

Parenting NI looking for volunteers for abseil off Belfast's Europa Hotel



Kate Millar (22) and Jake Clements (22) launch Parenting NI's abseil event

The abseiling event involves scaling the 120 ft high side of Belfast's tallest and most iconic hotel! This parenting charity has the perfect challenge for anyone with a head for heights. Parenting NI is looking for volunteers for its

September Abseil event off Belfast's Europa Hotel.

Taking place on Sunday, September 24, the Europa Abseil event is a great excuse for families, friends, work colleagues and club members to take part for a great cause.

The abseiling event involves scaling the 120 ft high side of Belfast's tallest and most iconic hotel. Participants will be paired up as they go over the side of the building. Absolutely no previous experience is required and even participants from the age of 14 can take part.

Lucy McCusker Business Development Coordinator for Parenting NI, said: "I am so excited about Parenting NI's Abseil event. Abseiling is such an exciting challenge and this is a really fun way to get all generations of families and friends to come together and raise funds for such a good cause.

"All parents need some support from time to time to get the job right – and at Parenting NI we are here to help with the big issues as well as the small."

Parenting NI has been offering their freephone helpline, counselling services, and parenting

programmes & consultations throughout NI since 1979 – helping thousands of families to overcome serious parenting issues and giving them support to move forward when things get tough.

This event will help raise funds to ensure these important services continue to exist for all local families.

Registration for the event is £25 and participants must raise £50 in sponsorship. Visit the ‘Get Involved’ section of the website parentingni.org or email fundraising@parentingni.org for more info.

Fr Aidan Troy urges people to pray for Paris

A priest has called for prayer following the suspected terror attack in Paris on Wednesday morning when a man in a car rammed into a group of soldiers.

The French prime minister's confirmed the suspected terrorist had been arrested after police shot the man - who was reportedly unarmed - on the A16 highway in northern France.



A counter-terrorism investigation was launched after six soldiers were injured in the attack in the Paris suburb of Levallois-Perret.

Fr Aidan Troy, parish priest of St Joseph's English speaking parish in the centre of Paris, told Premier people should pray for the capital.

he said: "All of us who care so passionately about our world have to keep not only praying ourselves but taking the chance of saying to others 'will you pray with me' so that we will offer up a prayer for peace and I'm convinced that it will happen."

Witnesses described seeing a BMW with one person inside waiting in a cul-de-sac near a building used for Sentinelle soldiers, according to two police officials.

One official said the attacker hit just as a group of soldiers emerged from the building to board vehicles for a new shift.

While the driver's motive is unclear, the mayor in Levallois-Perret is in no doubt it was deliberate. Two of the soldiers were seriously injured but their lives are not in danger, according to the Defence Ministry.

The soldiers were from the 35th infantry regiment and served in Operation Sentinelle, created to guard prominent French sites after a string of deadly Islamic extremist attacks in 2015.

This incident is the latest of several attacks targeting security forces guarding France over the past year.

While others have targeted prominent sites like the Eiffel Tower, Wednesday's attack hit a leafy, relatively affluent suburb that is home to France's main intelligence service, the DGSI.

Rr Troy said that Parisians have become used to heightened security since recent terror attacks.

He added: "Going into all the big stores and even into the smaller stalls. Opening your bag, if

its winter time - your anorak to make sure that you're not wearing a belt of any sort.

"So there's those constant constant reminders and a very high visible security presence."

He went on to say that it's important that French people don't react negatively to terror attacks by "building walls" to "segregate people".

He explained: "I am glad to see that France is not as it were trying to exclude people by pointing them out or behind walls or barriers.

"But saying 'no, will try and protect normal life, family life, commercial life and civic life together."

Mother of gay sons writes open letter to Jim Wells DUP MLA

A Northern Ireland mother has written a heartfelt letter to DUP MLA Jim Wells about her two sons who are both gay.

Elaine Somers, from Belfast, wrote the open letter to Mr. Wells and shared it on Facebook on Monday.



 Elaine Somers
August 7 at 12:14pm · €

An open letter to Jim Wells DUP

Mr Wells,

Some time ago I had sympathy with you after hearing of your wife's devastating stroke. It is there my sympathy ends. You have chosen to speak out against homosexuality, most recently condemning the National Trust's stance on Gay Pride marches. Sadly, it appears you are unaware of the 'causes' of being gay, making it sound as though it is a matter of choice. Let me tell you my experience, for I have two gay sons who are unique in their own way.

When my elder son was growing up, he was a very normal little boy, more popular than his older brother and more aesthetically pleasing perhaps, but able to stand up for himself and popular in the schools he attended. He brought girls from home with him and during his university life he had many friends of both sexes. It was therefore, quite a surprise when at 22, he quietly informed me he was gay. It was obviously something he had wrestled with for some time, wanting to bring shame to his family and wanting to be sure of his sexuality. Oh the emotions I went through at that time, feelings of disappointment, confusion and wondering had I done something wrong. I see Mr Wells, back then in 1992 I was as ignorant as you are now, even embarrassed about the fact that my son was gay and it was my mother, his grandmother, who pointed out to me that God had just as much love for his brothers and his sister, and that she valued to love him, just as he was, God's son. I had never stopped loving him but I had allowed myself to think how unfair it was, how I would have preferred him to marry some nice girl and provide me with grand

DUP MLA Jim Wells and part of the letter written by Ms. Somers.

Ms. Somers tells the former Health Minister that he does "not know the true meaning of Christian love" but adds "I hope someday you will." Ms. Somers wrote the letter as a direct response to the decision taken by Mr. Wells to resign from the National Trust because it supports Gay pride. Mr. Wells has spoken out against homosexuality in the past.

Read Ms. Somer's full letter below:

Mr Wells, Some time ago I had sympathy with you after hearing of your wife's devastating stroke. It is there my sympathy ends. You have

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August 10

chosen to speak out against homosexuality, most recently condemning the National Trust for its stance on Gay Pride marches.

Sadly, it appears you are very ignorant about the 'causes' of being gay, making it sound as though it is the lifestyle of choice. Let me tell you my experience, for I have two gay sons, each one unique in his own way.

When my elder son was growing up, he was a very normal little boy, gentler than his older brother and more aesthetic perhaps, but able to hold his own and popular in the schools he attended. He brought girls from school home with him and during his university life he had many friends of both sexes. It was therefore, quite a surprise when at 22, he quietly informed me he was gay. It was obviously something he had wrestled with for some time, not wanting to bring shame to his family and wanting to be sure of his own sexuality.

Oh the emotions I went through at that time, feelings of disappointment, confusion and wondering had I done something wrong. You see Mr Wells, back then in 1992 I was as ignorant as you are now. I was even embarrassed about the fact that my son was gay and it was my mother, his grandmother, who pointed out to me that

God had made him, just as he had made his brothers and his sister, and that she would continue to love him, just as he was, God's son.

I had never stopped loving my boy, but I had allowed myself to think how unfair it was, how I would have preferred him to marry some nice girl and provide me with grandchildren as good looking as he was. How shallow and shameful that was.

Several years later my youngest son informed us that he, too, was gay. A double whammy!

Now I began to think again that it had to have something to do with me, but in this case, he was my stepson who I had had the privilege of bringing up since he was five years old. This son was quite different, much more confident in his decision and certain of his sexuality. Again my mother's words resonated, 'God made him, he is God's son.'

So the years have passed and I make no secret of the fact that I have gay sons. I'm proud of both of them and proud of their differences. The older boy has more problems being gay than I could ever have imagined. At 47, he remains single with no significant other in his life. He would have preferred to be like my eldest son,

with choices he feels he doesn't have. I'm immensely proud of who and what he is. He is handsome, intelligent, popular, loving and kind and he is mine. I cannot imagine my life without him in it.

My younger son has embraced being gay, is more extrovert, outward and optimistic. He lives in Australia where being gay is more acceptable than this backward country where people like you Mr Wells can make judgements of him.

He is very successful in the job he does, mostly because he is a genuinely good and kind person who knows what real customer satisfaction means. He is the ultimate professional in his dealings with the public and being gay does not come in to it.

Over the years, through my sons, I have met many gay men and women. I have enjoyed meeting every single one of them and they have added to my life. They tend to be more thoughtful, kinder and sincere. I have listened to their struggles and felt humbled by some of their experiences.

So Mr Wells, two of my four sons are gay and I remain their proud and loving mother. They see their lives through different perspectives, but the

thing is, they did not choose to be gay, it's simply the way they are. I will not apologise for them to you or anyone else.

I, too, could take verses from the old Testament regarding homosexuality, but the Jesus I know and my mother knew, teaches me that they are precious in his sight and you cannot take that from me. I'm sorry for you, for your soul and for the children you have. You do not know the true meaning of Christian love. I hope someday you will.

BBC Service from Armagh's Charles Wood Festival

BBC Radio Ulster's Morning Service on Sunday 27th August will be broadcast from St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, as part of the Charles Wood Festival of Music and Summer School. This forms part of a range of Services and other events taking place during the festival, which runs from 20th August to 27th August.

The Service will feature the Charles Wood Girls' Choir with Ian Keatley as conductor and Donal McCann as organist. The programme will begin at 10.15am.

Charles Wood was born at 11 Vicars' Hill, Armagh in 1866 and received his early musical education as a chorister in the cathedral opposite his home. He later studied at the Royal College of Music and became a Professor there before becoming Professor of Music at Cambridge University. When Wood died in 1926 he left behind a legacy of over 250 sacred works plus a large number of hymn tunes. His other compositions include songs, music for Greek plays and chamber music but it is largely for his sacred music that he is remembered today.

Church buys pub to spread the gospel

Most people would never associate a pub with church, but St Thomas Church in Norwich is getting people to think outside the box.

The church bought a pub next door and plans to use it for evangelism purposes.

The vicar of St Thomas Church, Rev Ian Dyble, told Premier that he got the idea when he saw another vicar behind a bar several years ago.

He said: "Many years ago I went on holiday with my wife in the Lake District and we went for a drink and the local vicar was behind the bar. I



thought 'what a great idea, to engage in the community in that context'.

"When the pub came on the market, I put it to the church and there was a real consensus, evident by the very generous giving of the church, and we bought it'.

The pub, already called The Mitre (a headpiece worn by Anglican Bishops) cost £500,000 and was most recently used as a Chinese restaurant and takeaway.

Rev Dyle said although the pub will serve craft ales, it has more of a bistro setting.

He said, "The pub is going to have a family feel, a public home rather than a public house.

"We're keen to engage with the community, find out what's on the hearts of them and bring the

message of love and hope and grace mercy to them. We know a number of people who wouldn't come to the church door but would come to the Mitre."

When asked how he would encourage others to be creative when it comes to evangelism Rev Dyble said: "There are so many opportunities for us to reach out and share what I think is the greatest message in the world...there's nothing that you can't do with God on our side.

"Think outside the box, think creatively and take some risks."

The Mitre's grand opening is on 14th August.

Christian country star Glen Campbell dies aged 81

Country Christian music star Glen Campbell has died at the age of 81.

The nine-time Grammy-winner, best known for hit tracks Rhinestone Cowboy and Wichita Lineman, died on Tuesday morning in Nashville, following a six-year battle with Alzheimer's disease.



The family of the upbeat guitarist from Delight, Arkansas, announced his death on Facebook on Tuesday.

The statement read: "It is with the heaviest of hearts that we announce the passing of our beloved husband, father, grandfather, and legendary singer and guitarist, Glen Travis Campbell ... following his long and courageous battle with Alzheimer's disease."

A self-taught prodigy, he rose from a poor rural childhood to release over 70 albums and sell 45 million records.

He has been credited with paving the way for other country artists such as Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers.

The Jolene singer, 71, was among many stars who paid tribute to Campbell, describing him in



a video message posted on Twitter as "one of the greatest voices of all time".

She went on to say: "He was a wonderful session musician as well - a lot of people don't know realise that but he could play anything and he could play it really well - so he was just extremely talented."

Campbell's death comes almost two months after the release of his album, *Adios*, featuring songs from his Goodbye Tour, which followed his diagnosis in 2011. The record made it to number three in the official UK charts.

He previously struggled with alcohol and cocaine addiction but according to Rolling

Stone, in "1981 he became a born-again Christian and in 1982 he married Kimberly Woollen, a Radio City Music Hall Rockette, who helped Campbell clean up his life".

The son of a sharecropper, Glen Travis Campbell was born in Arkansas on 22nd April 1936, the seventh of 12 children.

His first guitar cost \$7 and he taught himself to play.

Recording since the 1960s, he also ventured onto the big screen, starring alongside John Wayne in True Grit (1969) and most recently playing Jesse Dalton for a stint in TV series Players (1997).

He is survived by his wife, Kim Campbell; their three children; his children from previous marriages; ten grandchildren, great- and great-great-grandchildren; two sisters and two brothers.

Campbell's family have asked for fans to swap flowers for donations to a Glen Campbell Memorial Fund through the BrightFocus Foundation.

They added: "The family appreciates your prayers and respect for their privacy at this time."

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