



Scрабо Tower, Newtownards, Co. Down

Cistercian College Roscrea to remain open after €1.5 million rescue plan

The future of one of the country's most famous secondary schools has been secured thanks to a massive fundraising drive by parents and past pupils.

Just one month ago, the Abbot of Cistercian College Roscrea (CCR) Dom Richard Purcell announced that the 112-year-old school located on the Offaly/Tipperary border was to close due to falling pupil numbers.

The school has had a 45 per cent drop in enrolment in the past ten years, with only nine first year students enrolled for September 2017. It currently has 167 pupils. There are now only five religious-run Catholic schools in Ireland that offer boarding facilities, compared to more than 30 such schools in 1990.

However, subsequent to the announcement, a major meeting was held in the County Arms Hotel in Birr, where the Save CCR group was founded, and the Cistercian Order and trustees gave the group until 16 March to come up with a rescue plan for the college.

This group has raised over €1.5 million to save the school from closure, and as part of the plan the college will now accept day borders and five-day borders. The school previously only accepted seven-day boarders. The plan was accepted by the school's board of trustees on Thursday 16 March last and the college will now accept enrolments for the next academic year.

In a statement released at the weekend the action group Chairman Ronnie Culliton said: “We are looking to the future with great enthusiasm now. This is a wonderful place for young men to be educated, play sport, develop musical talents, and grow friendships that will last a lifetime.”

He added: “We are delighted that we can now offer this fantastic opportunity to receive an education grounded in the Cistercian ethos to a greater number of families.”

His words were echoed by Dom Richard Purcell, Abbot of Mount St Joseph Abbey, who said: “This is one of the most joyous days in the history of Cistercian College. We have witnessed a small miracle over the past four weeks. The decision to close was an extremely difficult one for the monastic community to make and so we are understandably overjoyed to now be in a position to announce that the college will remain open.

“We have been truly overwhelmed by people’s generosity which has ultimately resulted in ensuring the financial viability of the college in the immediate term. The hope now is that we can continue this positive work together to

ensure that Cistercian College can remain open for a very long time to come.”

The school, which won the rugby Senior Schools Cup in Leinster for the first time in 2015, is the alma mater of former Taoiseach Brian Cowen, former Tánaiste Dick Spring and former Foreign Affairs Minister David Andrews.

‘Can’t Cook Won’t Cook’ clergy of Middletown churches fund 3 defibrillators

A defibrillator project which was the vision of the committee of Middletown Parish Community Hall which was newly built and opened a year ago has recently become a reality.

The committee organised a ‘Can’t Cook Won’t Cook’ event in the hall and the chefs for the evening were Rev. David Hagan (Middletown Presbyterian Church), Fr. Sean Moore (St. Joseph’s Chapel, Middletown), Mr. E.C. Hughes (local businessman) and Rev. Matthew Hagan (St. John’s Parish Church, Middletown). The evening raised £1,624.00 and was well attended by both sides of the community. In addition to this a substantial donation was given by E.C. Hughes, Middletown. A substantial donation was

also received from The Friends of Tynan Surgery. In total almost £5,000 was raised to purchase three defibrillators, the external storage boxes and the essential training in CPR and in how to use the defibrillators.

The defibrillators have now been purchased and have been placed in the villages of Tynan and Middletown and are located outside Tynan Pharmacy and outside Middletown Post office. The third defibrillator is located outside Aghavilly Parish Hall. The three defibrillators were purchased from The Cormac Trust, Benburb, who also provided the essential certified training. A total of 34 people in the Tynan, Aghavilly, Middletown, Caledon and Killylea areas have been professionally trained and have received their certificates in CPR and defibrillator training.

The defibrillators in each location – Tynan, Aghavilly and Middletown are registered with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service so that when someone dials 999 for an ambulance they will be given the four digit code for the defibrillator box.

The defibrillators are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Cormac Trust also have first responders who can be alerted and will also attend an incident.

Rev. Matthew Hagan (Chairman of Middletown Parish Community Hall) commented: “The hall committee had the vision that on completion of the building of Middletown Parish Community Hall a defibrillator would be provided in Middletown for the benefit of all the members of the community on both sides of the border.”

Rev. Hagan also stated: “Thanks to the generosity of local people who attended the ‘Can’t Cook Won’t Cook’ event, the generosity of Mr. E.C. Hughes and the generosity of The Friends of Tynan Surgery, the hall committee are delighted to have been able to purchase not only one defibrillator but three.” In this rural area of Co. Armagh these defibrillators will be of great benefit to the community.

Stew and shamrock in Garvagh inter-church blessing

A bowl of traditional Irish Stew was on the menu at an annual ‘Blessing of the Shamrock’ celebration at Glenullin Community Centre last week, which was organised jointly by St Paul’s Church of Ireland, Garvagh, and St Mary’s Roman Catholic Church in Glenullin.

The Rector of Errigal and Desertoghill, Rev Paul Whittaker, said the annual service – which alternates between the parishes – had grown hugely in popularity since it started in 2012, and had now become a firm fixture in both churches' annual calendar.

There was a new face at this year's event as Rev Whittaker was joined by the Parish Priest of Errigal, Fr Brendan Crowley, who was appointed to the position in September.

The evening began with the piping in of the shamrock by local piper Dessie Davidson. The sprigs were then blessed by the two clergymen before being distributed to members of both parishes as well as visitors.

This year's guest speaker, Omagh firefighter and lay preacher Paddy Quinn, recounted his personal faith journey to the scores of people present. Paddy, a former Tyrone gaelic footballer, was baptised a Roman Catholic but joined the Church of Ireland in adulthood.

The evening included hymns performed by the St Paul's music group, traditional music from the group Tigh Tara and Irish dancing. Gerard O'Kane, from the Glenullin GAA club, thanked

local businesses for sponsoring the event and those in attendance for supporting it.

Former president says it's 'no time for silence' on migrant rights

Former president of [Ireland](#) Mary McAleese has urged Christians to speak out against anti-immigrant sentiment as hundreds of church bells were rung on Sunday in Ireland and internationally in solidarity with refugees.

“This is no time for silence. There is a tide of malice and misery to be turned. If we are not to be consumed by it then we must confront it, name it, shame it, and proclaim the transcendent, the enduring power of the commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves,” she said.

Mrs McAleese was delivering the homily at the [Church of Ireland Christ Church](#) Cathedral in [Waterford](#) where she launched the “Joy of Bells” initiative by Dean of Waterford [Maria Jansson](#). It has attracted support from all over Ireland and internationally.

“Hundreds of Christian churches all over this island and across the globe with many from



Former president Mary McAleese says Ireland needs to demonstrate ‘the promise of the hundred thousand welcomes is not a fairy story’

other faiths and none, are joining us today, to make sure that message of loving tolerance reaches into as many hearts and minds as possible,” Mrs McAleese said.

“We ring the bells for all those who are on the move today fleeing famine, war, lack of opportunity and whose lives could be so simply transformed by a smile and a helping hand. We have the chance to make Ireland a light to the world in the example of tolerance and inclusion we give.”

Racism must be confronted, she said, “in the name of Patrick, the trafficked child kidnapped from his home and brought to a foreign land to work as a slave.

“We say it in the name of Patrick who escaped and became a refugee, in the name of Patrick who returned to Ireland as an immigrant, the most successful immigrant to Ireland of all time.

“We insist on tolerance for the refugee, for the immigrant, for the stranger among us, in the name of the millions of Irish, of our own people who knew the hardship and the hurt of being refugees from famine. - *An Irish Times report by Patsy McGarry.*

Presbyterian history society lecture on Secession Church

The next Presbyterian Historical Society lecture is on Thursday 23 March at 8.00 pm in Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, 77 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HL, when the Very Rev Dr Godfrey Brown will speak on ‘**The Original Secession Church in Ireland, 1841-1956**’.

When the Seceders joined with the General Synod of Ulster in 1840 to form the General

Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland some Seceder congregations did not join the union. This lecture will tell the story of this group of Seceders. Everyone is welcome. Refreshments afterwards. The lecture will be preceded by the Society's Annual General Meeting at 7.15pm.

See:

[Fitzroy Presbyterian Church](#)
[Act of Union 1840](#)
[The Seceders in Ireland](#)

First ever Dublin and Glendalough schools choir competition to mark 800 anniversary

The inaugural Diocesan National Schools Choir Competition will take place in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin on April 2 at 6pm. The event is part of the celebrations for the Dublin and Glendalough 800 anniversary.

Across the United Dioceses school choirs have been practicing for this event. A total of 10 school choirs are taking part with entrants hailing from Rathfarnham, Greystones, Sandford, Taney Parish, Dunlavin, Celbridge, Glenageary and Killiney, Wicklow, Donore Avenue and Whitechurch, Dublin.

Over the past few months, the pupils and teachers from these schools have been beavering away learning new music and honing their performance skills. In the competition, each school will sing two pieces of music: one of which must be capable of being sung in a worship setting. The adjudicators on the night will be Dr Kerry Houston, Head of Academic Studies in the DIT Conservatory of Music and Mr Ian Keatley, Director of Music in Christ Church Cathedral.

As music is an important part in building confidence, skills and an occasion for teamwork especially for children, this competition will foster a sense of unity within schools, the dioceses and will give children an opportunity to exhibit their God given gifts for singing to a wider audience.

The event should last approximately two hours and prizes will be awarded for the best overall choir, the best unison choir and the best part-singing choir.

Patrick's Mysterious Adventure draws crowds Belfast

Hundreds of children flocked to Patrick's Mysterious Adventure hosted by Connor

Children's Council in St Anne's Cathedral from March 15–19.

The event opened on March 15 and 16 for invited schoolchildren, and the public were welcomed on Friday and Saturday. It closed with a special service on Sunday.

Around 1,000 people joined in over the three public days, with 300 schoolchildren attending in the first two days.

This amazing free exhibition and interactive story trail was organised by Connor Children's Project Development Officer Jill Hamilton and Sister Karen Webb of the North Belfast Centre of Mission. They were supported by the Children's Council and the Connor Development Team.

Patrick's Mysterious Adventure was a family friendly event aimed at helping people of all ages to discover first-hand the adventurous life story of St Patrick. Actors re-enacted the tale from Patrick's capture by Irish pirates to his return to serve the people of Ireland. The role of Patrick was admirably played by Ross Jonas of Play It By Ear, a Christian Drama group. Ross and the other actors, who included members of the Children's Council, had the children quite enthralled!

First to experience Patrick's adventures were pupils from eight inner city primary schools who all visited on the Wednesday and Thursday. They followed the interactive story trail and learned more about the life of Patrick through a workshop hosted by an education officer from the St Patrick's Centre in Downpatrick. They also tried their hand at crafts helped by a local artist.

The event was open from 12pm–4pm on the Friday and Saturday with a full programme of performances running alongside the interactive exhibition. These included Irish dancers, 'Mr and Mrs Leprechaun,' circus walkabout acts and an Irish harpist. Children were able to take part in creative workshops hosted by Jumping Clay and Doodlebugs and to re-enact battle scenes with Ardglass Vikings.

A huge Viking Longboat was parked up outside St Anne's and certainly caught the attention of visitors young and not-so-young.

St Patrick's Mysterious Adventure concluded with a St Patrick's themed all-age service on Sunday March 19.

Jill Hamilton said: "In hosting this event, our aim was to give visitors the opportunity to reconnect with the life story of St Patrick, discover more

about him and be inspired by his faith and faithfulness to God.

“The event informed and educated visitors in an enjoyable and entertaining way about Ireland’s Patron Saint and encouraged people to come into St Anne’s Cathedral and experience something of the culture and early Christian faith as it dawned in Ireland.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, paid tribute to Jill, Karen and their entire team for organising what he described as an ‘amazing event.’

“There was an enormous amount of work put into this and the team achieved all its goals and more,” Bishop Alan said. “The volume of people who passed through St Anne’s to view the exhibition over the five days was fantastic. Well done to everyone.”

Churches claiming from RHI scheme

Recently published lists in the News Letter show:

- Two Presbyterian churches are claiming – Dundrod (£14,421) and Edengrove (£9,490);



- One Free Presbyterian church, Hebron in Ballymoney, installed two boilers – one in March 2015 and a second in October – bringing in a combined total of almost £60,000;
- Several Church of Ireland churches are listed – Hillsborough Parish Church (two boilers bringing in a total of almost £40,000), Ballinderry Parish Church Hall (£7,128) and Brantry Church (£15,291).

Former Queen's Chaplain quits 'liberal' C of E

A former Queen's chaplain has quit as a Church of England priest after a long-running objection to what he saw as the liberalising trend of the CofE.

Canon Gavin Ashenden made the unusual move of resigning his orders on Friday last leaving more than 35 years of ordained ministry.

An ardent conservative on both sexuality and women priests, Rev Ashenden confirmed to Christian Today he had signed the 'deed of relinquishment' under the Clerical Disabilities Act 1870. This starts a six-month interim period before he officially leaves the Church.

He declined to comment on the move until his six-month waiting time is up.

It comes after the long-standing critic of the Church left his post as Queen's chaplain in January following a row over a Quran reading in Glasgow Cathedral. The Shropshire-based priest criticised the decision by Rev Kelvin Holdsworth, Provost of St Mary's Cathedral, for inviting a reading from the Islamic holy book at the Epiphany service on January 6.

'After a conversation instigated by officials at Buckingham Palace, I decided the most honourable course of action was to resign,' he said at the time pointing to a 'a very important convention that the Queen should not be drawn into public affairs where she is deemed to be taking a position'.



His decision to leave ministry in the Church could lead others to follow suit. A number of conservative Anglicans have voiced their concern about the Archbishop of Canterbury's call for a 'radical, new Christian inclusion' after a report maintaining a largely conservative stance on sexuality was rejected by the CofE's ruling general synod.

'There is no sign the Church of England is going to reconsider its policy of accommodation with the secular culture,' Ashenden said in a previous interview with Christian Today.

'It has abandoned certain key and apostolic norms,' he added, warning the CofE would collapse within decades because of its refusal to adhere to conservative Christianity.

He contrasted the year-on-year decline in England with the rapidly growing churches in Russia and China and said the difference was they had 'not made an accommodation with the culture'.

He said in the January interview: 'There are two kinds of Anglicanism. A secular Anglicanism and a traditional biblical Anglicanism.'

'I see myself and others as very soon having to make a choice.'

He described himself as 'in limbo' between the CofE and other Anglican churches around the world.

'I certainly look at worldwide Anglicanism and I associate myself with some parts of the Anglican church that have kept the biblical faith. And I

increasingly disassociate myself with parts like the Church of England.'

Jeffrey John calls out hypocrisy amongst bishops

Jeffrey John, a priest in the Church of England and the Dean of St Albans; who lives honestly and openly as a gay man in a civil partnership has once again been excluded from becoming a bishop, and not on the merits of his candidacy but only because he is open about his true self. We've been here before, when Johns was first mentioned as a possible candidate for Bishop of Southwark back in 2012, [a position he was denied](#) because of his orientation even though Johns claims that he is celibate within his relationship, and even though then Archbishop Williams claimed that it was [homosexual practice and not orientation](#) that was prohibitive.

John's name was again mentioned in connection to the appointment of the next bishop of [Llandaff](#) in Wales. Once again despite widespread support of his candidacy, the college of bishops has again denied the possibility based solely on John's sexuality in spite of claims that orientation alone is no barrier to ministry within

the Church of England. John's candidacy was scuttled because the church's leadership would rather not avoid unwelcome publicity rather than live up to their claimed ideals and values.

Below is the text of a letter sent by Johns to the [Bishop of Swansea and Brecon, John Davies](#)

18th March 2017

To the Bishop of Swansea and Brecon

Dear Bishop John

Election/Appointment of a Bishop of Llandaff

Thank you for your letter. I do not intend to treat it as private and confidential, nor is this reply private and confidential.

I have repeatedly found that in these matters bishops and other ecclesiastical authorities routinely abuse confidentiality as a cloak for injustice and deception. I admire those who have breached the confidentiality of the Electoral College because they saw that the oath of confidentiality was being abused in precisely that way. In face of the kind of threats that you make in your letter, they are the ones who have acted with courage and principle.



Dr. Jeffrey John at St Albans Cathedral, where he is currently Dean.

I am aware that you began proceedings at the Electoral College with a statement that neither homosexuality nor a civil partnership were a bar to any candidate's eligibility. What followed however proves the statement hypocritical and untrue.

In the course of discussion a number of homophobic remarks were made and were left unchecked and unreprimanded by the chair. Much more importantly, the only arguments adduced against my appointment – in particular by two of the bishops – were directly related to my homosexuality and/or civil partnership – namely that my appointment would bring unwelcome and unsettling publicity to the diocese, and that it might create difficulties for the future Archbishop in relation to the Anglican Communion.

In a telephone call on the evening of March 3rd one of the bishops present confirmed to me that these were the only objections adduced, and explained that the bishops were ‘just too exhausted’ to deal with the problems they believed my appointment would cause. I put it to you that this is not a moral or legal basis on which to exclude me.

The injustice of the arguments about publicity and the Anglican Communion was pointed out to you several times in the college by the Llandaff electors and by others. This is precisely the way that anti-gay discrimination always works. You were also reminded that I am in a celibate relationship. My situation is exactly similar to that of the Bishop of Grantham, which was

recently defended by the Secretary-General of the ACC, Archbishop Idowu-Fearon, as being entirely compatible with the regulations of any Anglican province.

From very early on in the proceedings of the college the Llandaff electors were unanimous in my support, and they have remained so since then. Bizarrely, you and the other bishops have taken no account of this unanimity, nor the long and painstaking research the Llandaff electors did before coming up with my name. To ride roughshod of the very clearly expressed, unanimous view of a diocese in this way is extraordinary, unprecedented and foolish.

After the stalemate in the college you announced that soundings would be taken across all the Welsh dioceses and beyond. In response very many people – we suspect hundreds from the diocese of Llandaff and beyond – wrote to support my candidature, because they assumed that I was still a candidate. The Llandaff electors remained firm, and their support was reinforced across the diocese.

Nevertheless, at your meeting last week you decided, arbitrarily, to ignore the submissions that you had asked for, and to declare that those who were discussed at the Electoral College were now, in fact, no longer to be considered.

This is a clear and ludicrous breach of process, and a further insult to the people of the diocese, and very many others who took the trouble to contribute their view.

I trust there will now be an open and honest examination of this process in the light of day, and that you will not attempt to appoint a bishop for Llandaff until it is complete.

Yours sincerely
Jeffrey John

Copies to: the Bishops of Bangor; St Asaph;
Monmouth; St Davids

GET CNI HEADLINES EACH DAY
on Twitter or Facebook
Click on logo at CNI Home page
www.churchnewsireland.org

+ Please share CNI with your friends
www.churchnewsireland.org