



**Image of the day -  
New public artwork of Christian crosses  
at Glasgow church**

## Reports

### Newtownards congregations establish fully integrated Church of Ireland and Methodist community

**The Church of Ireland and Methodist congregations that share Movilla Abbey Church have made the momentous decision to become a fully integrated community that is equally Church of Ireland and Methodist.**

The decision followed an extended period of prayer, consultation and listening and has been given the blessing of both parent denominations.

At a joint service on Sunday 10 October, The Bishop of Down and Dromore, the Rt Revd David McClay and the Superintendent Minister of the North Eastern District, Revd Philip Agnew, commissioned the congregation into this exciting new phase of the life and ministry of Movilla Abbey Church.

The service also marked the beginning of the next, transitional, stage when all the legal and constitutional arrangements will be made. Such unity is made possible by the Church of Ireland and Methodist Covenant signed on 26 September 2002.

The process of discernment began in June of this year. Revd Alan Peek (Church of Ireland) and Revd Michael Spence (Methodist) said:



Pictured above L–R: Revd Alan Peek, Revd Philip Agnew, Mrs Rosie Lappin (Lay Reader), Bishop David McClay and Revd Michael Spence.

“In light of our forty–year shared history, that has been a blessing to so many over the years, it is not a question we asked lightly, but carefully and responsibly, taking time to collectively discern God’s voice over a period of four months. We began in June with a month of prayer including a guided prayer resource, prayer walks and a 24–hour prayer day with opportunities for people to feed back what they thought God was saying. At the end of June, we laid out a vision of what a fully integrated future could look like with a Vision Day and Frequently Asked Questions sheet. We then wrote to every active member inviting them to pray through July and August and to respond with their thoughts via a feedback form, one–on–one conversations and group discussions. Throughout this process our Church of Ireland Select Vestry and Methodist Church Council met, both together and separately, to prayerfully consider what we heard through prayer, in conversations, and from over 120 feedback forms that were returned. There was, at the end of

the process, a clear consensus that we should move in this direction.”

They concluded: “We know that for some, news of this change will be unwelcome, maybe even painful. We have all experienced more than enough change over the past 18 months. However, we also know that, in seeking to follow where God’s Spirit is leading us, we can trust God with our future. Our hope and prayer is that every one of our members will continue to call Movilla Abbey Church home.”

Speaking on Sunday, Bishop David McClay expressed his delight at the ‘courageous step’ taken by the people of Movilla Abbey Church.

He continued: “I consider it a privilege to be part of this special service along with Revd Philip Agnew as two congregations are commissioned to move forward as one. In this year that also marks the 1500th anniversary of the birth of St Columba this coming together will provide a stronger base for mission and evangelism in the years ahead – the same vision that characterised the early church and that of the saints of old, not least those with links to the earliest days of Christian witness in the abbey at Movilla. May the command of Jesus to make disciples become an even stronger reality as today’s congregation in Movilla Abbey embrace their opportunities for growth and the expansion of God’s kingdom.”

District Superintendent Revd Philip Agnew said:

“I am delighted that Bishop David and I are part of the commissioning service for the joining together of the two



congregations in Movilla Abbey. In John 17 Jesus prayed that His followers would live in unity, and this is a visible demonstration of what I believe warms the heart of Jesus. This is a good news story at a time when such news is in short supply. My prayer is that as the two become one that together they will experience the riches of God's blessing and live to share the love of Jesus in Newtownards and beyond."

## **64 seminarians currently studying for the priesthood for Irish dioceses**

**Nine new seminarians have begun their 2021-2022 academic programme and formation for Irish dioceses.**

These students are currently undertaking the propaedeutic programme in the Redemptoris Mater Seminary, Dundalk, Archdiocese of Armagh; Royal English College, Valladolid, Spain; and, Royal Scots College, Salamanca, Spain. This brings to 64 the total number studying for the priesthood. See below for the full list of seminaries and houses of study where these seminarians are currently undertaking their formation.

There are four stages of what is called initial priestly formation, three of which take place in a major seminary. These three stages include studies in Philosophy, Theology and Pastoral Ministry.

The Propaedeutic Stage is a distinct stage that takes place in a recognised seminary, approved by the Holy See and the relevant Bishops' Conference – see explanation below.

Upon completion of this programme, the seminarian, with the nomination of his bishop, then applies to a seminary to continue his formation for an Irish diocese.

Commenting on the 2021 – 2022 intake of seminarians, Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan, chair of the Bishops' Council for Vocations, said, "While we are all aware of the great challenges facing the Church and society at this time, we know also that God the all-powerful is always with us. These formation figures released today offer us a sign of hope."

Bishop Cullinan continued, "In his message for Vocations/ Good Shepherd Sunday on 25 April last, Pope Francis asked us to be inspired by the courage of Saint Joseph to say 'yes' to the Lord. The Holy Father said: 'May he help everyone, especially young people who are discerning, to make God's dreams for them come true.'"

Father Willie Purcell, National Diocesan Vocations Coordinator for the Bishops' Conference said, "Across the island of Ireland, the role we have as Vocations Directors is to help young people realise that each one of them has a unique calling from Christ, and we aim to support them in answering that call, particularly in the case of those who are discerning vocations to the priesthood or religious life. I take this opportunity to thank all the vocations directors for their work in accompanying those who are discerning a vocation to priesthood."

**The following seminaries and houses of study are where seminarians are currently undertaking their formation for Irish dioceses:**

October 14, 2021

Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co Kildare  
Redemptoris Mater Seminary, Dundalk, Co Louth  
Royal Scots College, Salamanca, Spain  
Royal English College, Valladolid, Spain  
Pontifical Beda College, Rome  
Venerable English College, Rome

In 2018, the Congregation for Clergy, in Rome – which has overall responsibility for seminary formation – issued a new document (Ratio), The Gift of the Priestly Vocation, which is the revised programme for seminary formation. The Ratio strongly recommends to bishops around the world the introduction of a propaedeutic programme for new candidates who wish to discern their priestly vocation.

The National Vocations Office of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference opened on 1 July 2017. For information on priesthood in Ireland and for contact details for local diocesan vocations directors, please see [www.vocations.ie](http://www.vocations.ie).

## **Mothers Union helps church tackle gender-based violence**

### **Sources of help for women and men affected or at risk**

June Butler and Jacqui Armstrong, from the Mothers' Union, spoke on the scale and challenge of gender-based abuse and violence – and how members of the Church can take action against it – at General Synod 2021; their presentation is now available for discussion in dioceses and parishes.

The presentation formed part of the Church and Society Commission's report to General Synod and incorporated a video shared by the Anglican Church in Australia's Diocese of Melbourne which highlighted violence against women and children, and its causes.

Both men and women may be victims of abuse and violence and everyone who experiences it should be encouraged to come forward and seek support and assistance. Mothers' Union representatives across the island raise awareness of gender-based violence through talks in schools, the Thursdays in Black campaign, and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence which encourages prayer, greater awareness and action (including practical donations to assist refugees) every year in dioceses across our island.

The 16 Days is an annual international campaign starting on 25th November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and running until 10th December, Human Rights Day.

### **I need help right now – how can I find it?**

In Northern Ireland, the Domestic and Sexual Abuse helpline – 0808 802 1414 – is open to women and men affected by domestic abuse or violence. Help can also be sought by emailing [help@dsahelpline.org](mailto:help@dsahelpline.org)

In the Republic, the Women's Aid helpline can be contacted on 1800 341 900 and Men's Aid Ireland can be contacted on 01 554 3811 or at [hello@mensaid.ie](mailto:hello@mensaid.ie)

Video at -

[churchnewsireland@gmail.org](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.org)



<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/news/10994/tackling-genderbased-violence>

## **Stunning new public artwork of Christian crosses unveiled at Glasgow church**

**One of the walls at St Rollox Church in Sighthill has been adorned with 77 crosses fashioned out of concrete.**

Entitled "Assembly", the piece is comprised of 33 different styles of Christian cross – one representing each year of Jesus's life before he was crucified.

It was created by prizewinning sculptor Michael Visocchi, who won the £45,000 commission after being selected by a jury chaired by Rev Jane Howitt, the congregation's minister.

The 44-year-old visual artist said it took him two years to make the crosses which belong to a variety of Christian traditions such as Coptic, Byzantium, Catholicism and Presbyterianism.

He added that the piece includes the St Andrew's Cross, the Iona Cross, the Manx cross from the Isle of Man and the Hasta Cross, which is two and a half metres long.

Mr Visocchi, who works out of an old schoolhouse in Glenprosen in Angus said: "The work is called 'Assembly' and the idea is each cross represents the diversity of people who attend St Rollox Church.



### **Prizewinning sculptor Michael Visocchi**

"It's a metaphor for what goes on behind the walls and the works title references the General Assembly of ministers and elders of the Church of Scotland."

St Rollox Church is one of the Kirk's most diverse congregations and its outreach project has supported asylum seekers and refugees seeking sanctuary in Glasgow from war-torn countries like Kosovo, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq for the last 20 years.

Many people, including those born in African nations like Nigeria and the Ivory Coast, housed in the area have become members of the congregation.

Mr Visocchi said: "I always hope that an artwork like this means something to the people and community who commissioned it and perhaps it will inspire teaching and sermons over the years.

"The piece also resembles a flock of migrating birds in a way, which refers to the distance that people within the congregation have come to settle in Glasgow.

"So, there is a poetic element to it, as St Rollox Church does important community outreach work and I hope the piece reflects that."

According to the National Gallery, St Rollox is a derivative of Roch, a man who was born in Montpellier, France in the 14th century.

He travelled to northern Italy where he helped care for victims of the Black Death, to which he eventually fell victim himself.

After his death, his remains were removed to Venice and he is one of the saints invoked against the plague.

Mr Visocchi, who works in wood, metal, card, thread, paint, rope and resin to make evocative objects, said legend has it that he had a red cross-shaped birthmark on his chest, a fact that inspired him when he thinking about a design.

"Each cross was made in wood first, I made patterns and then moulds from the patterns followed by casting the concrete composite which makes them pretty tough," he explained.

"I made templates out of plywood and fixed them up on the wall of the church to make sure the composition worked in relation to the original drawing.



"Multipart works are all essentially about the arrangement.

"Once I was happy with that, I started fixing the crosses on, one at a time, and the whole thing took me about three weeks."

St Rollox Church, a £2.5 million community hub church at the heart of the biggest regeneration project in Scotland, opened in October, 2019.

It is a flexible and versatile, multi-purpose space that symbolises the "rebirth" of the Sighthill area.

Ms Howitt said she and the congregation are delighted with the piece.

"The work is very cleverly designed and draws you in when you start to look at it and it makes you think and question what the cross is," she added.

"It is a thing of beauty because the cross reminds us of Jesus and the heart of the Christian faith which is him giving up his life for us.

"It is a piece that brings the church outside into the community and by using various cruciform designs strongly identifies the building as a church.

"It is visible from the nearby park and I think in time it will become a place of stillness where people can come and sit, be quiet and pray.

"For us as a church, I imagine we will hold Easter events outside, weather permitting, with the crosses in the background."

Mr Visocchi is a graduate of the Glasgow School of Art and in 2007, was the youngest artist to be elected to the Royal Scottish Academy of Art and Architecture.

He is currently working on a commission that will recognise decades of industrial-scale whaling in South Georgia, Antarctica.

The sculpture, which will be one of the remotest installations in the world will celebrate the return of each species of whale since it's banning in the late 1960's.

Ms Howitt said: "Michael is becoming an increasingly well-known sculptor and I imagine that anyone who has an interest in modern sculpture will find their way to St Rollox to admire his work.



"I reckon it will become a significant piece of work within the art world in time."

The opening of the church building nearly two years ago ended a tumultuous period for the congregation who were told in 2014 that they had to leave their old church building on Fountainwell Road half a mile away.

It was subject to a compulsory purchase order by Glasgow City Council which needed the land to build a new access road to Sighthill, where hundreds of new homes, a new school and shops were built.

Described as a "real asset" to the community, the building construction was funded by the local authority and furnished inside using money from a variety of sources.

## People and places

### **Tuam Clergy Say 'Farewell' to Canon Andrew Ison and Bishop Patrick Rooke**

The clergy and outreach team of TKA - Tuam, Killala and Achonry - gathered in Westport to bid a personal 'Farewell' to Rev Canon Andrew Ison and Bishop Rooke and his family, Alison and Susanna, on Monday 11th October.

Canon Ison, with his parish of Ballysodare, is transferring to the diocese of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh when the dioceses of TKA and Limerick and Killaloe amalgamate on



1st November 2021 while Bishop Rooke is retiring on 31st October 2021.

The day began with the Bishop celebrating the Holy Communion in Holy Trinity Church, Westport. After this, a sumptuous lunch, provided by Canon Jen McWhirter, was served in Westport Rectory.

A presentation was made to Canon Andrew by Dean Alistair Grimason and similarly a gift was given to Bishop Patrick by Archdeacon Stephen McWhirter, and to Alison and Sussie by Canon Jen.

The Bishop then responded by giving each of the clergy and outreach team a gift of a reusable water flask representing the diocese's involvement in the 'Water Drops' project. The colour of these flasks ranged from day-glow orange to deep Irish green. It was noted with merriment that none of the bottles was episcopal purple!



The P7 Class from Forth River Primary School with tennis coach Will Boyd and EfL Volunteers.

## **Equipping for Life introduces tennis coaching to schoolchildren**

Equipping for Life (EfL) has introduced tennis lessons into a primary school in the Shankill area of Belfast as a means of helping equip young people for a better future.

The Belfast-based charity enables people of faith to volunteer time in communities that have been impacted by deprivation.

Dr Darrin Barr, Area Support Officer with EfL, said: “With the recent amazing success of 18-year-old Emma Raducanu in

the US Open, tennis is a hot topic in the media and Emma provides a wonderful role model for young children. Her success is an example of hard work, dedication and determination. Participating in all sport requires self-discipline but it is also fun and boosts mental well-being.”

In June 2021, EfL started a pilot tennis coaching programme in Forth River Primary School. Along with volunteer helpers, professional tennis coach Will Boyd held one-hour tennis sessions during the school day with a variety of Key Stage Two classes.

The children were introduced to basic tennis coaching and participated with enthusiasm, good humour and much laughter. The session started with a prayer of blessing (see below) for the children and ended with big smiles and a yearning for more tennis!

### [Tennis coach Will Boyd.](#)

Will started playing tennis at Downshire Tennis Club, Hillsborough, when he was seven-years-old. He regularly still competes in the Belfast leagues and Ulster tournament circuit, and is a Tennis Ireland Level Two coach and currently the Head Coach of Cavehill Tennis club.

The EfL pilot tennis programme was so successful, it has been extended into the new academic year with the current P7 class participating in the next round of tennis coaching.

Darrin said: “We are very grateful for the support of Judith Stevenson, Acting Principal of Forth River Primary School,

for allowing Equipping for Life to launch this programme in the school.

Commenting on the programme, Mrs Stevenson said: “We are delighted with how well the tennis is going in school and the pupils are thoroughly enjoying every moment of it.”

Bob Cooke is a tennis volunteer with EfL, assisting the coach for an hour every Wednesday morning. “What a breath of fresh air for the P7 pupils and, I may say, the EfL volunteers,” Bob said. “All enjoy the craic. It starts with a prayer, light touch, and it is humbling to see how sincerely the pupils reverently take part in this short devotional experience.”

It is hoped that this initiative can be replicated in other schools on the Shankill and beyond.

## Perspective

### **Northern Ireland is not a bargaining chip - Daily Telegraph leader yesterday**

The final battle of Brexit is about to be joined. In his thoughtful and well-judged speech in Lisbon, Lord Frost, the Brexit minister, indicated that without significant progress on the operation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, the UK will take unilateral action to repudiate it, possibly within weeks. This is not an argument about sausages or empty supermarket shelves, though they matter to consumers in



the province. Fundamentally, it is a dispute about sovereignty, territorial integrity and democracy.

Almost from the moment the UK voted to leave the EU, Brussels used the ambivalent status of Northern Ireland as a means of leverage in talks about the final Withdrawal Agreement. Because the EU's only land border with the UK lies on the island of Ireland, the Commission and some member states, notably France, have exploited its troubled past to their own advantage.

Theresa May should never have allowed the fate of Northern Ireland, an integral part of the Union, to be a bargaining chip. To avoid a hard border in Ireland she would have permitted the whole of the UK to retain alignment with single market rules as a fall-back position. Boris Johnson decided that a customs border down the Irish Sea was defensible and he had a big enough majority to override the objections of the province's Unionist MPs.

Britain considered this to be a considerable compromise agreed for the greater good, and assumed (and hoped) the EU would allow the protocol to operate flexibly. But it has proved to be disruptive and divisive. Unionists feel that it has changed their relationship with the rest of the UK. They remain subject to the European Court despite no longer being a member of the EU and can have rules imposed by a legislature over which they have no say.

Given that the EU insisted a hard border on the island was a breach of the 1998 Belfast Agreement they must also acknowledge that changing the constitutional status of Northern Ireland within the UK is a similar infringement.

There might have been a pragmatic way to make this arrangement work but the EU either does not understand the issues or is wilfully ignoring them.

At the very least, the EU court should no longer have a role in the laws of our country. Lord Frost has put forward wording for a revised protocol and the EU will reply today. It is to be hoped they now recognise the seriousness of the situation.

## Poem for today

### To Autumn by William Blake

O Autumn, laden with fruit, and stainèd  
With the blood of the grape, pass not, but sit  
Beneath my shady roof; there thou may'st rest,  
And tune thy jolly voice to my fresh pipe,  
And all the daughters of the year shall dance!  
Sing now the lusty song of fruits and flowers.  
'The narrow bud opens her beauties to  
The sun, and love runs in her thrilling veins;  
Blossoms hang round the brows of Morning, and  
Flourish down the bright cheek of modest Eve,  
Till clust'ring Summer breaks forth into singing,  
And feather'd clouds strew flowers round her head.

'The spirits of the air live on the smells  
Of fruit; and Joy, with pinions light, roves round  
The gardens, or sits singing in the trees.'  
Thus sang the jolly Autumn as he sat;

October 14, 2021

Then rose, girded himself, and o'er the bleak  
Hills fled from our sight; but left his golden load.



## Speaking to the Soul

Bible verse, thought for the day and prayers - on site daily

