

Catholic church in Down and Connor diocese has assets worth £140m



Bishop Noel Treanor earlier this year officiating at the ordination of Rev Manuelltto Milo at St Peter's Cathedral, the first non-national to be ordained for an Irish diocese.

Down and Connor Catholic diocese had an income last year of close to £25m - with almost half coming from donations such as offertory collections.

Down and Connor diocese also had assets worth almost £140m including more than £20m of cash in the bank, but its expenditure reached nearly £29m.

The finances are revealed in newly published records submitted to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

It is the first time a Catholic Church diocese has had its funds made public through the north's charity regulator.

The watchdog was created in 2009 and since 2013 has been gradually calling forward groups and organisations to formally register for charitable status.

Once registered, charities are required to provide annual accounts for publication online.

The process is aimed at encouraging transparency and giving the public confidence over how their donations are used. It is estimated there are between 7,000 and 12,000 charities operating in Northern Ireland.

According to the Charity Commission website, nearly 2,000 registered charities have so far provided up-to-date accounts. Of these, only 68 have an income above £1m.

Registered as the Down And Connor Diocesan Trust, the 2016 accounts show the diocese had £138.9m of total assets less current liabilities and parish loan accounts. This included almost £20.7m of cash in hand and in the bank.

Our Lady's Care Home in west Belfast, which the diocese has since sold, and Glenmona Resource Centre on the Glen Road, which it no longer manages, are included in the figures for 2016.

The long-term assets include more than £80m worth of land and property, including church property and contents.

Its income fell from around £26.8m in 2015 to £24.7m last year.

This included parishes receiving around £12.2m last year in Sunday offertory and other donations.0

Expenditure increased slightly from almost £28m to around £28.8m in 2016.

The diocese had an average of 459 employees during the year. One employee was paid a salary within the band £110,000 to £119,999 while another received between £70,000 and £79,999.

Neither employee is a member of the clergy.

Pay and expenses for clergy in the diocese totalled £243,000.

It is understood that a curate's annual salary is £15,000, rising to £16,200 for a parish priest while a bishop earns £19,500.

According to the report, around one in five Catholics in the diocese attend weekend Masses.

It says there are around 325,000 Catholics in the diocese, which consists of 87 parishes. In 2014, the most recent statistics available, the average number attending weekend Masses was 72,818.

The report details the various activities the diocese is involved in, including faith development and bereavement support.

A Down and Connor diocese spokesman said: "The annual accounts demonstrate how resources are being used to ensure that the Church in Down and Connor fulfils its sacred

mission of spreading the gospel and ministering to the people of God throughout the diocese and the wider civic community.

"It reflects the dedicated efforts of priests, religious and faithful who through their pastoral care and charitable initiatives serve those entrusted to them."

The spokesman said it was "essential and prudent that careful management of financial resources is continually exercised so as to ensure that the church's mission will continue to flourish into the future".

He added: "The diocese acknowledges and commends the hard work of so many professionals and volunteers throughout the diocese who have given of their time, skills and experience.

"In particular, the diocese thanks the members of the trustee board and all involved at parish and curial level for their ongoing and dedicated commitment to the life and mission of the Church in Down and Connor."

CNI

Council insists Catholic Church aware of planning application for a Enniskillen memorial

Fermanagh Council on Thursday night insisted that the Catholic Church was aware of plans for a monument to the victims of the Enniskillen bomb atrocity to be placed on its land.

A council spokesman said the church had been "served notice" of the plans in January 2017 and later "re-notified" following a change to the proposed location of the memorial.

The claim however was disputed by church authorities who insist they were only approached in recent weeks.

The monument to the 12 victims of the 1987 IRA atrocity was unveiled on Wednesday at a service to mark the 30th anniversary of the bombing.

However, within hours, it was wheeled away and placed onto a lorry to be taken into storage as St Michael's Diocesan Trust has not given its permission for the monument to be placed on its land.

The trust yesterday said it had only recently received documentation requesting the

placement of the memorial on its land beside the Clinton Centre in Enniskillen.

"In the context of the present memorial which was unveiled yesterday (Wednesday), it is important to note that St Michael's Diocesan Trust received initial documentation from the Ely Centre in late September 2017 requesting that the memorial be placed at the entrance to the Clinton Centre, which is located on property owned by the Diocesan Trust.

"The Trust wishes to place on record that, as owner of the property concerned, it was not consulted by the council in relation to the granting of planning permission.

"Nonetheless, the Trust is in the process of giving due and careful consideration to all aspects of the request and has yet to come to any decision."

Those behind the memorial project, the Ely Trust, had originally applied for the memorial to be located at a gable wall on the site of the bombing.

But after the application was turned down by planners, permission for the monument to be placed beside the Clinton Centre was granted in July.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council last night said the church and the Clinton Centre were made aware of the proposal in January.

"The applicant has indicated on the planning application form that he has served notice on three parties on the 9 January 2017. One of these is St Michaels Diocesan Trust," a spokesman said.

"The council also notifies neighbours who are on occupied land which directly adjoins the site or which would adjoin it but for an entry or a road less than 20 metres in width.

"Neighbour notification was served on a number of properties including the Clinton Centre."

He added that the "amended siting was re-advertised in the local press and neighbours, including the Clinton centre, were re-notified".

Stephen Gault, whose father was killed in the bombing, said uncertainty over where the memorial will be located has been hurtful.

"It was a disgrace and added to the stress of what was already an emotional day," he said.

"Planning permission was granted six months ago with no objections made and all of a

sudden, just weeks before the anniversary, we came up against this final hurdle and the memorial couldn't stay."

The Ely Centre said planning protocol in regard to the application was followed with "public notification via local newspapers and also neighbourhood notification" and "third parties/ stakeholders were given time to view and comment on the application".

"The families have worked tirelessly to resolve this issue, we encourage the landowner to reach a decision swiftly to ensure that the families suffer no more during this exceptionally emotive time," a spokesman said.

Open door Advent recital in Killough Church

After the success of their inaugural event in December 2016, St Anne's, Killough in the Lecale Area Mission Partnership (LAMP) will be hosting an Advent Recital on Friday 1 December.

Soprano, Clara Wilson, will be performing seasonal sacred music and sharing some personal stories. Clara sings in Shankill Parish, Lurgan and has been part of the Worship Team over the years at Down & Dromore Diocesan

Events such as ordinations and Bishop's Bible Week. Alongside the music will be readings and poetry to fit the evening.

Revd Adrian Dorrian, part of the LAMP team, and minister with responsibility for Killough, said that these recitals were a wonderful opportunity to open the Church to the whole community:

“Ours is a small congregation in Killough, but the whole village shares ownership of our lovely church. We are always encouraged by our friends and neighbours from different traditions. As well as hosting this recital, St Anne's will also be the venue for this year's Cross Community Carol Service in the village. Clara has a stunning voice, and the music she will present will be a source of reflection, beauty and joy as we prepare to enter Advent. It is also a real pleasure for us to be able to offer this free event for the people of the LAMP Churches and for the whole Killough Community. We look forward to seeing many people there.”

The recital takes place in St Anne's, Killough on Friday 1 December at 8.00 pm.

Bishop John Kirby leads pastoral mission to USA to meet with Irish emigrants

Bishop John Kirby, the chair of the Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants, is in the United States of America for a twelve-day visit to meet with Irish emigrants, prisoners and their representatives in Boston and in San Francisco. Bishop Kirby is accompanied by the bishops' emigrant officer, Mr Brian Hanley.

Bishop Kirby will visit the site of the Berkeley balcony collapse to bless trees planted by President Higgins in memory of the young people who died and were injured

The purpose of the visit is to underpin the relevance of this Church outreach as a key support to the lived experience of Irish emigrants of different generations and backgrounds, as well as to recognise the Trojan work of the staff and volunteers of the Irish Apostolate USA.

The Irish Apostolate USA is the joint response of the Irish and United States Catholic Bishops to the needs of Irish immigrants in the United States. There are six member centres of the

Irish Apostolate, as well as a Presentation Sister working with Aisling Irish Community Center in New York, who works specifically with the bishops' Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas. 2017 marks the 30th year of service to Irish emigrants of the Boston centre, and the 20th year of service of the San Francisco centre.

The centres and their chaplains work closely with the Irish embassies and consulates across the United States, and Bishop Kirby will be meeting with the ambassador and two of the Consulates General during the visit.

Hallelujah! C of E Cathedrals celebrate best Christmas yet

Cathedrals recorded their best Christmas attendance to date last year, new Church of England figures show.

Statistics show that 131,000 people attended services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, compared with 125,000 the year before.

Senior figures suggested that the traditional music and buildings were attracting an ever-younger crowd who did not normally attend church. The number of people attending during



Advent also rose, from 624,000 two years ago to 635,000 in 2016. Overall Sunday attendance had also increased, from 17,900 in 2015 to 18,700, though midweek attendance had fallen from 19,100 to 18,200 each week.

Meanwhile, separate research published last month shows that the church now reaches more people on social media than in its services. Around 1.1 million people attend services at least once a month, while the church believes 1.2million people engage with its posts on sites including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Interest in events such as choral evensong has pushed up cathedral attendance in recent years, as young people in cities rediscover the traditional evening worship events held at flagship cathedrals including St Paul's.

The number of children attending educational events in cathedrals has also increased by 10 per cent to 310,000 since 2016. The figures will come as a welcome boost to the Church, which saw tourist numbers drop by 8 per cent across the country between 2015 and 2016. The decline in visitors, which contrasted with a 2 per cent rise at other UK tourist attractions, was blamed on entry fees and the heightened threat of terrorism.

Andrew Nunn, the Dean of Southwark Cathedral, said he believed Londoners were more likely to go to cathedrals because they had high standards for entertainment.

He said the cathedral's carol services had been particularly popular and the age profile was "getting younger".

"It's an easy way into Christmas," he said. "It's not like going to Holy Communion, which requires participation – you can participate in your own way.

"It's a good experience, it's excellent music, beautiful surroundings, familiarity of tunes, people around them, everyone singing along."

The figures also showed that the total number of choirs was the highest since 2013, at 990.

However, the number of visitors to cathedrals fell from 9.53million to 9.03million.

Press Watch: Personal memories 30 years on from the Poppy Day bomb

Former BBC journalist Charlie Warmington writes The Roamer column in the News Letter each week. This article was published on the anniversary of the bombing this week:

I don't remember if there'd been an overnight downpour but this morning, 30 years ago, I used some discarded bricks as stepping stones to get into my car which was parked in a deep puddle in Belfast. The makeshift causeway wasn't particularly successful and my shoe squelched as I accelerated towards Enniskillen.

I was a Radio Ulster news and current affairs journalist going back to the town where I was born immediately after the first tragic details filtered into the newsroom about the 1987 Remembrance Sunday bomb.

My mother still lived there and as there were no car phones back then I phoned her before leaving.



She hadn't attended the cenotaph but local friends told her about the people who were known to have died and she wept while telling me their names. Mum was an Austrian refugee whose Jewish father had died in Hitler's holocaust. She watched, terrified, as lines of Nazi supporters invaded Vienna's Jewish-quarter during Kristallnacht on 9th and 10th November 1938

She both shared, and deeply empathised with, Enniskillen's grief and tragedy. I knew most of the local people who she named on the phone, her voice spraining with emotion.

Constantly retuning my car radio for newsflashes I drove quickly and soon rendezvoused with

several BBC colleagues already in Enniskillen. We separated to various agreed locations.

I wasn't a hugely experienced news-journalist and my professional apprehension expanded into numbness as countless childhood memories mixed overwhelmingly with the dawning reality of terrible tragedy.

The qualifying exam, also known as the eleven plus, was probably my most intimidating childhood experience, sitting nervously at a desk in 1960 perusing menacing examination papers.

I stood in the darkening, drizzly dusk on Sunday evening, 8th November 1987 near the tall arc-lights around the cenotaph. Security men and forensic teams were sifting the rubble amidst the drone and rumble of heavy machinery. The acrid smell of petrol fumes and scorched wood hung in the air. Much of the deep-strewn masonry, heaped roof-slates and dislocated rafters had erupted mercilessly from the same building wherein I "sat the qualifying". The Remembrance Day bomb exploded in the rooms where myself and several dozen little classmates hoped for the best in 1960.

There wasn't any hope in my mind in 1987 as I walked up the main street towards Enniskillen's town centre. Only hopelessness...and grieving.

All the town's telephone kiosks were occupied, some with a queue of sombre people waiting to make calls. The awful news was spreading.

I knew that a number of the dead were from the Presbyterian Church where I paused and listened to a mourning congregation, softly singing hymns and saying prayers. As a youngster in the junior Boys Brigade (the Life Boys) I attended the hall at the rear of the Presbyterian church every week where we played games, sang hymns, prayed prayers and tried to live up to our motto - 'Sure and Steadfast'. The motto offered me little comfort in 1987.

Almost next door to the church, upstairs in the Impartial Reporter building, the windows were open, allowing fresh air into a newspaper office packed with the sudden influx of journalists. From the footpath below I could see their rolled-up shirt sleeves and recognised the faces of more than a few hacks from the nationals. The staccato clacking of their typewriters – heartrending headlines, hastily compiled obituaries, eyewitness accounts of death and

devastation – contrasted harshly with mournful singing from the church.

A nearby alley once offered access to the river where I'd often paddled my little boat and caught perch under the bridge at the cenotaph. I'd regularly roller-skated along the footpath and in later years walked there with my first girlfriend.

As an excited child with my first camera I photographed the cenotaph parade in 1958, where Johnny Megaw died in 1987. I remembered Johnny pushing his rickety old bicycle through the town, dressed in oversized, paint-splattered dungarees, his bicycle handlebars dangling with buckets of paint – on his way to decorate someone's house. I remembered his ad-hoc choir, singing hymns in hospital wards.

I played my trumpet in the same school concert where little Marie Wilson played her violin.

I bought chemicals for my childhood chemistry set in Mullan's pharmacy. "What does he want that for?" proprietor William Mullan asked one of his shop assistants after I'd requested another ounce of potassium permanganate. I wanted it because it was beautifully bright-blue! William and his wife Agnes died in the explosion.

Wesley and Bertha Armstrong attended the same church as I did when I was a lad and holidayed in the Sligo hotel where I worked during the summer of 1968. Mr and Mrs Armstrong both died at the cenotaph.

Kit (Kitchener) Johnston was one of the hospital's ambulance drivers where my father was a doctor. Mr Johnston and his wife Jessie, a former nurse, died at the cenotaph. So did former Second World War nurse Georgina Quinton whose son was my school chum.

Those I didn't know of the 11 who died were Samuel Gault and Edward Armstrong.

The bomb's 12th fatality, Ronnie Hill, died after spending 13 years in a coma. Today, as Enniskillen commemorates the saddest day in its uniquely distinctive history – remembering its fallen, at the cenotaph and on the cenotaph – I silently remember the folk I was privileged to know, and their loved ones, with Wordsworth's "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears".

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