



The essential daily brief on the Irish churches



Belfast Community Gospel Choir is currently in New York fulfilling a number of engagements

Marie Lacey has been a performer for almost four decades, and her voice and work ethic has earned her great respect in the Northern Ireland music scene.

Irish Central NY - To hear her talk about her Belfast Community Gospel Choir – BCGC for short – she sheds the years and takes on the enthusiasm of a teenager on her way to a One Direction concert. She is beyond excited about taking her choir to the Big Apple at the end of the month with their new CD, the appropriately titled "Ain't No Stopping Us Now."

"We are not your typical choir. We are more a phenomenon," Lacey enthuses. "Northern Ireland is not a land where gospel rules. We are more diddly-diddly. I have always loved the vibe and joy from African American gospel music. I have always connected at the level of soul for the joy that music brings."

On "Ain't No Stopping Us Now," BCGC brings that joy of gospel to everything from folk standards to seventies funk. The title track, a famous disco hit back in the day, bounces with sheer exuberance in the hands of this choir.

For the remainder of Irish Central's report and a video of the choir see -

<http://www.irishcentral.com/news/irishvoice/Belfast-choirs-new-twist-on-gospel-VIDEO.html>

Remembrance service planned for victims of all farm accidents

Ulster rugby star Rory Best has agreed to be a provincial ambassador for support group Embrace (Farming Accidents Remembered and Missed) which is holding its inaugural Ecumenical Remembrance Service for the victims of farm accidents and their bereaved families, friends and neighbours later this month.

News Letter - The service in the Most Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Abbeyleix, Co Laois on Sunday June 29 at 2pm, will include readings, prayer and song celebrated by both Catholic and Church of Ireland clergy led by Bishops Denis Nulty (RC) and supported by Michael Burrows (Church of Ireland).

There will be keynote speakers from agri organisations, counsellors and families directly impacted by farming accidents.

Four international Rugby players involved in farming will be Provincial Ambassadors for Embrace and will also take part in the Service - Rory Best of Ulster, Sean O'Brien of Leinster, John Hayes of Munster and John Muldoon of Connacht.

Almost 300 adults and children have lost their lives in farming accidents on the island of Ireland over the past 10 years.

The Rohan family was forcefully made aware of these facts on 19th June 2012 when their dad, Liam Rohan was tragically involved in an accident on the family farm near Shanahoe in Co Laois and sadly passed away three days later.

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Liam Rohan was well known in farming circles as he represented the Republic of Ireland four times in the World Ploughing Championship, 1982 in Australia, 1985 in Denmark, 1987 in Austria and 1988 in the USA.

His son Brian commented: "We quickly came to realise that there is little or no support available to families that have lost loved ones by way of emotional, practical, business, legal and financial advice.

"Our aim is to create more awareness of farm safety especially as primary schools get their summer holidays around this time."

The aim is to develop this event into an annual remembrance at Provincial level and to develop various support structures to help families come to terms with the irreplaceable loss of their loved ones.

Brian added: "We hope to do this by growing EMBRACE FARM (Farming Accidents - Remembered & Missed) as a support group for all those affected by farming accidents."

Families are encouraged to contact Embrace with details of their loved ones who have died from a farming accident so their names can be read out on the day - www.facebook.com/embracefarmaccidents, Twitter: @Embrace Farm, Email: embrace.farm@gmail.com, Phone: +353 (0) 85-7709966, Website: www.embracefarm.co

Farming community focus of parish prayer walk

Parishioners of Castlewellan and Kilcoo on Sunday 25 May, during their 24–7 prayer weekend highlighted Rogation Sunday.

The rector, Revd Brian Cadden, takes up the story...

"Coming as it did on Rogation Sunday, we set off to take prayer out into the farms and countryside of our parishes which straddle the northern foothills of the Mourne Mountains and the rolling farmlands of south Down.

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“Our prayer trek took us to some of the farms and rural businesses (a cycle retailer) of our community. It opened the eyes of many to the challenges our farmers face in their daily lives, and expressed our thanksgiving to God for his blessings on our labours.



“We also prayed for farming families, farm safety, the farming of livestock and the crops for market. Living in such a beautiful, and precious natural environment, we prayed for the visitors to the hills and those engaged in the conservation and supply of one of our most precious resources – water!

“As could be expected, we had our fair share of rain on Sunday afternoon, (mustn’t complain!) but it lifted and by the time we reached Bryansford we were welcomed with a cup of tea! Farmers were encouraged, non – farmers were enlightened, and the craic was good!”

Rogation Sunday is the day when the Church has traditionally offered prayer for God’s blessing on the fruits of the earth and the labours of those who produce our food. The word “rogation” is from the Latin rogare, “to ask.” Historically, the Rogation Days (the three days before Ascension Day) were a period of fasting and abstinence, seeking God’s blessing on the crops for a bountiful harvest.

Irish Churches’ Affirmations on Diversity

The Irish Inter–Church Committee and its constituent churches in a statement issued this week recalls and endorses affirmations on migration, diversity and interculturalism which were issued in 2009.

The statement follows: The Irish Inter–Church Committee and its constituent churches, issued the following Affirmations in December 2009 in recognition of the significant changes over the previous decade in the fabric of our

Church communities and of society as a whole. We seek to ensure that the Affirmations, founded on Gospel values, will inform and drive the plans, processes and programmes of our Churches as, individually and together, strive to live out the mission of Christ in an increasingly diverse and intercultural society. Five years on they are just as relevant as when they were issued.

We affirm our commitment as Christian Churches:

1. To recognise and appreciate cultural and ethnic diversity as gifts of God, and to ensure that these gifts are reflected in the life of the Church.
2. To foster faith communities where the rights of each person are respected and where scope is provided for each person's potential to be realised.
3. To work towards inclusive communities, paying particular attention to addressing racism and xenophobia in attitudes, actions, practices and policies.
4. To explore and adopt ways of worship, systems of administration and other structures so that they fully respond to and reflect the Church membership.
5. To defend the rights of migrants in accordance with international and national laws and standards on migration.
6. To advocate for the rights of all migrants, and in particular their right to family life.
7. To support and assist migrants in appropriate, practical ways in their efforts to integrate in Church and society.
8. To establish networks with migrant-led Churches and chaplaincies by fostering co-operation and collaboration with them in providing pastoral care and support to migrants.
9. To seek the development of appropriate services for migrants and to draw attention to the need for public services generally to be responsive to the circumstances of migrants.
10. To work together as Churches and to network with people of other faiths and none to promote a greater understanding between denominations and other faiths and none, ensuring the growth of a society based on respect, dignity and equal rights for all its members.

“We offer these Affirmations in the hope that they will guide our Churches and communities towards achieving a just, fair, equitable and harmonious society.

“These Affirmations were agreed in 2009 by the constituent member churches which at the time were: The Roman Catholic Church, The Antiochian Orthodox Church, The Church of Ireland, The Greek Orthodox Church in Britain and Ireland, LifeLink Network of Churches, The Lutheran Church in Ireland, The Methodist Church in Ireland, The Moravian Church (Irish District), The Non–Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Ireland, The Rock of Ages Cherubim and Seraphim Church, The Romanian Orthodox Church in Ireland, The Russian Orthodox Church in Ireland, The Salvation Army (Ireland Division)”

Archbishop Eames speaker at healing service in Belfast

Archbishop Eames will be the special speaker at a service of divine healing in St. Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast on Monday, June 30 at 8 pm.

He will speak on ‘Inner Peace and Community Peace’. The theme is very relevant because there is often tension in the province at this time of year.

Brother David Jardine said, “Archbishop Eames is a very suitable choice as speaker because he has been involved in the work of peace and reconciliation since the early years of the Troubles. He is also a man who keeps control of himself in the most volatile situations.

“There will be an opportunity to receive personal prayer for healing and a blessing with oil on June 30. “

The service will be led by Brother David Jardine, Director of Divine Healing Ministries. West Church, Bangor, Music Group will lead the worship.

Crosslinks Team Leader appointed rector of All Saints’, Belfast

The Rev Trevor Johnston, currently Team Leader of Crosslinks Mission Agency, has been appointed as Incumbent of the Parish of All Saints’, Belfast.

Trevor is a former chaplain to the University of



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Ulster at Jordanstown and Belfast and a former curate of St Patrick's Parish, Jordanstown.

He joined Crosslinks in September 2009 and was commissioned as Ireland Team Leader in January 2010.

Trevor is married to Joy and they have four daughters and one son. He said he couldn't wait to take up his role as rector of All Saints'.

"It is one of the most stimulating, interesting and challenging places to work within the Church of Ireland because of the vast array of different types of people including local and international students, within the traditional parish boundaries," Trevor said.

"There is a great team in place and I am familiar with the parish as I worked there as an outreach worker a number of years ago."

Trevor said he had had a great five years with Crosslinks. "I am very sad to leave Crosslinks and the staff and mission partners, but All Saints' and Crosslinks have historically had very strong links and I am sure this affinity between the two will continue."

A date for the institution has yet to be confirmed.

Ringling endorsement of Carrickfergus teenager

A Carrickfergus teen has received a ringing endorsement of his campanology skills during an event at St Nicholas' Parish Church.

Carrickfergus Times - Alex Nelson, 14, practices the art of campanology, or bell-ringing, with the local branch of the Irish Association of Change Ringers.



The Northern District of the association held their annual general meeting at St. Nicholas' on Easter Monday.

All sixteen bell towers in the district were represented at the meeting, with awards presented at a ceremony later in the day.

Ulidia Integrated College student Alex was handed the trophy for 'most improved young campanologist' in Northern Ireland over the past year.

Alex, who developed an interest in bell ringing when he was thirteen, joined the Carrickfergus Bell Ringers in September 2012.

The local boy dedicated the award to his late grandmother, Ruth, who encouraged him to become a campanologist.

The Carrickfergus Bell Ringers practice in the bell tower of St. Nicholas' Church every other Monday.

Anyone interested in bell ringing will be welcomed by the group.

The Irish Association of Change Ringers was formed in 1898 and covers the entire island.

The Northern District takes in all of Northern Ireland, with a further two districts in the Republic of Ireland.

Irish Presbyterian educator in Malawi

Diane Cusick is based in Mzuzu in Northern Malawi, where, at the invitation of the *Education Department* of the Livingstonia Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), she's been able to introduce the Montessori teaching method to an already established pre-school in Mzuzu; and has set up, and runs training programmes for care-givers in *Early Childhood Development*.



Diane's service in Malawi began in late 1995, in the South of the country, teaching classes in the Women's Ministry Department at [Zomba Theological College](#) (ZTC). Further responsibilities soon followed when she became Director of ZTC's Crèche and Playgroup, where she was involved in

preparing all the educational material used in the playgroup.

In 2004, Diane undertook a year's study in Johannesburg (South Africa), completing a pre-school teaching course at the [College of Modern Montessori](#). This laid the foundations for the work she is now doing in Mzuzu, which began in 2007.

While she was on home assignment in the early part of 2011, Diane continued her studies for a Masters degree in *Early Childhood Development* (ECD) through [Stranmillis Univeristy College](#), as well as doing some limited deputation speaking.

Chicago college choir's Irish tour

Twenty nine students will depart for Ireland on Thursday, June 5 and will perform 16 different choral selections at St. Columba's Church in Ennis, St. Canice's Cathedral in Kilkenny, St. Mary's Cathedral in Limerick, St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church in Galway, and finally at St. Finbarr's Cathedral in Cork.

Chicago Tribune - This will be the third time the KHS Madrigals have done an international tour. Previous tours took them to Oxford University, Cambridge University and York in 2009; and England and Scotland in 2012.

"On this trip, the students will not only perform six concerts at historically-significant cathedrals, but they will also have an opportunity to visit historically-significant destinations. Along with that, they will have the unique opportunity to listen to music performed by, and learn Irish dance steps from the Irish World Academy," shared director Bryan Kunstman.

The Madrigals will perform a varied and challenging repertoire in a space that the music in which they are performing was written, something they would not experience in a classroom. More importantly, they will immerse themselves in other cultures as they "come away with experiences and memories that they will keep with them for the rest of their lives" Kunstman stated.

The Kaneland Madrigal Singers are under the direction of Mr. Bryan Kunstman. This elite group is composed of students who were selected from the award-winning Kaneland High School Chorus. Kaneland High School is located at 47W326 Keslinger Road in Maple Park. For more information, please contact Kaneland High School at 630-365-5100, or visit the website at www.kaneland.org.

Archbishop Welby receives a warm welcome in Pakistan

Archbishop Justin Welby has received a warm welcome from the Church of Pakistan on the first day of his visit there.



Accompanied by his wife Caroline and two staff members, Archbishop Welby spent time with the Church's bishop, their spouses and other members of the Church.

He met Governor of Punjab Mohammed Sarwar who, before becoming governor, was Britain's first Muslim MP. Archbishop Welby also met other non-religious leaders.

In the evening he and his guests were treated to a culture event staged by the young people from the Church of Pakistan.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby will meet Pope Francis in Rome next month

The visit, from 14th to 16th June, will focus on the joint modern slavery and human trafficking initiative launched by Archbishop Justin and Pope Francis earlier this year.

Lambeth Palace - The Archbishop will visit the Anglican Centre in Rome and hear about the new international Anglican



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Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission website, which will be launched at this time. He will also see a church-based refugee project, visit the Sant'Egidio community mission and hear about poverty projects. He will also meet members of the international ecumenical Catholic foundation Chemin Neuf, four of whose members took up residence at Lambeth Palace earlier this year.

The Papal meeting will take place during the final morning of the visit. Archbishop Justin previously met the Pope at a private meeting last year.

Read more about the launch of the joint modern slavery and human trafficking initiative here: <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5262/archbishop-justin-and-pope-francis-back-anglican-catholic-anti-slavery-and-human-trafficking-initiat>

Pope says his 'most authentic' gestures in Holy Land were spontaneous

During an inflight news conference on his return to Rome from the Holy Land yesterday, Pope Francis answered several questions about his just-ended three-day visit, giving reporters insights into his thinking and glimpses behind the scenes of the high-profile events.

Regarding his dramatic gestures during the visit, when he prayed at the controversial Israeli-built separation barrier in the West Bank and kissed the hands of Holocaust survivors, the Pope said the “most authentic gestures are those you don’t think about... mine were not planned gestures, it just occurs to me to do something spontaneously that way.”

The Pope said he had considered inviting Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to pray with him for peace during the visit, but “there were so many logistical problems, so many, the territory where it should happen, it wasn’t easy.” Instead, he invited the two leaders to join him later at the Vatican for the purpose. Both have accepted, but a date for the event has not been set.

On the status of Jerusalem, which Israel has controversially declared its “complete and united capital,” the Pope suggested part of the city might serve as capital for Palestinians under an eventual two-state solution, but that in any case it should be a “city of peace” for Christians, Muslims and Jews.

Asked about his meeting in Jerusalem with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, the Pope said they discussed what he called the “ridiculous” problem of Catholic and Orthodox churches celebrating Easter on different dates, and the possibility of common efforts by the churches to protect the natural environment.

The Pope’s meeting with Patriarch Bartholomew, marking the 50th anniversary of a historic encounter between Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, was the original reason for Pope Francis’ densely packed pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The two leaders met a total of four times during the visit, participating in an ecumenical prayer service at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and issuing a common declaration calling for “communion in legitimate diversity” between their churches.

Former British regulator launches church taskforce on credit unions

A former British investment banker and financial regulator launched a national network of churches, communities and credit unions on Tuesday that aims take on short-term lenders that charge high interest rates.

Hector Sants is leading a task force set up by the Church of England as part of a campaign against "payday lenders" spearheaded by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby.

Lenders such as Wonga - which gives short-term loans at [interest rates](#) that work out at 5,853 percent on an annual basis - argue they fill a void left by high street [banks](#) and that the loans are meant to be repaid in a month, limiting the interest.

But Welby says payday loans - intended to tide borrowers over until the next pay packet - can drive vulnerable people into a debt spiral, and has pledged to put them out of [business](#).

Sants, chairman of the Task Group on Responsible Lending, said the network bringing together churches and credit unions would initially be piloted in three of the Church of England's 44 dioceses: Southwark, Liverpool, and London.

"This is a grass roots initiative that will only succeed with the enthusiasm and engagement of the local church," Sants said in a statement.

- See more at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/27/britain-church-lenders-idUSL6N0OD3HY20140527>
- Complete text at : <http://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2014/05/sir-hector-sants-speech-at-launch-of-church-credit-union-network.aspx>

Brussels Jewish Museum murders came as no surprise to the city's Jews

Over the years, with the constant increase in verbal and physical attacks, with the unceasing rhetoric of anti-Jewish speeches emanating from radical groups, this tiny Jewish community has long feared that such an act would one day take place.

- See more at: <http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/comment/2014/05/28/the-brussels-jewish-museum-murders-came-as-no-surprise-to-the-citys-jews#sthash.pJgoQ85T.dpuf>

Syrian refugees inside their new homes in Lebanon - in pictures

More than one million Syrians have been forced to seek refuge in the neighbouring country. Many families live in abandoned buildings such as shops or storerooms. They depend on the generosity of relatives and neighbours to survive

This Guardian photo gallery, featuring Christian Aid photos, worth a look:
<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/gallery/2014/may/28/syrian-refugees-inside-their-new-homes-in-lebanon-in-pictures?index=1>

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