

The resource includes:

A postcard, made from seed paper, which can be personalised by local Parish leaders.

A wooden token with the word HOPE.

The opportunity to donate a Euro to a charity of their choice.

Susie and Christina say the Five Marks of Mission encourage us to consider our actions and how we live. Each Keeping In Touch pack connects with these five things: Tell, Teach, Tend, Treasure and Transform.

TELL: The Bible Verse (Psalm 71:5) used on the postcards made by a small Irish business provides an opportunity for young people to be reminded of the life-giving news within the Bible. Alongside the postcard features a wooden token with the word HOPE. These have been made individually by The Yard Solas Project, Dublin and acts as a reminder of calm and comfort for young people.

May 28, 2021

TEACH: The postcards are blank on the back and you are welcome to write a message to decorate the front of the postcard as you like. It invites the church community together to express their care and support for the young people.

TEND: Christians are encouraged to respond to the needs of the world. The project has chosen three charities that do good work and young people can choose one that resonates with them and pledge a euro to that charity.

TREASURE: Part of following God means enjoying the world and his creation. Each postcard is made from seed paper meaning young people can plant it and wildflowers can grow!

TRANSFORM: By pledging a euro to charity, planting wildflowers or connecting with a local parish, Christina and Susie believe these packs can transform, parishes and communities across Ireland.

There are 2,500 packs available. Parishes in the diocese are encouraged to get a pack for each young person using a form on the diocesan web page.

Newtownabbey grandmother running 5k a day for Tearfund charity

A Newtownabbey woman has been taking on '5k a day in May' in aid of a global development and aid charity, the Newtownabbey Times reports.



Grace Startin, a mother of three and grandmother of four, is a classroom assistant in Methodist College Belfast.

She is part of a team virtually running every day in May in support of Tearfund, a charity which is responding to the impact of Covid-19 on people living in poverty.

A keen athlete and member of the County Antrim Harriers, Grace says the social side of running is what she values most. "I mostly run with my friend Marian, who is also going to do 5km a day throughout May," she added. "The hardest part of this challenge is motivating myself when there's no company to run with and when it's cold and wet!"

Clocking up 155km over the course of the month, Grace has already raised almost £700 for Tearfund.

May 28, 2021

Altogether, the group of 33 members is covering the distance between Belfast and the very tip of North Africa - a distance of 3,290km.

Running mainly in Northern Ireland with a few international participants in Malaysia, Lincolnshire and Geneva, they hope to raise a total of £20,000 for Tearfund - which could help up to 1,200 families living in poverty with health training and food support as they await safe access to a Covid-vaccine.

Thousands of people in Northern Ireland are now partially or fully vaccinated, but for billions of people around the world, a vaccine is still a long way off.

It is estimated that amongst people living in poverty, only 1 in 10 will access a safe vaccine this year; with most others having to wait until next year or even 2023 before they are able to.

Glen Mitchell, Tearfund's NI Director, said: "We talk about the pandemic being a storm we are all experiencing, but in very different boats. This inequality has never been more evident than when it comes to the access to Covid-19 vaccines.

"Those of us who live in countries with enough resource to purchase ample doses of the vaccine are often also those who can afford to social distance and freely access things like clean water or soap. For many people living in poverty, going to work in crowded spaces is their only chance at putting food on the table for their families. Still others, in refugee camps for example, have no way of isolating. Many

May 28, 2021

others have to walk for miles in order to access clean water, which they then have to ration through the day.

Report and photograph Courtesy the Newtownabbey Times

People and places



Community Pastor for the Parish of Bangor Primacy

Bishop David McClay of Down & Dromore has introduced Denise Wilson as Community Pastor for the Parish of Bangor Primacy. The service had been postponed until it could take place in person.

Denise took up her post on 1 February and she is encouraged and excited as she looks to Primacy's future.

“The congregation have been so supportive over these four months,” she says. “People have stepped up into leadership roles and some of our volunteers are far out of their comfort zones, but they’ve been willing to take a risk.”

May 28, 2021

The Church of Ireland shares the building with a Methodist congregation led by Revd Mandy Durrell who has been equally supportive. The congregation welcomed and prayed for Denise and her family at their first in-person worship service after restrictions eased.

“Mandy and I are like-minded,” says Denise, “and as well as occasional joint worship services, we’re looking forward to our congregations taking on some outreach projects together in the future.”

Good soil

Since arriving, Denise has started ‘Exploration Groups’ which will eventually meet in homes, a weekly prayer meeting and she is working towards establishing a youth ministry. The church, which has a strong connection with Bangor CAP Centre and Storehouse, is also keen to reach out into the community.

Denise says: “This is a praying church – the people have a praying heart. I feel privileged to have been planted in such good soil.”

Bishop David also gave the address at the service which took place on Wednesday 26 May, 2021. Refreshments were served outside afterwards.

About Denise

Denise trained as a Diocesan Lay Reader and formerly worshipped in St Columbanus, Ballyholme. She and her husband Rory, a doctor, served in Kiwoko Hospital, Uganda under CMSI for a decade and returned three years ago.

May 28, 2021

Denise's background is in paediatric nursing and she worked for Fields of Life for several years before joining CMSI. She and Rory have a young son, Gideon.

Mossley Parish Church celebrates the parish's 50th anniversary this year

This weekend, parishioners of Mossley will celebrate their 50th anniversary with special services of thanksgiving attended by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison.

Mossley Parish was formally created on Sunday May 30 1971, following the establishment of a new worshipping community in Newtownabbey in 1967. The Rev Leslie Forsythe was the first rector and the 1970s saw remarkable growth within the parish.

When Mr Forsythe moved to Antrim Parish in 1980, he was succeeded by the Rev Hugh Hopkins, and then in 1986 by the Rev Neil Cutcliffe. The current rector, the Rev Peter Jones, was instituted in 2017.

During the past 50 years, Mossley Parish has been blessed through the ministries of eight curates, and a significant number of parishioners have responded to the call of God into ordained or lay ministries.

A vast array of parochial organisations has developed, and a strong sense of community has always been at the heart of Mossley Parish.



The Rev Peter Jones, rector of Mossley Parish.

Peter said: “Just before the Covid-19 pandemic, we had a wide range of plans made to celebrate our 50th anniversary. Many of these have been placed on hold until the autumn when, we hope and pray, that the easing of restrictions may enable us to acknowledge this significant year in the life of our parish in a more complete way.”

The celebrations will officially begin this Sunday, 50 years to the day Mossley Parish came into being. Bishop George will be present for two thanksgiving services. “We are delighted to see many parishioners join with us for in-church worship and there will also be an online service which is available on our website,” Peter said.

“In the year ahead, we hope to gather for an anniversary dinner in a local hotel, further develop our Christian mission and ministry in new and innovative ways and continue to reach out into our local community. We look forward to welcoming Streetreach back to Mossley in July 2022.”

Two new bishops announced in Chester Diocese

Venerable Julie Conalty, currently Archdeacon of Tonbridge, will be Bishop of Birkenhead, and Revd Canon Sam Corley, currently Rector of Leeds Minster will be Bishop of Stockport.

Irish-trained Jesuit named bishop of Hong Kong

Bishop-elect Stephen Chow Sau-yan completed his noviciate in Ireland, continuing a 90-year link between the nations. Learned Jesuit bishops are a rare thing, largely because the Jesuits vow not to seek such offices and will only take up a bishopric if the Pope asks them directly. (The Irish Catholic)

Father Campbell retires after 50-year service to Catholic Church in Ghana

Irish by birth, Father Campbell has been in Ghana for the past 50 years and served at the St Peter's Catholic Church at Osu, the Sacred Heart. The farewell Mass climaxed the 70th anniversary celebration of the Christ the King Parish, which was commemorated with a special Mass at the forecourt of the church at Cantonments in Accra.

The year-long anniversary was launched on February 14, 2021 on the theme: "Celebrating our faith and love: Doing something beautiful for God".

It was attended by the Speaker of Parliament, Mr Alban Bagbin; the wife of the Vice-President, Mrs Samira Bawumia; the Greater Accra Regional Minister, Mr Henry

May 28, 2021

Quartey; the wife of a late former Vice-President, Mrs Matilda Amissah Arthur; the Apostolic Nuncio to Ghana, Monsignor Henryk Mieczyslaw Jagodzinski; a former Anglican Archbishop of Accra, the Most Rev Justice Ofei Akrofi, and a member of the Council of State, Mr Sam Okudjeto.

The Vice-President, Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, joined Father Campbell to cut the anniversary cake.

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

Compassion Sunday Worship Special

This unmissable event will be jam-packed with uplifting worship, inspiring testimonies, and a message of hope by Compassion Graduate Jane' Alam Sheikh.

Join in on TBN UK (Freeview channel 65, Sky 582) on Sunday 6 June at 11:30am and on Compassion UK's YouTube and Facebook channels at 8pm.

Don't miss out on this great event. Sign up today!

<https://www.facebook.com/events/523047978855130>

General Assembly address by Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

The speech made by the Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church Bishop Strange to the Church of Scotland General Assembly, commending the Saint Andrew Declaration, can

May 28, 2021

be watched again here just after the 4min mark youtu.be/4ZeKdoH8h1Q via @YouTube #GA2021

Who Can Receive Communion with Us?

The National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW) have published a new resource entitled Who Can Receive Communion with Us? which seeks to answer the question “When may Christians from other Churches ask to receive Holy Communion in a Catholic Church?”

The leaflet clarifies what is meant by sharing Communion, outlining when Communion may be shared, and provides advice about how to ask to receive Communion within the current guidance.

Download the Who Can Receive Communion with Us? leaflet

The National Board of Catholic Women have written this leaflet in consultation with the Association of Interchurch Families, the Department for Faith and Unity of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity in Rome. Its guidance is based on the teaching of One Bread, One Body, the Bishops’ Conference teaching document on the Eucharist in the life of the Church.

Janet Ward, of the NBCW said: “We are excited to have this leaflet available to help inform and clarify what is allowed under the Roman Catholic Church’s current guidance with regard to eucharistic hospitality. We hope it will be circulated broadly across the Church.”

Association of Interchurch Families -

[[] <https://www.nbcw.co.uk/publications>]

Phone-friendly version of the document at -

[[] [https://drive.google.com/file/d/](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Lf6YzXw0RSqcn0o7RSYloPsy6EJ4QHuK/view)

[1Lf6YzXw0RSqcn0o7RSYloPsy6EJ4QHuK/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Lf6YzXw0RSqcn0o7RSYloPsy6EJ4QHuK/view)]

An invitation to the pilgrimage of justice and peace

Launched in 2016, the booklet "An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace" introduces the conceptual framework of the WCC's pilgrimage.

"Christians and their communities around the world are aware today, as never before, that life itself is in peril. So many dangers — climate change, certainly: but also poverty and economic injustice, threats to health and well-being, violence and war — endanger humanity and can drain our hope. Yet precisely for that reason, the shared faith and commitment of Christians everywhere are necessary, affirming the God of life and the resilient hope offered to us in the life, the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christians are called to affirm, sustain, and protect life."

"This is an ecumenical calling. One God of life, one creation, one humanity call the one church of Jesus Christ to commitment and engagement where peace and justice are threatened or destroyed", reads its introduction.

Click here to download the full booklet (<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/booklet-an-invitation-to-the-pilgrimage-of-justice-and-peace>)

See other available resources -

May 28, 2021

<https://www.oikoumene.org/blog>

Media review

The EU must take a more pragmatic approach

Daily Telegraph

<http://digitaleditions.telegraph.co.uk/data/581/reader/reader.html?social#!preferred/0/package/581/pub/581/page/62/article/166896>

The NI woman helping save children's lives in Tel Aviv

Belfast Telegraph

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/the-ni-woman-helping-save-childrens-lives-in-tel-aviv-40451044.html>

Lough Neagh farmers band together to improve environment

BBC News

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-57189175>

Edwin Poots may be unlikely saviour of Belfast Agreement

Irish Times

<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/edwin-poots-may-be-unlikely-saviour-of-belfast-agreement-1.4569547>

Irish police urged to probe Adams comment

Belfast Telegraph

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/irish-police-urged-to-probe-adams-comment-over-sheltering-on-the-run-ira-suspect-40445536.html>



Pointers for prayer

Holy God,
you spoke the world into being.
Pour your Spirit to the ends of the earth,
that your children may return from exile
as citizens of your commonwealth,
and our divisions may be healed
by your word of love and righteousness. Amen.

Empowering God,
you gave the church
the abiding presence of your Holy Spirit.
Look upon your church today and hear our petitions.

... *Petitions*...

Grant that, gathered and directed by your Spirit,
we may confess Christ as Lord and combine our diverse
gifts with a singular passion to continue his mission in this
world
until we join in your eternal praise. Amen.

May 28, 2021

Creator Spirit and Giver of life,
make the dry, bleached bones of our lives
live and breathe and grow again
as you did of old.

Pour out your Spirit upon the whole creation.
Come in rushing wind and flashing fire
to turn the sin and sorrow within us
into faith, power, and delight. Amen.

Holy Spirit,
you poured yourself out on the people of the early church,
pour yourself out on us now.

Holy Spirit you set their tongues on fire with languages so
as to speak to one another in ways that could be
understood.

Set our tongues on fire to speak in different languages and
ways so others may hear the good news about Jesus.

Jesus, you said you had to go away so that the Holy Spirit,
the advocate, the counsellor would come and it was so.

Come once again Holy Spirit as the advocate that we all
need, as the counsellor we all need, and as the helper we
all need.

Come Holy Spirit, fan your flames of love and
empowerment, set us on fire for you once again. Bring life to
each of our dry bones.

Amen

Speaking to the Soul

**Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to
others. A fool is quick-tempered, but a wise person
stays calm when insulted.**

Proverbs 12:15-16 NLT

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The language of Proverbs is very black and white. The writer speaks of the wise and does everything he can think of to illustrate how wonderful it is to live in this way. It's a life of happiness, prosperity and peace and is marked by humility, grace and generosity. It stands in complete contrast to the fool whose way of life is miserable, poor and full of conflict. I suspect that all of us recognise that we lurch between these two extremes. We can see the huge blessings of being wise but have to admit that we are still capable of foolishness at times. If that describes you (and it certainly describes me) the value of Proverbs is that it gives us some clear practical pointers to how to live wisely.

These verses give us two pieces of valuable advice. Firstly, listen to others with care because by doing so we are allowing ourselves to be blessed by their experience and wisdom. We won't always be wrong, of course, but it is always good for us to check our thinking by those who have a wider and deeper experience of life. I am delighted that mentoring has become so popular in recent years, and I find it an enriching part of my own life both as a mentor and mentee. However confident you may be about a course of action you need to check your thinking with others.

Secondly, we need to stay calm when we are insulted. That's great advice but it's incredibly tough. If someone is rude to us the instinct is to hit back immediately for self-preservation, but the wiser course is for us to keep calm and to respond in a measured way when we have had time to think things through. A quick-tempered outburst is bound to make things worse. I'm so glad that we can read this wise advice through the perspective of the New Testament and to

May 28, 2021

know that God has given us his Holy Spirit to strengthen us and give us his wisdom amidst the rough and tumble of life.

QUESTION

In what way do you need the Holy Spirit to help you to be wise in your relationships with others?

PRAYER

Lord God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon me so that I will become increasingly wise and gracious each day. Amen

