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C of I interfaith consultation



The Church of Ireland Theological Institute was the venue for the C of I Interfaith Consultation

An interfaith Consultation organised by the Interfaith Working Group of the Church of Ireland, was held in CITI in Dublin on 7 September 2018, Canon Patrick Comerford writes in his blog.

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The main speaker was Bishop Toby Howarth, Bishop of Bradford, who has worked extensively on interfaith relations in the Church of England. He spoke in the morning on the report *Generous Love: the truth of the Gospel and the call to dialogue*, produced by the Anglican Communion Network for Inter Faith Concerns (Nifcon) and discussed how the Church of England approaches interfaith issues.

Bishop Toby Howarth has worked extensively on interfaith relations in the Church of England. He was born in Kenya, and before his appointment as Bishop of Bradford, he worked in Pakistan, was a tutor at Crowther Hall and the Selly Oak colleges in Birmingham, Inter-Faith Adviser to the Bishop of Birmingham, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Secretary for Inter-Religious Affairs and the National Adviser for Inter-Religious Affairs for the Church of England.

After lunch, I was invited to chair the session at which the Revd Suzanne Cousins, of Moville, Co Donegal, presented her MTh dissertation, *Generous Love in Multi-Faith Ireland*, which was published earlier this year and was launched by Archbishop Michael Jackson in CITI [14 March 2018].

I had the privilege of supervising Suzanne's research at CITI and TCD, and it is always a supervisor's particular joy when a student's dissertation is recommended for publication as a book by both the external examiner – in this case the Revd Dr Adrian Chatfield of Ridley Hall, Cambridge – and the Court of Examiners.

While she was working on this dissertation in 2015-2016, Suzanne also received the Oulton Prize for Patristics, which enabled her to join me at the summer school in Sidney

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Sussex College, Cambridge, organised by the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies. The topic for the summer school that year was 'Christian Faith, Identity and Otherness: Possibilities and Limitations of Dialogue in Ecumenical and Interfaith Discourse' [31 August to 2 September 2015].

She quotes me in a number of places in her book, and she is generous when she says in her acknowledgements when she says: 'I am especially grateful to my academic supervisor, the Revd Canon Patrick Comerford, for generously sharing with me his time, wisdom and expertise, and for his example of living engagement' (p 5).

Her book identifies theological and pastoral challenges and concerns for clergy assisting their parishioners in everyday Christian-Muslim relationships. It is the eighth in the Church of Ireland Theological Institute's 'Braemor Studies' series and is published by Church of Ireland Publishing (CIP).

This dissertation was a journey for both of us. It took Suzanne to many places I too enjoy, from Istanbul to Cambridge. Reading it once again in preparation for the consultation.

Listening to her presentation this afternoon also brought back many memories of the process of supervision, many cups of coffee in Dublin, and even discussions in Sidney Sussex College and in cafés in Cambridge.

Earlier in the morning, at our opening worship, I was asked to read from the Old Testament: 'For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and

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in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts' (Malachi 1: 11).

Later in the afternoon, the consultation discussed and ways forward for the Church of Ireland in the area of interfaith work, and we explored ways we can move forward towards a better future for all.

The consultation was organised by the Church of Ireland Interfaith Working Group, which is chaired by the Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe, the Right Revd Kenneth Kearon. It had been planned for last March but was rescheduled because of severe weather problems.

The report *Generous Love*, which was central to our discussions today, is available [HERE](#).

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry returns to work, with thanksgiving for people's prayers

"I want to thank you for all of the cards, and the well-wishes and, above all, for all of the prayers," Presiding Bishop Michael Curry of the US-based Episcopal Church said in a video message posted on Facebook as he returns to work following prostate surgery in late July.

"I came through the surgery very well. Everything is good," Curry said in the video. "The pathology report was just fine, and I'm slowly but surely working my way back into the work I love to do." He described reading through the

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hundreds of cards and letters sent to him at the Episcopal Church Centre. “They are a blessing,” he declared.

On 25 July Presiding Bishop Curry shared news that he had recently been diagnosed with prostate cancer and would be having surgery to remove the prostate gland. “I’ve been recovering,” he said. “I pretty much stayed home and recuperated in August. Things are starting up slowly, but starting up.” Bishop Curry has recently resumed work and was in Atlanta to speak at a sold-out benefit dinner for the Day1 media ministry. He was also honoured by the Atlanta City Council.

Day1 is the ecumenical radio and internet ministry formerly known as “The Protestant Hour,” which has broadcast sermons by preachers from the mainline denominations each week for 73 years. The program is produced by the Alliance for Christian Media. Bishop Curry was a regular contributor to the program in the 1990s, a member of the Day1 advisory board, and a former member of the board of trustees.

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Number of Masses to be reduced in Border diocese

The Catholic diocese of [Clogher](#) has announced it is to reduce the number of Masses by 15 per cent from next month due to the age and shortage of priests, the Irish Times reports.

The diocese, which has a Catholic population of 88,000, covers most of Monaghan and Fermanagh, with parishes in Tyrone, [Donegal](#), [Louth](#) and Cavan.

The changes were announced by the Diocesan Administrator Msgr Joseph McGuinness, who noted that the diocese has just 58 priests active in parish ministry, 28 of whom are over 65.

In a pastoral letter entitled *The Future Mission of Our Parishes*, Msgr McGuinness said Clogher has just 44 priests aged under 75 and that they were ministering to communities in 85 churches across 37 parishes.

The changes follow a series of meetings over recent weeks involving priests of the diocese and chaired by Msgr McGuinness, who was appointed in 2016 following the resignation of Bishop of Clogher Liam McDaid due to poor health.

They will mean a reduction in Masses across the diocese from 113 at present to 96 next month, Msgr McGuinness said.

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Changed landscape

It was “the beginning of the task of addressing the spiritual and pastoral needs of all in our diocese in what is now a very changed landscape,” he said.

“Many parishes will see Masses being rotated between two or even three churches at weekends. In some cases, churches will only have Mass on designated Sundays of each month,” Msgr McGuinness said.

This reduction was to allow for the reduced number of priests to celebrate several Masses on a weekend across parish boundaries in each pastoral area and to provide people with a range of options for attending Mass, he said.

Further, there will be no additional funeral Masses on Sundays. Funerals will be marked at one of the regular Sunday Masses and families unhappy with this can have the funeral Mass on the Saturday or on the Monday.

From next month also, a Mass on any weekday or weekend can be offered up for several intentions at once, including month’s minds, anniversaries, or funerals.

In such instances, however, the priest may only accept one offering for himself for any one Mass, in accordance with Canon Law. Other offerings or stipends will be used to contribute to the work of the church.

The changes will also mean having priests from neighbouring parishes coming in on a regular basis to preside at the Sunday Eucharist in each other’s parishes.

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Further changes

“Obviously, further changes will become necessary in the period ahead as parishes and pastoral areas continue to review local circumstances,” Msgr McGuinness said, insisting “there is no question of any church being closed”.

There was, he said, a clear recognition of the importance of each church to its local community.

“I know and understand that not everyone will be happy with every aspect of these changes. However, I am confident that the people of the diocese as a whole will give them a chance,” he said.

There was, he said, “still much to be done, especially by lay men and women, in renewing parish life and the mission of the church into the future. In this way, we can work towards a balancing of the roles of clergy and laity in our church, where all work in partnership together”.

New Testament scholars to lay the biblical foundations for the Lambeth Conference

Work to begin laying the biblical foundations for the next Lambeth Conference will get underway later this year when 35 leading New Testament scholars from different denominations around the world gather for the St Augustine Seminar at Lambeth Palace. Around 800 bishops from around the Anglican Communion will gather at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England, in the summer of 2020 for the once in a decade Lambeth Conference. As

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Professor Jennifer Strawbridge will convene the meeting of 35 leading New Testament scholars from around the world for the St Augustine Seminar.

part of their time together, the bishops will engage in Bible study around the first epistle of Peter (1 Peter) and the St Augustine Seminar will begin the work of preparing materials for the studies.

Some 35 New Testament scholars from Australia, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, China, Columbia, Egypt, India, Ireland, Kenya, Nigeria, the Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, the UK, and the US will take part in the St Augustine's Seminar. The participants come from different churches of the Anglican Communion and a wide spread of other denominations, including Methodist, Presbyterian, Uniting Churches of Australia, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, and Armenian Orthodox Churches.

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The Seminar will be convened by Professor Jennifer Strawbridge, Associate Professor in New Testament Studies at Mansfield College in the University of Oxford. The group will consider the text from 1 Peter and help to draw up critical thinking to help shape the Bible studies and other aspects of the Lambeth Conference. After the initial meeting in November, a smaller group will convene at Lambeth Palace again in May 2019 to draw together resources.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: “I am looking forward immensely to the St Augustine Seminar in November. This gathering will play a significant role as we seek God’s wisdom on developing and refining themes for the Lambeth Conference.

“The book of 1 Peter is a personal favourite of mine. There is so much in it that is pertinent for the Church, for the world, for the times we are living in and for us as we seek direction for the Anglican Communion in the years ahead.

“The expertise and insight of the theologians who gather will be vital in informing the thinking in areas such as the daily Bible expositions, group Bible studies and homilies. I pray it will be a stimulating and exciting time together.”

Professor Strawbridge described her participation in the St Augustine Seminar as “an absolute honour”, adding: “I have admired the work of many of those in attendance; and am excited to see what happens when so many incredible, convicted, and faithful hearts and minds are brought together to discuss scripture and the Church.

“One of the focuses of Lambeth will be on collegiality and my hope is that this seminar will model precisely that as we

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use the lens of Scripture to explore what it means to walk together in a connected but not necessarily relational world. Moreover, my hope is that this group will think creatively about different approaches to biblical study, including ways of disagreeing well over the meaning of a text.

“The focus of the seminar will be intensive work on 1 Peter set alongside the overarching theme of the Lambeth Conference: God’s Church for God’s World: walking, witnessing, and listening. Thus, members of the seminar will think about 1 Peter theologically and in context. But such a focus will be set alongside the wider themes drawn from 1 Peter such as our calling in Christ, our communion with Christ, the proclamation of Christ, and the exhortation in 1 Peter to shepherd the flock with humility.”

News briefs

+++Victoria Cross focus to parish European Heritage

Open Day - Billy Parish Church was one of a number of churches in Connor Diocese which opened to visitors over the weekend to celebrate European Heritage Open Days. The parish put on an exhibition for the occasion, in part focused on one of its most famous sons, Robert Quigg VC. Rifleman Robert Quigg, a lifelong member of Billy Parish, received the Victoria Cross, the highest military honour awarded for valour in the British Commonwealth, for his actions at the Somme. In June 2016 this year, Her Majesty the Queen visited Bushmills to unveil a statue of Robert Quigg, which was dedicated by the rector of Billy and Derrykeighan, the Rev John Anderson, who is pictured in Billy Church at the weekend.

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Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Josepha Madigan with staff and the managing committee of the C of I's RCB Library during the Minister's informal visit to the Library to announce a capital grant for the digitisation of Church of Ireland parish registers. The Representative Church Body Library, at Braemor Park, Dublin, is the Church of Ireland's repository for archives and manuscripts, including 1,120 collections of parish records. The Library's collections also include the archives of the Church's dioceses, cathedrals, architectural drawings, the administrative records of the Representative Church Body and its multiple committees, and thousands of manuscripts relating to the Church's people, buildings and activities, spanning from medieval times to the present.

+++Connor youth weekend - The fifth annual Connor Takes the Castle residential in Castlewellan brought young

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people and leaders from nine parishes in the diocese together for a fantastic weekend. From arrival on Friday evening, September 7, until departure on Sunday lunchtime, the schedule was action packed, with late night walks around the lake, team sports, raving in the basement and the infamous Connor's Got Talent competition. James and Elise Turner from Church of the Resurrection led sessions, with Kate Peden from Space, Jordanstown, facilitating worship. Young people heard about faith and doubt, asking big questions and, if they are doubting God,

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what they can do to grow in their faith. Salt Factory Sports were there for the Saturday afternoon to create space for young people to make friendships over team games as they battled it out in volleyball, dodgeball, ultimate frisbee and more. Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie said: “This weekend is fantastic for allowing young people and leaders from different parishes across the diocese to get to know one another, make connections and share their faith with others of the same age. “Connor Youth Council puts together an incredible weekend with lots of activities as well as opportunities for discipleship for young people with the leaders they come with.”

+++Saturday Night Live kicks off again - on September 29, hosted by St Columbanus, Ballyholme. SNL is a bi-monthly event for youth groups from around the diocese of Down & Dromore to get together for worship, bible teaching and prayer...and food!



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