

Bangor group Rend Collective tops US Christian album chart



It's heavenly music: a folk group from Co Down whose aim is to spread the "good news" have topped the Christian album charts in America, The Sunday Times reports.

Rend Collective are part of a wave of faith-based musical groups from Ulster proving popular with evangelical fans in the US.

The Bangor band topped Billboard's Christian album charts earlier this month, the equivalent of 9,000 sales. They are now planning an extensive US tour.

Chris Llewellyn, the lead vocalist, said the majority of their audience was in America but they also had fan bases in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. They will tour the UK in May, when they also play at Dublin's Olympia Theatre.

Rend Collective formed through a bible group in Bangor started by the band's drummer. The five key members describe themselves as Christian rather than identifying with any one denomination.

"We actually didn't really play music together. It was just an exploration of our spirituality. Then, after about five years of meeting together, we decided to make some Christian music," said Llewellyn.

"We thought Christian music had its own religious sound that nobody was ever going to enjoy outside of the church, and I guess we didn't even enjoy it that much, and we wanted to do something a little bit different and more true to ourselves and the journey we had been on."



We Are Messengers, led by Monaghan native Darren Mulligan, have also appeared on Billboard's Christian music charts, while Kathryn Scott, a pastor at an evangelical church in Coleraine, is also an Irish musician enjoying international success.

Llewellyn credited the popularity to their accents and outsider status. "It disarms people a little bit," he said. In America, there's a lot of politics and negativity surrounding the whole idea of faith. When you hear the word 'evangelical' in the States, people begin to tense up a little bit and get afraid that they're about to hear something angry and uncomfortable. When we come over, they don't see us as political, but just happy- go-lucky Irish people talking about Jesus."

Good News was the third Rend Collective record to top the Christian album charts. Seven of the band's singles also made it onto Billboard's Hot Christian Songs chart.

Llewellyn said topping the charts was exciting but not why they do what we do. "This album's called Good News for a reason. As Christians we're motivated by things beyond chart success and all of that," he said.

"We see our purpose as to announce good news. There's so much bad news and negativity out there. We just want to be a message of positivity, hope and light that we think we find in Jesus."

Presbyterian Moderator: 'Renew efforts to find an agreement'

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Rt. Rev. Dr. Noble McNeely, has expressed his disappointment that devolved government is not being restored in Northern Ireland and has encouraged politicians to renew their efforts to find an agreement.

Dr. McNeely said, "As we approach the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, it is worth reflecting on the optimism of that time.

Opportunities exist now, as they did in 1998, to honour and respect each other, and to share in the responsibility of building a better place to live.

“Along with many others, I am very disappointed that we are not in a position for devolved government to be restored, and I continue to be concerned about the vacuum of good and stable government, which, of course, impacts most profoundly on vulnerable people in our society.

“I urge all involved in the talks not to walk away, but to renew their efforts to find an agreement for the good of all. Those involved in this critical period can be assured of my prayers and the prayers of many across our denomination.”

Mayo priest to be exhumed in step towards canonisation

Relatives of an Irish-born priest who drew millions to his worldwide Family Rosary rallies in the 1940s and 1950s have confirmed his body is to be exhumed as part of a process which it is hoped will lead to his canonisation, The Irish Times reports



Pope Francis: towards the end of 2017, he named Fr Patrick Peyton as Venerable in recognition of his “heroic virtue”.

The exhumation of Fr [Patrick Peyton](#) from a grave at [Boston College](#) where he was interred in 1992 is likely to take place before summer, according to one of his nephews, [Tommy Peyton](#).

Mr Peyton, a garage owner, lives in Attymass, Ballina, Co [Mayo](#), the parish from which his charismatic uncle emigrated to the [United States](#) before becoming a priest in the 1920s.

[Fr Peyton](#), whose famous rallying call was “The family that prays together stays together”, staged massive Rosary rallies all over the world including [Ireland](#).

Late last year, in recognition of his “heroic virtue” Fr Peyton was named as Venerable by [Pope Francis](#).

This is one of the final stages in the lengthy process towards beatification.

Relic collection

As Fr Peyton moves closer to becoming a saint, his body is to be exhumed prior to an examination by medical professionals to officially identify the remains, report on their condition, and collect relics.

Details on the time and location of the exhumation are not being released.

Tommy Peyton, one of the priest’s six nephews and two nieces, says he believes the exhumation at Boston College will take place before June.

The remains are expected to be reinterred at the Holy Cross headquarters – the order to which Fr Peyton belonged – in New York.

In recent years, the Fr Peyton Memorial Centre was established in Attymass. It attracts thousands of pilgrims and visitors every year.

Attymass resident John O'Hara, a member of Mayo County Council, said on Monday everyone locally was excited at the prospect of their famous predecessor becoming a saint: "It [sainthood] would be good for Attymass and for north Mayo."

Australian mission partner to work with Kilmore youth team

This month Erin Moorcroft, a mission partner with CMS Australia, arrived in Ireland from Sydney, Australia. She is joining the Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh children and youth team.

Despite her name Erin doesn't have Irish heritage – she was born in Australia and grew up on the sunny Northern Beaches of Sydney. While in school she went on a study camp with friends that changed her life – it was the start of a relationship with God that continues to grow and impact on her life. After school Erin trained as a primary school teacher working in Australia and Tanzania. However, she was keen to know and understand God's Word more so she returned to Australia to study at the Sydney Missionary and Bible College.

Speaking of this time, Erin says 'It was here that God ignited my passion to be teaching kids



about Him – rather than Maths and English (as important as they are!), to be teaching kids about God’s kingdom, His deep love for them and the extreme He went to in sending His Son so that we can be in a right relationship with Him. There is nothing greater than knowing God, it’s a lifelong journey filled with such depth and richness.’Erin will be based in Sligo and will be partnering with the Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh

Diocese to work alongside churches in the ministries for kids and youth.

Former head teacher called to be Kirk's first ever Hub Minister

The Church of Scotland has recruited a former secondary school head teacher to become its first ever Hub Ministries co-ordinator.

Rev Catriona Hood will help members of A'Chleit, Clachan, Gigha, Kilberry, Skipness and Tarbert churches in Argyll to be even more directly involved in mission and pastoral support work.

The 51-year-old, who was ordained as an Auxiliary Minister in 2006, said she felt “very privileged” to have been chosen for the “exciting” new role, which she formally took up on Saturday.

Ms Hood, who is based in Tarbert, Loch Fyne, is largely assisting churches without full-time ministers and will encourage the development of lay worship teams who will take services.

She will support Readers, whose duties are principally concerned with the ministry of the word and the conduct of public worship, and



L-R Marilyn Shedden, business convener of the Presbytery of Argyll, Rev Catriona Hood and Dr Chris Brett, Clerk to the Presbytery of Argyll.

take on the burden of administration duties when required.

Ms Hood, a minister's daughter, stood down as the head of Campbeltown Grammar School in Argyll to take up the innovative role.

Exciting opportunity

The former teacher, who was also head of Tarbert Academy, she said: "I feel very privileged to have this opportunity which has arisen from

the Presbytery of Argyll's innovative approach to ministry.

“I am very fortunate in that I have existing friendships with the Hub communities, having been Interim Moderator in the parishes at the south of the Hub for many years.

“The response from the congregations and communities has been warm and welcoming and I appreciate this very much.

“Being the first Hub Minister in Scotland is a very exciting opportunity and together with a supportive Presbytery and lovely congregations, I will do all I can to ensure its success.”

Ms Hood grew up in Campbeltown and is a graduate of Aberdeen University.

She has taught English and Religious Education at Invergordon Academy, Plockton High School and Lochgilphead High School.

A Service of Introduction was held for Ms Hood, who will carry out the paid role for 12 months initially, in Tarbert, Loch Fyne, on Saturday.

But for the last month she has been at the forefront of supporting the local community

following the sinking of the trawler, TT100 Nancy Glen, in the sea loch.

Ms Hood, along with Free Church minister, Rev Robert MacLeod, and Matthew Ramsay of the Fishermen's Mission, led a quayside service 10 days ago which was attended by around 500 people.

She has been campaigning to ensure that the bodies of two missing fishermen, Duncan MacDougall and Przemek Krawczyk, are removed from the wreckage and brought home to their families.

Dr Chris Brett, Clerk to the Presbytery of Argyll, said: "We are delighted to welcome Rev Catriona Hood to this new post.

"It is the first of a new style of ministry which will bring Ministers, Readers, Elders and other trained lay people to work together to serve the Church and the community across a wide area of Argyll.

"Catriona is already well-known in the area as a former head teacher, Auxiliary Minister and Interim Moderator, and has recently been very active in supporting the people of Tarbert following the Nancy Glen tragedy.

"We look forward to an exciting new phase in the life of the Church in Argyll."

"Celebration of Family" Conference held in Derry



The "Celebration of Family" Conference took place in St Mary's College, Northland Road, Derry on Saturday 3rd February 2018.

The Guest Speakers were: Grainne Doherty, Director for Pastoral Development for Raphoe Diocese, Ireland and Part-time Lecturer in Theology, All Hallows College. Gerard Gallagher, a native of Derry Diocese from Strabane, and a

Pastoral Co-Ordinator in the Archdiocese of Dublin at Archdiocese of Dublin, and an author.

Fr Johnny Doherty CSsR: a Marriage Enrichment Specialist with ACCORD, Director of Love is for Life, founder of a Movement of Continuous Prayer for Marriage & Family Life and an international retreat giver for priests and religious. He is the author of Living the Sunday Liturgy and collaborated on Together Forever, a set of videos on marriage.

The Closing Mass was celebrated by the Papal Nuncio to Ireland, HE Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo.

Corporate donations sought to help fund Dublin event hosting Pope Francis

Irish businesses are being approached by the Catholic Church to help cover the cost of the Pope's visit here later this year, Breaking News Ireland reports.

The Sunday Business Post reveals Pope Francis' visit and hosting the World Meeting of Families event in Ireland could cost around €20m.

Individual and corporate donations are being sought in return for tickets to the Pastoral Congress in the RDS.

A spokesperson for the event told the paper it is too early to assess how much money has been raised to date in relation to the overall target.

21 Christian martyrs beheaded by ISIS honoured at Egyptian church inauguration

Yesterday saw the inauguration of an Egyptian church dedicated to the 21 Christians beheaded by ISIS on the Libyan coast in 2015.

February 15, 2018 marks the third anniversary of the martyrdom of 20 Egyptian Coptic Christians and one Ghanaian believer, graphic footage of which was broadcast online. The church dedicated to their memory has been built in al-Our, near Samalut in Egypt's Minya province, the home of 13 of the Libyan martyrs, according to [Independent Catholic News](#).

Relatives of those killed were expected to attend yesterday's inauguration service and eventually



the remains of the deceased are expected to be buried together at the site.

The targeted Christians – declared to be 'martyred saints' by Coptic Pope Tawadros II – were kidnapped in January 2015, with footage of their beheading shown a month later in a video titled: 'A message signed with blood to the nation of the cross'. Permission for the vast new church at al-Our, to honour the dead, was [granted by](#) Egyptian president Abdel-Fatah al-Sisi.

In October 2017 their remains, with bodies still bound and dressed in their orange jumpsuits, were found at the coastal city of Sirte, according to [World Watch Monitor](#).

Coptic Christians represent about 10 per cent of Egypt's majority Muslim population. The community has been subject to intense attacks in recent years, particularly from Islamist fundamentalist groups.

In December 2016, ISIS claimed responsibility for a Cairo Coptic church bombing that killed 27.

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