

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Enthronements

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Enthronements

The enthronements of the Rt Rev Dr Michael Borrows proceed. A fine welcome at Killala and now on to Limerick.

People and places



Archbishop John Charles McQuaid's heavenly house in Killiney for €12m

Heavenly view for sale in Killiney

The private high-end house has some of the best sea views in this part of Dublin

Killiney is not short of impressive seven-figure sum homes. But if you ever wanted to elevate your position over well-heeled neighbours all you need do is climb the 72 steps to the top of the viewing tower of Ashurst.

The original turret of the high Victorian gothic residence was extended heavenwards by its most famous owner, former archbishop of Dublin John Charles McQuaid, about 100 years after it was first constructed.

The bishop, a close friend of Éamon de Valera, took up residence in 1945. A keen astronomer, he added the belfry tower, which today extends about 27m and offers the most bewitching views of Killiney Bay. From this lofty position you can see north to Sorrento Terrace, west to the obelisk at the top of Killiney Hill, and south to Bray Head and the Sugarloaf.

It is said that he liked to ascend it to be closer to God, but the authoritarian figure probably also got a kick of commanding one of the highest spots in the capital. He is reported to have been fond of shooting too, and would aim his .22 rifle at approaching magpies.

But the tower is now a mere talking point in a house that discreetly delivers a level of creature comfort that if in situ in his time may have given the cleric a serious case of Catholic guilt.

Designed by architectural practice Lanyon, Lynn and Lanyon, Ashurst was originally built for Sir Compton Domville, a member of parliament and landlord. It is probable that a partner in the firm, architect Charles Lanyon,

designed it. He is responsible for the Palm House in the Botanic Gardens, and Queen's University, Belfast, to which Ashurst bears a resemblance.

The current owners bought it in 2013 for €4.065 million, according to the Property Price Register, well above its then asking price of €3.5million. Courtesy The Irish Times

Synod applause for Bishop's call on UK government to “step up to the mark” in response to Ukraine refugee crisis

There was loud applause for the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster, on day two of the General Synod in Belfast when he called on the UK government to “step up to the mark” in its response to the refugee crisis which has arisen as a result of the war in Ukraine.

During consideration of the Report of the Church of Ireland's Standing Committee, the Bishop compared the responses of smaller countries like Ireland to that of the UK. Out of 66,000 visa applications [from Ukrainians], he said, only 11,000 had been settled in the UK. “Now, what's happening with the visa applications is that you may have a mother with three children, and two of the children are getting an application and the mother doesn't get it – and families [are] to be split up. I can't understand whether that is incompetence or cynicism, to be honest with you.”

The fact that our response in the United Kingdom to this refugee issue with people has been huge – many people



Parishioners of St Stephen's Belfast prepared the welcome bags for members of the General Synod

have signed up for 'Homes for Ukraine', and so on – and then [when] they get to the second part of the process, it is nothing but frustration. Smaller countries like the Republic of Ireland have led the way in saying for the moment we'll forget about visas because this is a crisis that needs an immediate response."

The UK government has supported in different ways, we know, in the conflict, but I think it has to be said that the response to the refugee crisis is found wanting and terribly wanting. And, for us as Christians, with open hearts for refugees – because we worship one who was a refugee – can I urge you to lobby your local MPs for this and on this

issue. I have done, and I've had a very open response to that, but I think we need to be speaking out the cause of the oppressed within this. Bishop's Appeal is helping us [to] do that but the government needs to really step up to the mark in its response to this refugee crisis."

General Synod stimulates debate

The General Synod has examined various issues relating to conducting their business including a Bill which, if passed, will provide for the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, Diocesan Synods of the Church of Ireland, and General Vestry meetings of the Church of Ireland to have the flexibility to meet electronically rather than, or as well as, in person.

It was explained that the Bill was aimed to give flexibility to how people conduct their business in the future, not just at General Synod level, but at Diocesan Synod and Easter General Vestry levels.

Another Bill receiving its first two readings aims to ensure that those who act as parochial nominators are part of the parish for which they are elected as parochial nominators. Currently, in theory, the Constitution allows for a member of one parish to be a parochial nominator of another parish. Given the importance of the role of a nominator, it is considered appropriate that a parochial nominator in invested enough in the parish to be a registered vestry member.

A motion calling on General Synod to recognise that conditions now exist for the implementation of arrangements



Welcome bags from St Stephens to the Assembly buildings await members.

providing for interchangeability of ministry with the Moravian Church was proposed at Synod. Proposed by Bishop Michael Burrows, the motion follows from a resolution of Synod in 2015 and is in accordance with an agreement made between representatives of the Church of Ireland and the Moravian Province of GB and Ireland and endorsed by the House of Bishops in November 2021.

The Church's Liturgical Advisory Committee also proposed a motion on the use of liturgies for the Season of Creation. The motion calls on General Synod to recognise that the Season of Creation exists de facto within the liturgical calendar on the Sundays from September 1 to October 1

and therefore commend the use of the LAC liturgies on this subject during this time and at other appropriate times.

The second day of the General Synod, Thursday, received the report of the Representative Church Body and among those speaking on it was one representative who asked the RB to acknowledge the importance of the Irish language in some areas where church services are conducted in Irish. Bishop Michael Burrows insisted that the Irish language should not be politicised.

Another speaker called on the Representative Body to organise and time important meetings of committees with more flexibility to allow laity who work having to avoid taking holidays to attend these.

The Council of Mission report was adopted and their new video, Radiant Faith, part of their Five Marks of Mission, was shown in the conference hall in the Assembly Buildings, Belfast.

Church of Ireland launches clergy assistance programme

The Church of Ireland has announced a Clergy Assistance Programme to help to improve mental health among leaders in ordained ministry.

It will be provided by Health Assured, the UK and Ireland's largest independent provider of programmes of this type, as part of the Church's mental health promotion project, MindMatters COI. The programme was announced today



(Thursday, 5th May) by Bishop Pat Storey, who chairs the initiative, at the 2022 General Synod meeting in Belfast.

Bishop Storey remarks: “For those who lead and pastor us, it is vital that there are enough resources to keep them healthy and well. It is to this end that the MindMatters project launches its Clergy Assistance Programme for church leaders, focussing on good mental health and well-being. It is hoped that, in response to the MindMatters survey, clergy will feel more adequately supported.

“As with many professions, clergy too have felt isolated and powerless throughout the pandemic – many feel that their very *raison d’être* was removed. The Clergy Assistance Programme seeks to give clergy a place and a space to explore their own well-being and is intended to supplement and not to usurp the pastoral care of a diocesan bishop. We hope that this will be a successful contribution to better support and care for those who watch over us.”

This service will be available free-of-charge to all Church of Ireland clergy for three years thanks to generous financial support from the Benefact Trust (previously known as Allchurches Trust). Key features will include:

- telephone helplines – available 24 hours a day and seven days a week – offering practical information and emotional support;

- a medical information helpline – available on weekdays, between 9am and 5pm;

- up to six face-to-face counselling sessions, per issue, per member of the clergy, including with applied cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques;

- up to six structured telephone counselling sessions, per issue, for a member of the clergy, or their spouse, and dependents (aged between 16–24 and in full-time education);

- crisis management and critical incident support;

- an online health and wellbeing portal at www.healthassuredeap.com; and

- a monthly well-being newsletter.

The Clergy Assistance Programme has been put together in response to surveys of Church of Ireland clergy and lay members in May–June 2021, which were commissioned by the Church to document understandings of and attitudes towards mental health. In responses to the clergy survey, 28% of clergy disagreed (and 18% strongly disagreed) with the statement that the Church of Ireland provided them with good support for their own mental health; by comparison, 20% agreed and 1% strongly agreed.

MindMatters COI is a three–year project to raise awareness of, and respond to the mental health needs of communities across our island, and was launched in October 2020.

Further initiatives from MindMattersCOI

Dioceses and parishes are currently being invited to submit applications for seed funding for local mental health promotion initiatives to address one of the following four themes emerging from the project’s research:

Stigma – there is a significant level of stigma in relation to mental health issues;

Connections – connections play an important role in positive mental health;

Supporting clergy to support others – clergy may benefit from additional training to support parishioners experiencing mental health issues and can feel unsupported in relation to their own mental health; and

Faith as a support for mental health – as faith and prayer are important to the mental health of members of the Church.

Mental health training is being rolled out to clergy and pastoral carers, free–of–charge and delivered online by Action Mental Health. The training lasts no longer than two hours and provides the participants with a broad overview of mental health, identifies the most common mental health conditions, teaches the participants how to sustain good mental health and emotional well–being, and provides them with relevant resources available in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The Church is also seeking to recruit mental health champions/advocates as part of the project, who will help promote positive mental health in the Church of Ireland and in communities across the island of Ireland. The plan is to match champions' skills, interests and time availability to the countless opportunities that exist to promote positive mental health in the Church of Ireland and the wider community. Anyone can be a mental health champion, whether they have personal or professional experience in the area of mental health or not.

If you have a query or would like to express your interest in training or becoming a mental health champion, please email the project team at mhp@rcbdub.org or fill out the contact form on the home page of its website:
<https://mindmatters.ireland.anglican.org>

Portuguese pastoral visit by Moderator

Presbyterian moderator the Rev Dr David Bruce visited Portugal last weekend to see at first hand work being undertaken by his church's global mission workers in the northern city of Porto.

Portugal is one of 11 countries across four continents where Irish Presbyterianism directly supports 27 global mission workers.

These include James and Heather Cochrane, from Comber, Co Down, and Chris and Rachel Humphries, from Tartaraghan, Co Armagh, who work in collaboration with the



Igreja Christa Presbiteriana de Portugal – the Christian Presbyterian church of Portugal.

The couples have planted Comunidade Pedras Vivas (CPV), a church in Senhora da Hora in the greater Porto area. Its name translates as “Living Stones”.

Dr Bruce said: “A moderator seeks to be an encourager to the church. In my two years in office I have had the privilege of seeing and encouraging the work done by many of our congregations. Due to the covid pandemic, I was unable to undertake an overseas tour like my predecessors. I hope this visit to Portugal will be an encouragement.”

Church planting is a broad term that encompasses prayer, planning, team-building, evangelism, discipling, pastoring, building relationships and training future leaders.

The Cochranes, who lead the CPV team, say building of relationships in the local community is important. The couple served as church planters in Brazil for seven years, before moving to Portuguese Bible Institute. Five years later, they relocated with their two daughters to Porto, to establish Comunidade Pedras Vivas with the Christian Presbyterian Church of Portugal. Chris and Rachel Humphries, with their young son and daughter, joined the team in 2019.

James Cochrane says: “The moderator’s visit was a time of fellowship and personal encouragement for us and the church family. We are a vibrant multi-generational congregation of 80 people who gather on a Sunday morning to worship.”

They also saw the moderator’s visit as an opportunity to raise awareness of the challenging mission context in western Europe. “Portugal, predominantly Roman Catholic, is a religious nation with symbols of Christianity on every corner. Yet, few would claim to have a personal relationship with Jesus. In this context, there is a great need to make disciples through the planting of Christ-centred, Bible-focused churches,” James Cochrane added.

Dr Bruce also travelled to the capital Lisbon, to meet the president of the Christian Presbyterian Church of Portugal, to hear of the challenges faced by that denomination. He also met a representative of Grupos Biblicos Unidos, the Portuguese movement within the international fellowship of evangelical students (IFES). For three years in the 1980s, Dr Bruce was the IFES travelling secretary in Ireland.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

New Mark Wahlberg movie on the life of Father Stuart Long to open in Ireland on 13 May

Father Stu is Mark Wahlberg's new film based on a boxer turned priest, which tells the true story of Father Stuart Long.

Based on a true story, Father Stu is an unflinchingly honest, funny and ultimately uplifting drama about a lost soul who finds his purpose in a most unexpected place. When an injury ends his amateur boxing career, Stuart Long (Mark Wahlberg) moves to Los Angeles, USA dreaming of stardom. While scraping by as a supermarket clerk, he meets Carmen (Teresa Ruiz), a Catholic Sunday school teacher who seems immune to his bad-boy charm. Determined to win her over, the longtime agnostic starts going to church to impress her. But surviving a terrible motorcycle accident leaves him wondering if he can use his second chance to help others find their way — and leads to the surprising realization that he is meant to be a Catholic priest. Despite a devastating health crisis and the scepticism of Church officials and his estranged parents played by Mel Gibson and Jacki Weaver, Stu pursues his vocation with courage and compassion, inspiring not only those closest to him but countless others along the way.

The film shows how it's often those who have been through the biggest struggles in their lives, experience God's mercy

the most. They also tend to be the best at sharing God's love with others.

The film also shows the Church through Father Stu's eyes, with fantastic inquisition and keenness to engage. On this journey, he discovers a new kind of strength in weakness, which parallels his boxing history.

Mark Wahlberg is very passionate about this film, having committed a substantial amount of his own money into the project. The story of Father Stuart Long is told with clarity, heart, compassion, raw emotion and a deep sense of God's unending grace.

To Wahlberg, Father Stu is the story of an apparently ordinary man who, through his faith, was able to touch a multitude of people in danger of losing their way. At a moment in the world when, he believes, people are starving for something to reignite their faith, Wahlberg hopes the movie will resonate not only in the Catholic community, but for every denomination and even for nonreligious people.

"I've prayed for Stu's intercession every step of the way," Wahlberg says. "I asked, is this what I'm supposed to be doing? Is this what he would want? It's been a massive undertaking, but I feel inspired and encouraged by doing it, and perhaps I can inspire somebody else to continue to pay it forward. I know that God uses us all in His big plan."

Wahlberg is eager for audiences to see the film in the format in which it was intended to be seen: on a big screen with a full house. "If I have to, I will walk from city to city, state to state, country to country encouraging people to go and see

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this movie wherever they can,” he said. “But you need to see it in a theater for the same reason you need to go to a church: to really feel the Holy Spirit. It must be shared. People’s laughter, people’s emotional response, their tears are infectious. Having that human experience is very, very important.”

Father Stu will be released in cinemas across Ireland on Friday 13 May.

A faith guide to the movie has also been made available which can be downloaded here.

For more see [<https://www.fatherstumovie.com>.]



Creating New Christian Communities Day Conference

The Methodist Church in Ireland's 'Creating New Christian Communities' Day Conference is taking place next Saturday 14th May, 9am - 1pm with teaching, stories to inspire and challenge as well as space to dream and discern!

In-person & Online!

→ Register and more info at: <http://buff.ly/3IMs3fJ>

Perspective

Bring back grammars, MPs tell Johnson

MPs are calling for the Prime Minister to lift the ‘absurd’ ban on setting up new selective schools, Charles Hymas writes

Boris Johnson has been urged to bring back grammar schools under a campaign by Tory MPs to “level up” education.

The MPs, led by former teacher Jonathan Gullis, are demanding the Prime Minister lifts the ban on new free schools being selective, in order to enable grammar education to spread out of its strongholds in London and the South East. Mr Gullis, the MP for Stoke on Trent, said wealthy areas of the country had a monopoly on selective education.

Half of the 163 grammar schools are in the South East or London, which, he claimed, is a geographical disparity that

denies the benefits of their teaching to children in more disadvantaged areas.

Mr Gullis said this had been “codified” by Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi’s White Paper, which had only committed to “protecting” grammar schools rather than expanding them.

Some 200 Tory MPs – more than half the parliamentary party – are thought likely to back such a demand, according to grammar school campaigners, who said it was “absurd” for a Conservative Government to continue Labour’s ban on new grammar schools 12 years after it was introduced.

Among those supporting the change in the law is Sir Graham Brady, the chairman of the Tory backbench 1922 committee. The MPs have suggested the Government could introduce it as part of a new education Bill expected in the Queen’s Speech later this month.

Mr Gullis, a teacher for 10 years before becoming an MP, said: “I have seen first hand the detrimental effects that lack of opportunity and choice have on ambitious students.

“Education is currently the very definition of a post code lottery. Protecting existing grammar schools without creating new ones is reinforcing this. Evidence of this is that 60 per cent of grammar schools are in just 11 local education authorities, out of 152 in total. We cannot and must not continue with this geographic sweepstake approach to education. Pupils should be able to stay local and to go far, to coin a phrase.

“Why should parents in the South East, and places like Stratford-On-Avon, have a varied choice of how best to educate their child but not parents in Stoke-on-Trent? If a child from Stratford-upon-Avon has access to a grammar school education then it’s only right a child in the red wall does too.

“With the launch of the 55 new Education Investment Areas, we have an opportunity to end this education postcode lottery.

“I am calling on the Secretary of State for Education to remove the ban on new selective free schools. In doing so, we can level up the country by offering students in the most deprived constituencies the same choice in education as the least deprived. This is levelling up in action.”

Sir Graham said grammar schools drove social mobility for families unable to afford more academic private schools. “It is absurd that after 12 years of Conservative-led governments, we still have Labour’s ban on new grammar schools in place. This should be scrapped without delay,” he said.

“Doing so would open the door to innovative proposals, such as that coming from Jonathan Gullis to create opportunities in places where academic attainment is low.

“It would also allow existing selective areas to maintain the same level of selection when the population increases without having to jump through unnecessary hoops.”

Grammars can open new selective “satellite” schools under their brand name but this has only been achieved once in Kent because of the complexity and bureaucracy.

Mr Zahawi is known to be a supporter of grammar schools, with three in his constituency.

He has pledged to extend their “DNA” across the education system, through allowing them to retain their selective status when they join multi-academy trusts.

Boris Johnson is also said to be “pro-grammar” schools as a “great mobiliser and liberator for many people.”

Poem for today

An Old Woman of the Roads by Padraic Colum

O, to have a little house!
To own the hearth and stool and all!
The heaped up sods against the fire,
The pile of turf against the wall!
To have a clock with weights and chains
And pendulum swinging up and down!
A dresser filled with shining delph,
Speckled and white and blue and brown!
I could be busy all the day
Clearing and sweeping hearth and floor,
And fixing on their shelf again
My white and blue and speckled store!

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I could be quiet there at night
Beside the fire and by myself,
Sure of a bed and loth to leave
The ticking clock and the shining delph!
Och! but I'm weary of mist and dark,
And roads where there's never a house nor bush,
And tired I am of bog and road,
And the crying wind and the lonesome hush!
And I am praying to God on high,
And I am praying Him night and day,
For a little house - a house of my own
Out of the wind's and the rain's way

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

The publication of Church News Ireland is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD. He may be contacted at houstonmckelvey@mac.com
