

A first as Joint C of I and Methodist minister is appointed to Edgeworthstown and Longford



This Sunday, 9th July, the Revd Christiaan Snell will be welcomed as the new Minister-in-Charge of the Edgeworthstown Group of Parishes in Co. Longford. The service will take place at 4pm in St John's, Edgeworthstown.

Christiaan will also be taking up a position in the Methodist Church in Longford and Drumshambo.

He will be welcomed by the Methodist Church at a service at 12pm in Longford Methodist Church.

Kilmore, Elphin and Armagh dioceses states, “This is the first time that such an appointment has been made since the covenant between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland reached agreement on the interchangeability of ministries.

“It is visible evidence of the openness, acceptance and appreciation of each other’s gifts, ministry and worship that exist between the two traditions”.

Christiaan moves to Longford with his wife Karen and children Zoe, Daniel and Joshua.

WCC hails Wittenberg declaration aiming to overcome Reformation divisions

The World Council of Churches has welcomed the signing of two ecumenical statements by the World Communion of Reformed Churches in which it seeks to overcome divisions of the past and to work with other Christian communions for



unity and common witness, reports Stephen Brown, Editor for the Ecumenical Review at the WCC.

“Today is a historic day,” said Jerry Pillay, president of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) at the beginning of the ceremony on 5 July in Wittenberg, where Martin Luther once lived and worked.

At the ceremony, the WCRC formally associated itself with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, originally signed in 1999 by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Roman Catholic Church. The World Methodist Council (WMC) affirmed the declaration in 2006.



The WCRC also signed a “Wittenberg Witness” with the LWF pledging to strengthen cooperation and joint action.

“These declarations are two concrete expressions of the pursuit of full communion and common witness to the world, which is the will of Christ for all Christians,” said the Rev. Dr Mary-Anne Plaatjies van Huffel, the WCC president for Africa, following the signing of the two documents at the service in Wittenberg’s Stadtkirche (Town Church). Orthodox and Mennonite representatives offered their support.

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification stated that mutual condemnations pronounced by Lutherans and Catholics during



the Reformation do not apply to their current teaching on justification.

“Catholics and Lutherans stated that a ‘consensus in basic truths exists between Lutherans and Catholics’ in regard to the theological controversy with was a major cause of the split in the Western church in the 16th century,” said Bishop Brian Farrell, secretary of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity during in the ceremony.

The Wittenberg Witness builds on decades of theological dialogue and on steps taken by LWF and WCRC member churches around the world. It expresses the common call of churches to witness in the world.

The congregation at Wittenberg's *Stadtkirche* (Town Church), broke into spontaneous applause as Reformed, Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist representatives signed a statement confirming the WCRC association's with the joint declaration.

"Today we are not only signing a statement, we are building a church together," said the Rev. Najla Kassab from Lebanon in her sermon at the service in the *Stadtkirche*, where Luther used to preach.

The ceremony took place in the year marking the 500th anniversary of Luther's denunciation of church corruption in his 95 Theses, an event that helped set in motion the Reformation and centuries of division between Protestants and Catholics.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and Pope Francis sent messages of encouragement to the ceremony.

At the service there were prayers of repentance and lamentation for past divisions and wrongs, and commitments to work for unity and justice.

"We commit ourselves to redouble our common efforts to embody our unity, together resisting

the forces of injustice and exclusion,” said Rev. Dr Martin Junge, LWF general secretary.

The ceremony in Wittenberg took place during the WCRC General Council which has brought about 1000 participants to the eastern German city of Leipzig.

The WCRC groups more than 225 Protestant churches with a combined membership of about 80 million Christians in Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting and Waldensian churches in over 100 countries. Its offices are in Hannover, Germany.

Battle of Britain chapel saved from closure

A WW2 memorial chapel to the aircrew that died protecting Britain's shores from German attack has been saved from closure thanks to a £2m Heritage Lottery grant.

Stuart Hopley, head of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said to the Express: "It will provide a suitable memorial to the actions of 'The Few'."

Last year budget cuts saw the Ministry of Defence (MoD) withdraw its £50,000 annual



funding for St George's RAF Chapel of Remembrance at Biggin Hill, Kent. The MoD said its running cost was no longer an "appropriate use of defence resources".

An e-petition on the Government website attracted more than 30,000 signatures calling for the chapel to be saved.

Martin Mitchener, who began the petition said: "If no one or group takes on the responsibility of this magnificent Memorial Chapel, it will be closed without access to the public or church services."

Winston Churchill had said the chapel should be a permanent shrine to 'the few' who gave their lives during the Battle of Britain. Their names are inscribed in the chapel.

With the former Prime Minister's support, the Grade II-listed building was built in 1951 next to the Spitfire station used to defend Britain from Luftwaffe attacks in 1940.

Part of the new funding will be spent on renovating the building while the rest will go towards funding an adjacent £5m Biggin Hill Memorial Museum.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols welcomes vulnerable refugee scheme extension

Cardinal Vincent Nichols has welcomed an announced by the UK Government that a programme to resettle vulnerable refugees is being expanded to include families from outside Syria.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd announced on Monday that non-Syrians across the Middle East and Africa who have fled conflict in Syria will now be eligible for the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS).

The Archbishop of Westminster said: "I am very pleased that Her Majesty's Government has



made this important extension to the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme with immediate effect."

Ms Rudd revealed the VPRS is on track to resettle 20,000 refugees by 2020. This is in addition to 3,000 vulnerable children from across the Middle East and North Africa set to benefit from a separate scheme by 2020.

Cardinal Nichols went on to say: "The devastating conflict in and around Syria has affected people of many different nationalities.

"That is why the Catholic community has been calling for our resettlement programme to be made accessible to the most vulnerable refugees whatever their background."

The home secretary's announcement means families of mixed backgrounds are now eligible. Iraqi minorities who have fled violence in both Iraq and Syria may also qualify.

Ms Rudd said the conflict in Syria has caused "unparalleled suffering, destruction and disregard for human life" and driven thousands of refugees and migrants towards Europe.

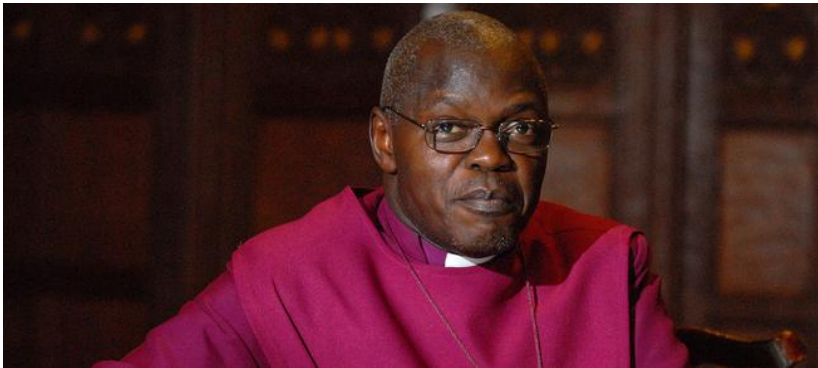
In a statement, she added: "Our approach is rightly based on targeting our support so that it delivers the most impact, helps those who need it the most, and avoids unintended consequences.

"This provides refugees with a more direct and safe route to the UK, rather than risking the hazardous journey to Europe which has tragically cost so many lives."

In response, the Refugee Council said: "With the number of refugees at a record high, we urge the Government to go further and commit to

resettling people from around the world, at least at current numbers, for as long as it is needed."

Archbishop of York's charity marks £1m given to those in need



The Archbishop of York's online charity has awarded £1m of grants to provide help for people living in poverty in the UK since it began in 2009.

Acts 435 - a self-sustaining charity funded in entirely by Gift Aid, guarantees that 100 per cent of donor funds go directly to the people in need.

Executive director Jenny Herrera expressed his gratitude to people who had donated to the cause and said: "This is person-to-person giving where every donation matters. Whether £5 or



£50, this is making a big difference in people's lives.

"Help us to help others."

The site shares numerous stories of people who have benefited from the scheme. A family in Suffolk who were homeless and placed in temporary accommodation with their baby twins had no facility for storing or heating baby food. Acts 435 stepped in with a £75 grant for a mini fridge and a £55 grant for a microwave.

The charity - whose name is based on the biblical scripture Acts 4:35 which says "And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" - puts people wanting to give in touch with people who are in need.

Once a local church or charity advocate meets with individuals to ascertain their need, they will

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post their requests on the website, allowing those wanting to give to raise money for the items.

Dr John Sentamu said: "It is a very simple idea but a very exciting one. I am proud that the Church is taking practical steps to help those facing practical difficulties."

Appointments to Chapter of Christ Church, Dublin

Two new appointments have been announced to the Chapter of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. The Revd Sonia Gyles has been appointed Twelfth Canon following the retirement of Canon Neil McEndoo. Canon Roy Byrne has been appointed to the position of Precentor, also in succession to Canon McEndoo.

The Revd Sonia Gyles is Rector of Sandford and St Philip's, Milltown, while Canon Byrne is Rector of Monkstown and has been a Canon of Christ Church Cathedral since 2012.

Announcing the appointment of the Twelfth Canon, Archbishop Michael Jackson said: "I am very pleased that the Revd Sonia Gyles has accepted my invitation to be a Canon of Christ

Church Cathedral. Sonia has served all her ministry in Dublin and Glendalough and for many years has been involved in the annual National Schools' Service and in the Clergy Conference both of which cover the whole of the United Dioceses. I wish Sonia and the cathedral well as they form a new partnership through Sonia's joining the Chapter".

Dean Dermot Dunne also commented on the appointment saying: "I was happy to agree with the Archbishop's choice of a new Canon for the cathedral when he invited the Revd Sonia Gyles to accept preferment to the Twelfth Canonry. Sonia will bring much experience and talent to the Chapter which I and the Chapter look forward to sharing. I wish Sonia every blessing in her role and every good wish for her forthcoming marriage".

The Revd Sonia Gyles said she was very happy to accept the Archbishop's invitation to join the Chapter of Christ Church Cathedral. "Having been an Acolyte in the cathedral many years ago, I was then ordained in Christ Church in 2001 by the Most Revd Walton Empey. I look forward to becoming more involved in the life of the cathedral once again. I would like to acknowledge the support of the parishioners of

Sandford and St Philip's Milltown with whom I share this appointment," she said.

Dean Dunne also commented on the appointment of Canon Byrne as Precentor. "I am very pleased with Canon Byrne's appointment as Precentor of the cathedral. Roy brings much experience to the role. This coupled with a deep attachment and commitment to the cathedral will serve him well when he takes up his new responsibilities. I wish him well in his new post," he stated.

Canon Byrne said he was delighted to accept the nomination of the cathedral Chapter to serve as Canon Precentor of Christ Church. "Having been involved with the cathedral since my ordination in 1999. I am looking forward to serving the cathedral community and choir in the years ahead in this new role, conscious of the enormous contribution made by my predecessor Canon Neil McEndoo," he said.

The Revd Sonia Gyles was ordained to service in Taney Parish as curate assistant to Canon Desmond Sinnamon. She was appointed Rector of Sandford and St Philip's Milltown in 2004, where she is also Chaplain to Alexandra College. Sonia has served on Diocesan committees including the Diocesan Board of Education, the

Diocesan Council for Mission and the Diocesan Committee for Social Action and continues to be a member of Diocesan Councils.

A native of Co Offaly, Sonia entered the Church of Ireland Theological College (now Institute) in 1999. She later qualified as a Counsellor/ Psychotherapist in 2012. Sonia is due to be married in October this year.

Canon Roy Byrne was ordained in 1999 for the curacy of the Christ Church Cathedral Group of Parishes which included work in the cathedral itself. In 2003, he moved to the diocese of Leighlin to take up the incumbency of the Killeshin grouped parishes but returned to Dublin in 2007 becoming incumbent of Drumcondra and North Strand. He moved to become Rector of Monkstown in February 2016.

He was appointed a Canon of Christ Church Cathedral in 2012 and a board member in 2014. He has been involved with the cathedral's library and archives committee with special responsibility for the cathedral's extensive plate collection for many years and has curated a number of historical exhibitions during his time

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