



Image of the day - Antrim parish church

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Can you spare 15 minutes for mental health?

On World Mental Health Day last October, the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev John McDowell, launched MindMattersCol, the Church's new mental health promotion initiative, Bishop- Pat Storey writes in the Church of Ireland Gazette.

Bishop Pat Storey chairs the Project Team and Advisory Group for MindMattersCol. To read on and find out more about Mind Matters Col



Wellness in body, mind and spirit is something that our Church wishes to promote and our faith deeply desires.

We have been working hard, gathering a lot of information, developing a website and establishing an advisory group of experts to guide the project. I am pleased to let you know that we're now starting to collect information on awareness

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and attitudes towards mental health within the Church, and we need your help. Gathering your thoughts on mental health awareness and understanding is a key phase of the project as the results will inform and shape everything else we do.

Therefore, I would really appreciate if you would visit our website – <https://mindmatters.ireland.anglican.org> - and complete a short survey. It will only take about 15 minutes to complete, and the information you share will be anonymous and confidential. We will also be running a number of online



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focus groups, and if you would like to join one of these, please let us know by emailing: mhp@rcbdub.org

If you don't have internet access but would still like to participate, please call + 353 (0) 1 4125 660 and leave your name and address. We will post you out a copy of the survey with a stamped addressed envelope, to return directly to the project manager, and will also provide details of the focus groups should you wish to participate in them.

The success of this initiative depends on your participation, so I would really like to encourage you to contribute and also tell your friends, relatives and fellow parishioners about this opportunity to take part and help us to respond best to the mental health needs in the Church and wider community. Updates on the project will be available on our website so do visit it regularly. Thank you in advance.

Minister's report a cause for concern for Irish prisoners overseas and their families

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas yesterday reacted with concern following the publication of the Minister for Justice and Equality's Annual Report on the operation of the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Acts (1995 and 1997). The report, published last week, provides annual figures on the number of prisoners transferred into and out of the State.

Brian Hanley – Coordinator of the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas which was established by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference in 1985, said, "The figures for 2020 shine a light on what is at this point, a barely-functioning

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system. No Irish prisoner was transferred into the State from an overseas prison for the fourth year in a row, and three quarters of those who applied to transfer to an Irish prison were refused last year.

“These numbers are unprecedented and run contrary to the Government’s stated policy that prisoners should be permitted to serve their sentences close to their families – not least because of the humanitarian benefit to prisoner’s families but also because of the improved resettlement outcomes such family engagement and supported release programmes have for society. The system has essentially ground to a halt and Irish people in prison overseas and their families here in Ireland feel utterly let down by the State.

Mr Hanley continued, “Even the number of people applying to transfer into the State points to a broken system. Eight applications were received in 2020; whereas five years ago the number of applications was double that. Irish prisoners overseas are coming to the harsh realisation that the opportunity to serve their remaining sentence close to their families and support network is no longer a possibility.

“This is shortsighted, as prisoners who receive regular visits from families have been shown to be much less likely to reoffend. Many Irish people who serve a prison sentence overseas will return to Ireland following their release from prison but won’t have had the opportunity for regular family visits and the support and stability that can provide.

Mr Hanley added, “While it is welcome that applications are being dealt with more swiftly than in previous years, it is

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regrettable that two of the thirteen applications under ‘active consideration’ applied for a transfer in 2013. This is an unacceptable delay, given the uncertainty and anxiety experienced by prisoners and their families awaiting a decision.

“Problems with the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Acts were highlighted by a Supreme Court decision in 2016 and an amendment is required in order to deal with these issues. Despite the amending legislation being drafted two years ago, it is still not on the Government’s priority list of legislation. The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas is calling on the Government to introduce the amending legislation without further delay.”

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas is a charitable organisation, which was established by the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference in 1985. The ICPO works on behalf of Irish prisoners overseas to provide information and support to these prisoners and their families.

The Minister for Justice and Equality’s Annual Report on the operation of the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Acts (1995 and 1997) is available here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d95f1-transfer-of-sentenced-persons-acts-annual-report-2020/>

C of I Bishops’ Appeal helps with fight against Covid in India

The Church of Ireland Bishops’ Appeal has released €10,000 (equivalent to around £8,600) in emergency



[Asha's ministry in Delhi during the Covid-19 pandemic.](#)

funding to support two frontline agencies responding to India's second coronavirus wave: Asha, a Christian charity working in communities in Delhi; and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

Donations in support of this appeal can be made online or by post using the reference 'CIBA India Covid Relief' and all details about how to contribute can be found [here](#).

Asha has committed supporters across the world and enjoys good relations with development agencies, diplomatic missions and governments. It is well-placed to bring medical treatment and to model good practice in terms of hygiene and face-coverings.

Asha's founder, Dr Kiran Martin, who has worked in over 60 slum communities in Delhi for 25 years, has made an impassioned plea for support. The agency needs N95 masks and medical masks, nebulisers, pulse oximeters and thermal scanners, steroids and anti-coagulants, or the



The Holywood Parish team, which returned in March 2020, with staff at Asha's headquarters

funds to purchase the supplies. Her team is treating people who present with Covid in their homes. Dr Kiran says: “Asha has instituted a protocol for home treatment of Covid patients with mild, moderate or severe disease. The situation with hospital beds and oxygen continues to be horrendous. We are treating severely ill patients with amazing success. I truly think it’s a miracle of God through willing and compassionate hands.”

Hollywood Parish, outside Belfast, became associated with the charity almost 20 years ago and has sent a number of teams to visit two projects in the slums of Zakhira and Peera Garhi. The parish has funded building work for community
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centres and the creation, resourcing and staffing of IT centres. The work of Asha has also been embraced by many schools in Northern Ireland where young people have learned valuable life lessons.

Canon Gareth Harron, Holywood Parish's Vicar, says: "When you visit an Asha centre in the slums of Delhi the values of the society – dignity, empowerment, justice etc. – are not displayed on posters on the walls; they are held in the hearts of the people who have embraced them. Asha means 'hope' and I had the privilege of seeing their hope-bringing work first-hand when I visited with a team from our parish in March 2020. We flew home just as the number of cases of Covid-19 began to rise in Delhi, not anticipating the crisis levels that have now been reached there. Having stood alongside the work of Asha for some years, we are grateful and encouraged that Bishops' Appeal has pledged its support as we know this will bring relief to the poorest residents of Delhi."

Médecins Sans Frontières has restarted its emergency response amid a surging second wave of Covid-19 in Mumbai, in Maharashtra state. The city's population density, poverty, and poor hygiene conditions are a triple trigger for the virus to breed, infect and spread rapidly.

"This is the largest upsurge since the pandemic started," says Dilip Bhaskaran, Covid-19 Co-ordinator for MSF in Mumbai. "MSF stands ready to further pace up its services in support of the health facilities that are currently completely overwhelmed."

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Among many other responses, MSF is supporting two units within a jumbo hospital in Mumbai. The units will include two tents with the capacity for around 1,000 intensive care beds in each.

Bishops' Appeal is the Church of Ireland's World Aid and Development Programme. It was set up by the Bishops of the Church in response to the commands in the Bible to bring good news to the poor and relief to the suffering.



Bishops invite submissions about planned Synod on the Church

The Catholic hierarchy have announced plans for a Synod about the future of the Church.

In preparation for that, they are embarking on a Synodal Pathway consultation. The deadline is Sunday, May 23.

In their guidelines, the Bishops say: "Submissions should reflect on what methods/models to adopt in these coming two years of conversations. For example: focus groups, questionnaires, deep-listening sessions; written submissions; family-focused gatherings; summary of findings of assemblies that have already taken place across dioceses; and/or conferences."

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They add: "These submissions are not yet about the themes for the Synod but rather how to go about this phase of setting up the initial conversations."

You can find more details and make your own submission here: www.catholicbishops.ie/synod/submissions/

Influential Sydney Diocese elects first non-white Archbishop

The Very Rev. Kanishka Raffel, dean of Sydney's St. Andrew's Cathedral, was unanimously elected as the 12th Archbishop of Sydney by the diocese's synod on May 6.

Raffel, a London-born Sri Lankan and a Buddhist convert to Christianity, will be the first person of color to lead the vibrant conservative evangelical diocese, which has great power and influence in the **GAFCON** network, Mark Michael reports in Living Church.

"I'm humbled and somewhat daunted by the responsibility given me by the Synod," Raffel said to *Eternity News*, a Sydney-based Christian news network. "We believe that the Lord works through his people — both in making this decision and in enabling the archbishop to fulfil his role. Like every Christian, I gladly trust in Jesus."

Raffel, who has led Sydney's cathedral since 2016, was **widely considered** to be the favorite among the four candidates for the post, even though he was the only non-bishop on the slate. The website launched to promote his

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candidacy, introducingkr.org, focused on his deep commitment to evangelism and traditional teaching, as well as his skills at growing churches.

It also included endorsements of Raffel from prominent leaders within Australian Anglican evangelicalism, including Bishop Richard Condie of Tasmania, the leader of GAFCON Australia; and the Rev. Dr. Mark Thompson, principal of Moore Theological College.

Prior to his ministry at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Raffel was rector of St. Matthew's, Shenton Park, in Perth. There he oversaw a dramatic growth in the parish, and helped to plant five new congregations. He also attracted attention as a committed conservative in one of the Anglican Church of Australia's most liberal dioceses. "He was active as an evangelical leader in the Perth synod, where he often stood bravely for gospel truth," noted introducingkr.org.

In wider Anglican and evangelical church life, Raffel is a significant figure, and currently serves on the General Synod's Standing Committee, as a board member of GAFCON Australia, as a trustee of the Anglican Relief and Development Fund Australia, and as a board member of Australia's branch of the Gospel Coalition. He recently led Sydney's service of remembrance for the life of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, which was attended by Australia's governor-general, prime minister, and premier. Sydney, Australia's largest city, is also its most ethnically diverse. Over 40% of its 2 million people, like the archbishop-elect, were born outside the country, and only a third of its inhabitants had both parents born in Australia.

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Addressing the synod shortly after his election, Raffel said, “Globally, Anglican Christianity is ethnically diverse and our multiculturalism in Sydney mirrors that. I’m glad that our diocese reflects the changing ethnic make-up of our cities and values the participation of Australians of all backgrounds in our church life together. Our team of bishops is almost equal part Asian-background and Anglo. That is contemporary Australia.”

Raffel will likely play a significant role in the GAFCON network, which was led for many years by his one of his Sydney predecessors, Archbishop Peter Jensen. GAFCON’s initial formation emerged partly out of the strong links Sydney had cultivated over many generations with other evangelical Anglican dioceses, especially in Singapore and Malaysia. Jensen, who retired as archbishop in 2013, was the only other Archbishop of Sydney to be elected directly to the role, instead of serving first as a diocesan or suffragan bishop. Jensen had been principal of Moore College for sixteen years before his election.

Six months ago, Raffel joined GAFCON Australia’s board in a [public statement](#) that threatened to set up “alternative oversight” for Anglicans who wish to disaffiliate from the national church if its General Synod fails to overturn a ruling from its appellate tribunal that refused to forbid a liturgy for blessing same sex unions developed by the Diocese of Wangaratta. The synod meeting, which had been scheduled for later this month, has since been indefinitely [postponed](#) because of the pandemic.

The Diocese of Sydney has long exercised an outsized role within the Anglican Church of Australia. According to 2015

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statistics compiled by David Goodhew, 615 of the church's 2,366 "active clergy" serve in Sydney diocese, and it is unique among the church's dioceses in seeing steady, if modest, growth in recent years. Known for vibrant youth and college-age ministry, the diocese stands out for the youth of its leadership, having over half of active clergy under forty and about 60% of clergy under the age of 30. "Apart from Sydney, the urban Australian dioceses have a serious problem of aging clergy," Goodhew notes. "The significance of Sydney within the Australian church looks set to increase in future years due to demography alone."

Opinion - This is not the way to achieve reconciliation - Richard Dannatt

The Government's latest plan to draw a line under the Troubles will raise, not lower, the temperature, Richard Dannatt writes in the Daily Telegraph

That the trial of Soldiers A and C collapsed on Tuesday should have come as no surprise to anyone who had followed this case closely. The soldiers' statements in 1972 were not under caution, and therefore inadmissible as evidence. The record of their interviews with the Historical Enquiries Team in 2010 was equally inadmissible. The cynics in the veteran community saw such interviews as "fishing trips", looking to catch out the aged and unwary veteran soldier.

But the Government's reported response to the collapse of the trial appears to be as unwise as was the decision to prosecute Soldiers A and C in the first place. The outrage of

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the veteran community at the treatment of two of their members has now been matched only by the outrage of nationalist community leaders at the apparent prospect of a de facto amnesty and the establishment of a “truth and reconciliation” process.

However difficult this Government believes this situation to be, it cannot be ducked further. Promises have been made to the veteran community of fair treatment, but the necessary legislation has not yet been forthcoming. The recent Overseas Operations Bill, now awaiting Royal Assent, ducked the issue of establishing a duty of care standard for soldiers operating overseas and, as things stand, Northern Ireland veterans are in a no better place.

So, what is to be done? Helpful discussions have gone on with the Government – in particular, with former attorney general Sir Geoffrey Cox – about developing a policy to enable interviews to take place with veterans but with the presumption not to prosecute. The purpose of those interviews would be solely to establish the facts of what happened on a given date at a given place in order to give the family of someone who had lost their life some closure.

In my view, a face-to-face interview with a veteran should only take place if research of the relevant records left a question genuinely unanswered. Moreover, it should be remembered that it was only the Army that kept detailed records of events. Search in vain for similar patrol or incident reports in the non-existent records of the IRA, the UDA or the UVF. This underlines that the investigation process starts from a completely unlevel playing field and is fundamentally unfair.

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Introducing a policy of interview with a presumption not to prosecute must, of course, be subject to a number of caveats. The first is to assert once again that no one is above the law. Thus, if new and compelling evidence were to come to light about a given incident, then there may be a case to consider a prosecution. However, secondly, that decision should only be taken at the most senior level in the criminal justice system.

Such a policy would negate the need for a general amnesty or an unqualified statute of limitations. Both of these ideas are deeply inflammatory to both the nationalist and loyalist communities in Northern Ireland and therefore not worth pursuing if our goal – as it surely must be – is to seek to draw a line under decades of hostility.

The other idea being considered again is the institution of some form of “truth and reconciliation” process similar to that established in South Africa. This is not a new idea and was examined a number of years ago by the former Archbishop of Armagh, Lord Eames. In theory it sounds commendable but in the context of Northern Ireland it is not practical unless it is developed in the most general sense of trying to bring about reconciliation through community integration. The education system is the critical place to start that process. Simply bringing together soldiers, terrorists or civilians who may or may not have fired a weapon at one another or other people is a recipe for further acrimony, not the basis for reconciliation.

If this Government really wants to make progress on the veterans’ issue arising from the Troubles, then a short Bill to introduce interviews with a presumption not to prosecute is

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a simple and fair way to proceed. Old soldiers of my generation are watching the Prime Minister very carefully.

*General Lord Dannatt was Chief of the General Staff
2006-09*

Published in the Daily Telegraph 07.05.2021

Media review

'A possible disaster': Catholic Church reckons with declining interest post-pandemic

Irish Times

Growing realisation in church that it was 'not really missed' during lockdown, says Bishop

[<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/a-possible-disaster-catholic-church-reckons-with-declining-interest-post-pandemic-1.4557615>]

Martina Anderson: What is going on with Sinn Féin in Derry?

BBC News

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56994779>]

Troubles: Unilateral move by UK on veterans would 'breach trust'

BBC News

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-57006280>]

Brexit: Irish Sea border 'still causing difficulties'

BBC News

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-57014342>]

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SDLP launches first panel of New Ireland Commission, the party's civic forum to discuss Irish unity

Belfast Live

The New Ireland Commission aims to "fuel public debate and discourse about constitutional change on these islands" [<https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/sdip-launches-first-panel-new-20533335>]



Pointers for prayer

Mighty God, in whom we know the power of redemption, you stand among us in the shadows of our time.

As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life, uphold us with knowledge of the final morning when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son, we will share in his resurrection, redeemed and restored to the fullness of life and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women

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proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,
and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love,
and peace,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his
resurrection,
teaching them to love all people as neighbours.
As his disciples in this age,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe
in which we are privileged to live
and our neighbours with whom we share it....
Petitions... concluding with:
Open our hearts to your power moving
around us and between us and within us,
until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and
enemy,
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

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Holy God,
you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,
and to care for those who are our companions,
not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.
Seeking to be true friends of all,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world.
Petitions... concluding with:
Guide us in the path of discipleship,
so that, as you have blessed us,
we may be a blessing for others,
bringing the promise of the kingdom near
by our words and deeds. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the ear says, “I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

1 Corinthians 12:14, 16 & 17 NLT

I love Paul's sense of humour! He imagines a conversation going on within the body which is plainly ridiculous. It would be crazy if the ear were to complain that it wasn't a proper part of the body because it wasn't an eye. But, funny as it is, Paul is making a very serious point. He is talking about inferiority complexes and they get everywhere. Many people in churches look down on themselves. Some think they don't count because they are only a Sunday school teacher, or only a cleaner, or only a newcomer. Paul wants to make it

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clear that, so far as God is concerned, there are no “only” people in the church. Every single person is vital.

Paul recognises that there is another problem as well. And that’s the problem of having a superiority complex, and this is just as absurd. Paul imagines the eye saying to the hand, “I don’t need you” and the head saying to the feet “I don’t need you”. Not only would it be offensive for the parts of the body to talk to one another like that, but it would also be absolutely wrong – the eye does need the hand, the head does need the feet! In every organisation there tends to be a pecking order. Without much thought you can work out who are seen as the most powerful and important in the organisation and who are the least powerful and most unimportant. But Paul protests that in the church, just like in the body, everyone is absolutely crucial. We need to learn to treasure everybody and to value them highly because God has placed them within the church, and without them the church would be unable to function.

QUESTION

Have you ever suffered from an inferiority complex or a superiority complex? If so how does this passage help you?

PRAYER

Lord, help me to value the members of my church in the way that you do. Amen

