



The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

Schools, churches and monastery open up for film festival

Thousands are expected to attend what is being branded the “most ambitious” Belfast Film Festival yet – which started yesterday.



News Letter - It is the 14th year of the festival, and new additions this year include screenings in [schools](#) and a monastery – plus a free full-length feature film, shown on the big screen outside Belfast City Hall on Saturday at 3pm.

Organisers have chosen the comedy Groundhog Day to mark the death of director Harold Ramis last month.

An outreach programme called Cine-Roma also intends to bring “cultural cinema” to places which would not normally experience it.

The addition of this new element will see films hosted at Clonard Monastery, Bloomfield and Townsend Street Presbyterian churches, and Nettlefield and Strandtown Primary Schools – and means the 2014 festival is “probably the most ambitious we’ve ever had” said marketing manager Damien Connor.

The first film will be run at the Strand Arts Centre at 6pm today, and the programme runs until April 5.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/schools-churches-and-monastery-open-up-for-film-festival-1-5960225>

"HaassHope" Conference - Bishop Harold Miller's closing remarks



L–R: Dr Duncan Morrow, Brett Lockhart QC, Michael O’Doherty (Faith to Faith, Omagh), Andrew Bell (Department of Education NI), Sarah McNeill (Fitzroy Presbyterian), Anna Tate (Fitzroy Presbyterian), Peter McNeice (YMCA), Lord Eames, John Kee (Summer Madness), Jasper Rutherford (Summer Madness & Church Army) (Photo: Paul Harron/Col

A conference entitled ‘#HaassHope’, organised by Summer Madness along with consortium of youth agencies, with the intention of encouraging young people to integrate their faith particularly into politics and community relations issues in Northern Ireland today, was held on at Riddell Hall, Belfast on Sunday 23rd March 2014.

With the strapline ‘A 16 year old peace process with no 16 year old voice?’,

it was organised following an indication from young people that it would be useful to have their voice heard by politicians and church leaders from across the spectrum. Speakers at the event included Dr Duncan Morrow, Lord Eames and Brett Lockhart QC (seen above with a number of the young people and organisers attending).

At the close of the conference, the Rt Revd Harold Miller, Bishop of Down & Dromore, said: ‘It was a privilege to sit and listen to the hopes and dreams of a younger generation of Christians, from across the community in Northern Ireland, at the Haass Hope event. Church leaders and politicians were asked to say very little, which was challenging in itself! What struck me was the importance of freeing a new generation to paint a picture of what they would

hope the future might be in this place, and – more importantly – what they believe a “Kingdom of God” future might look like. For generations we have been able to convey the “impossibilities” which might dumb down their vision. The role of an older generation now is not to block a creative future by the impossibilities of the past, but to let a new generation “fly”, to pray new young leaders into existence who are godly, hopeful and visionary, and to tell them that our God is the one whose task is to make the impossible possible.’

Battle of Clontarf Anniversary Service

The Church of St John the Baptist in Clontarf will host an ecumenical service to commemorate the 1,000th anniversary of the Battle of Clontarf on Wednesday April 23 at 12.00 midday.



The service will be attended by President Michael D Higgins and Archbishop Michael Jackson will preside along with the Roman Catholic Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin, the Rt Revd Eamon Walsh who will represent Archbishop Diarmuid Martin.

Local clergy from the Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist communities will also be present along with members of the diplomatic community, politicians and representatives of local business, sporting, educational and recreational organisations.

The Clontarf church was chosen to host the service due to the efforts of parishioner, John Patten, who attended community planning meetings. He cited the ancient lineage of the parish, which can be traced back to the 6th Century, as a reason why St John the Baptist on Seafield Road West was the most appropriate venue. The Battle of Clontarf took place on April 23 1014 and while it resulted in victory for the Gaelic forces over the Vikings, Ireland’s King, Brian Boru was killed on the same day.

Belfast should take pride in its Jewish community

The Belfast Jewish community has always been a relatively small one. Current estimates put the number of Jews living here at around 500.

Belfast Telegraph - Even at its peak it would not have numbered more than a few thousand. And yet it has always punched well above its weight in terms of contribution not just to society in this city and in [Northern Ireland](#) as a whole, but internationally too.



Rabbi David Singer

Jews first came here in significant numbers back in the 1860s and '70s, mostly merchants or workers attracted by the linen trade. Their numbers were boosted down the years by refugees. Jews fleeing Tsarist Russia. Jews from Poland and [Lithuania](#). Jews fleeing Germany.

Outside Belfast there were small Jewish communities in Lurgan and Derry. Early religious services were held in Holywood before the first synagogue was established in Great Victoria Street in Belfast and then later Annesley Street. The current synagogue, with its spectacular Star of David-shaped roof, was built in 1964.

Sir Otto Jaffe, twice Lord Mayor of Belfast, was a Jew. Gustav Wolff of Harland and Wolff fame came from a Jewish family.

For this excellent article by Lindy McDowell see -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/columnists/lindy-mcdowell/belfast-should-take-pride-in-its-jewish-community-30125911.html>

'24 Hours for the Lord' initiative

The Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation wrote to dioceses across the world in February of this year, inviting them to take part in the '24 Hours for the Lord' initiative.



Pope Francis suggested that the dates of 29-30 March should be the days on which the '24 hours for the Lord' are held.

It was suggested to dioceses that people should be able to find special opportunities during these days for prayer and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Pope Francis himself will be participating in the initiative and is expected to hear confessions. The event will begin in Rome in the Vatican with a liturgical celebration in Saint Peter's Basilica on the afternoon of Friday 28 March.

Irish dioceses have responded to the Pope's initiative. More at -

<http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2014/03/26/24-hours-lord/>

Note: This page will be updated as more diocesan information becomes available. Follow what's happening in Irish dioceses on Twitter by using the #24hoursfortheLord hashtag.

Archbishop's Evangelism Task Group meets for the first time

The Archbishop of Canterbury's keenness to focus on evangelism has been highlighted this week as his Task Group met for the first time at Lambeth Palace on Monday.



In his first presidential address to Synod last July, Justin Welby labelled evangelism as one of his three main priorities in ministry. "We need new imagination in evangelism

through prayer, and a fierce determination not to let evangelism be squeezed off our agendas," he urged.

"The Gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed the good news for our times. God is always good news; we are the ones who make ourselves irrelevant when we are not good news. And when we are good news, God's people see growing churches."

The Archbishop has set up an Evangelism Task Group made up of experts and practitioners in evangelism including the Reverend Annie Kirke, Pioneer of Missional Communities in the Diocese of London, the bishops of Hertford and Lancaster and Reverend Andy Croft of Soul Survivor. The group hope to encourage, empower and equip Christians across the UK to share the Gospel and be the good news within their communities.

Archbishop Welby's Advisor for Evangelism and Witness, the Reverend Canon Chris Russell, says the Task Group is not designed to be a "command and control centre telling churches what to do", but will consider good practices and share them with the wider Christian community. "It is about bringing all the influence we can to bear," he notes.

Church officials have praised the Archbishop's initiative, including the Archbishop of York John Sentamu who has declared that "making disciples is at the heart of our Christian faith and our Anglican tradition".

"Next to worship, witness is the primary and urgent task of the Church," he says. "Compared with evangelism everything else is like re-arranging furniture when the house is on fire."

Ahead of the meeting, Welby himself spoke of his desire to see the Church transformed through evangelism and his passion for people to come to know God. "It is the task of this group to see every church and every Christian embrace their calling to be those who proclaim the gospel in word and deed," he asserted.

"Nothing quite brings energy and renewal to a church than seeing people come to faith."

The meeting on Monday, the first of five to take place over the next 12 months, saw the group consider their role in influencing the wider Church in the short, medium and long term.

"I am excited about [the] vision to equip ordinary Christians to share their faith through words and action with those outside the Church," Mark Russell, Church Army's Chief Executive and member of the Task Group said.

"I hope this group can support the Archbishop on the third of his priorities – evangelism and witness – and help us bring about the cultural change in the church we need to see, and a real shift where the church becomes more outward looking, becomes more focused on serving the community.

"I hope this group can help put evangelism front and centre of the work of all areas of the Church of England."

Cardboard cathedral designer wins top prize

One of architecture's most prestigious international awards has been given to the man behind Christchurch's cardboard cathedral.

Shigeru Ban was today named the winner of the 2014 Pritzker Architecture Prize.

The 56-year-old Tokyo-born architect is known for his elegant, innovative and resourceful approach to design, as well as his humanitarian efforts.

Ban will be given the distinguished award at a ceremony at Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum on June 13, recognising his work creating community buildings for disaster victims around the world.

Over the last 20 years, he has worked locals, volunteers and students in places hit by natural or man-made disasters to design and construct simple, low-cost and recyclable shelters and buildings.

His projects include Christchurch's cardboard cathedral, built as a temporary replacement for the earthquake-damaged Christ Church Cathedral.

The \$5.3 million transitional Anglican cathedral opened to the public last year, incorporating 98 beams encased in cardboard and with seating for up to 700 people.