

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – New Dean in Tuam

Image of the day

New Dean in Tuam

The new Dean of Tuam, the Very Revd Diane Matchett has nit the ground running and has already been interviewed on Galway Bay FM Keith Finnegan.

Pictured on front page - from the historic Institution and Installation service

L to R - The Revd Canon Paul Hoey, the Right Revd Michael Burrows, and the Very Revd Diane Matchett

People and places

Thanks for Big Breakfast morning at Mullavilly Parish Church

“The Big Breakfast at Mullavilly Parish Church was enjoyed by everyone.

“A fantastic amount was received in donations (£590) towards the Organ Appeal - (Thank you, another key). Thanks also to all who helped, provided items, cooked, served, set-up or washed up. It was greatly appreciated.

“Also the Parish ‘officially’ handed over the Cheque to Air Ambulance Northern Ireland for half the money raised at the

January 16, 2024

'Rectors Sit-Out' in early December - Thank you Shelia Sinton for coming along and joining us this morning. And many thanks to, to Claire Holmes from Sams Ireland - who was our speaker and encouraged and challenged us in mission".



CMSI at St Patrick's Ballymena

Deirdre, Mark & Ben Zimmerman of CMSI were the special guests of St Patrick's Ballymena last Sunday as they shared about their lifetime of service in Nepal.

January 16, 2024

Around 50 people stayed on for a soup, bread and cheese lunch followed by a PowerPoint presentation about Nepal.



Confirmation at Kilbride

The Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor, visited Kilbride Parish Church on Sunday for a Service of Confirmation. The four candidates are pictured with Bishop George and the Rev John McClure. Photo: David Holmes.

Scouts St. George's Day Awards 2024

North West Belfast District Chairman, William Humphrey MBE and District Treasurer, Mary Morrison

January 16, 2024

have both been recognised by the Chief Scout in this years St. George's Day awards.



Both William and Mary have been awarded the Bar to the Silver Acorn, the second highest award an adult leader can be awarded.

William has been a member of the District team for over 30 years. William began his Scouting career with the 20th troop before serving as Deputy DC, District Commissioner, President, and most recently District Chairman, William also serves as Chairman of Crawfordsburn Scout Centre. This award is further recognition of William's commitment to Scouting in North West Belfast and across Northern Ireland.

Mary, has also served in the district team for over 30 years. Serving as Deputy DC, ADC Scout Active Support. Mary, for nearly 40 years was dedicated to the 48th Beaver Colony until she stood down a few years ago. She continues to play a very active role in North West Belfast as their Treasurer.

Education: Gratitude in challenging times - Presbyterian Church Ireland

Following a meeting of the Presbyterian Church’s State Education Committee, its first of 2024, Acting Convener, Karen Jardine, expressed ‘sincere gratitude’ to teachers, and all those engaged in educating and nurturing children and young people in schools across the island of Ireland.

She also expressed the Committee’s astonishment at the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland’s ‘pic-and-mix’ approach to devolution, where making changes to the school curriculum with regards to Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) had taken ‘precedence over more pressing issues like resolving school funding, or delivering long-term solutions to educational underachievement.’

Speaking after the Committee’s first meeting of the year, Miss Jardine said, “As a new academic term begins the Presbyterian Church in Ireland would like to express again its sincere gratitude to teachers, school leaders, governors, and all those involved in the education and nurturing of children and young people across the island of Ireland.

“The recent, and impending, industrial action by school staff in Northern Ireland highlights the very difficult circumstances that characterise the sector, including pressure on budgets, long-term impact of education-at-home during Covid lockdowns, and increasing demands on staff time and resources.”

Miss Jardine continued, “All of which makes the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland’s pick-and-mix approach to devolution even more astonishing, where making changes to the school curriculum, with regards to Relationship and Sexuality Education, has taken precedence over arguably more pressing issues, like resolving school funding, or delivering long-term solutions to educational underachievement.

“The State Education Committee, however, welcomes the Department of Education’s common sense approach to implementing legislation on the delivery of RSE in post-primary schools, imposed by the Secretary of State, on the basis of recommendations from the flawed UN CEDAW report,” she said.

“While we continue to regret the manner in which these changes relating to teaching on access to abortion have been introduced, it is encouraging that the Department of Education has listened to the 7 out of 10 respondents to its consultation, who said they did not want to see RSE taught in a morally neutral or value free environment. That both teachers and pupils will continue to be able to explore moral, ethical and spiritual issues during the delivery of RSE is to be welcomed.

“Such an approach is vital not only for the delivery of holistic and inclusive education in an age-appropriate way, but also for enabling students to explore the boundaries of healthy relationships. Indeed, we advocated this approach in PCI’s response to the Department’s consultation. It is a fallacy to

suggest that personal and sensitive matters, such as these, can be dealt with in a 'neutral' way.”

Miss Jardine said that the State Education Committee also welcomed the Department of Education's recognition of the importance of school ethos, alongside the vital role played by school governors in relation to setting policy on RSE. “While external providers can helpfully support schools in their delivery of the RSE curriculum, in its guidance the Department has recognised the autonomy that governors and principals continue to have over when, how, and who, is involved in curriculum delivery in this, and other areas.

“It is important that teachers and governors are equipped with adequate support and resources in respect of the legislative requirement to provide an opt-out for those parents that request it for their children, and in the delivery of RSE within the full flexibility provided for by the curriculum,” Miss Jardine said.

The Acting Convener also highlighted the crucial role that parents and guardians had with regards to the education of their children. “As a Church we continue to encourage all parents, carers and guardians to take an active interest in the education of their children, joining with those who professionally, often vocationally, have a role, in enabling children and young people to flourish,” she said.

<https://www.presbyterianireland.org/News/January-2024/Education-Gratitude-in-challenging-times.aspx>

Northern Ireland parents strongly reject idea of teaching about access to abortion in schools

Almost three out of four people who responded to a public consultation have rejected a proposal by the British government that would require schools in Northern Ireland, including Catholic schools, to teach students how to access an abortion, Michael Kelly writes in OSV News, Dublin

In November, Irish bishops warned that the plan would “impose abortion ideology” on faith-based schools in the region.

Though Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom, it has been largely self-governing since a 1998 Good Friday peace agreement brought an end to 30 years of sectarian violence and created a Protestant-Catholic power-sharing government.

However, that government has been suspended since February 2022 over political disagreements and decisions are now made by British ministers.

Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris has insisted that he will update the requirements for Relationship and Sexuality Education, or RSE, in the curriculum. Heaton-Harris claimed the regulations will make “age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering

prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion” a compulsory component of the curriculum for students.

The results of the consultation were published Jan. 5, and revealed a total of 13,461 responses.

The results show that 73 percent of respondents disagreed with the government’s RSE program. In total, 92 percent of respondents agreed that parents or advocates should always be informed about the specific nature and content of any RSE program. And 96 percent said parents and advocates should always have access to any school RSE policy or program for review.

In one of the first comments published in the report by the Department of Education, a parent/carer said, “I disagree that abortion options and prevention of early pregnancy should be explained to children.”

The person added, “This may encourage them to experiment with sex from a young age, removing their innocence, and show them that there is a ‘get out of jail free’ card if they were to fall pregnant. Abortion is the murder of a child and it should not be taught as an option.”

Director of the pro-life charity Precious Life, Bernadette Smyth, described the response to the consultation as “unprecedented.”

“This shows the strength of feeling from the people of Northern Ireland on this issue,” she told OSV News.

Smyth insisted that the British government “must end their complete disregard for democracy and devolution (to local politicians), and their total disrespect for the views of the people of Northern Ireland.”

“We demand Heaton-Harris and the government listen to the 73 percent majority in Northern Ireland, and remove this abortion-promoting RSE program from our schools,” she said.

In November, Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry warned that the “expectation that schools should become engaged in the delivery of an allegedly neutral curriculum which highlights access to abortion shows no understanding of the foundational principles of Catholic education.” Michael Kelly is editor of the Catholic Newspaper.

[\[https://catholicreview.org/northern-ireland-parents-strongly-reject-idea-of-teaching-about-access-to-abortion-in-schools/\]](https://catholicreview.org/northern-ireland-parents-strongly-reject-idea-of-teaching-about-access-to-abortion-in-schools/)

News

Bishop says brother's murder gave family 'chance of a new life'

The Bishop of Chelmsford has been speaking of how her brother's murder following the Iranian revolution led her family to flee to the UK when she was 14 years old.



The Bishop of Chelmsford (above) has been speaking of how her brother's murder following the Iranian revolution led her family to flee to the UK when she was 14 years old.

Rt Rev Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani's 24-year-old brother Bahram was murdered in Tehran in 1980. She said she regards his death as "a sacrifice" that led to her and her family having "the gift of a chance of a new life in this country."

Speaking to the BBC programme Desert Island Discs, Bishop Guli said she had found out about the news of his death purely by accident while at school:

"My mother was in Tehran at the time, and my brother was in Tehran as well, he was teaching at the university there.

January 16, 2024

"He had been killed on May 6. My eldest sister who was looking after me found out very late at night, after I had gone to bed. Because there was so much uncertainty around, she decided, and I completely understand it... to not say anything to me, and I don't know quite how she did it."

However, she found out about it from a classmate who had read the news.

"Two young men ambushed his car, got in," she said.

"An eyewitness later told us that they had a brief conversation, and then one of them pulled a gun and killed him.

"We've spent a lifetime coming to terms with it. In a sense, it was his sacrifice that brought us here. I don't think my mum and my sister and I would have left if we hadn't had a very good reason to.

"So he gave us the gift of a chance of a new life in this country."

Bishop Guli moved to the UK, where her father, the Anglican Bishop of Iran, was staying on a visit.

The 57 year old worked at the BBC before being ordained as a priest, becoming the first minority ethnic woman in the UK to be ordained as a bishop in 2017. She served as Bishop of Loughborough before being installed as Bishop of Chelmsford in 2021.

"It came from left field really," she said.

"And yet, in a very strange way, it made sense. I had the feeling that it was clearly not about what I had done, in terms of experience in the Church, it was about my life experiences, and what that might have to contribute now within the context of the Church of England.

"I feel like I represent something way beyond myself."

Among the songs she chose for the programme was Sinead O'Connor's Take Me To Church, which she said reminded her of her Irish husband, Lee who is a priest.

She added that she would take the 10th century Persian poem The Book of Kings with her onto the desert island, as well as her photograph albums.

In the media

Ireland's top two billionaires have more wealth than bottom half of population, report says - Journal.ie

Oxfam found that the richest 1% of people in Ireland hold 35.4% of the country's financial wealth.

Ireland's two richest billionaires now have more combined wealth than the bottom half of the country's population, a new report from Oxfam has found.

January 16, 2024

Oxfam's annual Inequality Report, which derives its calculations from the Forbes rich list, found that the richest 1% of people in Ireland hold 35.4% of the country's financial wealth.

Oxfam Ireland has called on the Government to introduce an "extreme wealth tax", which it says could generate up to €9.2 billion a year.

Bríd McGrath from Oxfam Ireland said that now is the time for states to reassert themselves, "including the Irish state".

"We are calling on the Government to properly tax wealth and close the loopholes for tax avoidance," she said.

McGrath said that she does not believe that "one cent" of taxpayers money should go to corporations "who abuse their dominant position, don't pay their workers a living wage, who refuse to reduce carbon emissions".

"Those companies should be outside the fold when it comes to grant aid, tax breaks and any other reliefs at budget time," she added.

Oxfam Ireland is also calling on the Government to be a "voice" for the Global South, by supporting UN work to clear targets on wealth inequality reduction, and by supporting a proposal the American economist Joseph Stiglitz that every nation should aim for a situation where the bottom 40% of the population have roughly the same income as the richest 10%, which is known as the Palma of 1.

More at -

[Church News Ireland](#)

[<https://www.thejournal.ie/irish-billionaires-list-6272085-Jan2024/>]

British Jews are under attack as never before - Jewish Leadership Council

100 days on from the October 7 pogrom, our community is showing that resilience trumps hate, Claudia Mendoza writes in the Daily Telegraph

As we watch the war in Israel and Gaza unfold on our TV screens every night, it can be easy to lose sight of how we got here. But for the Jewish community across Britain, the horror of October 7 – and the hatred it has unleashed here at home – remains at the forefront of our minds.

One hundred days ago, we saw the worst pogrom since the Second World War, as thousands of Hamas terrorists poured into Israel to slaughter, rape, maim and abduct civilians.

Hundreds of young people, who had gathered at the Re'im music festival to celebrate freedom and promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians, were murdered. At kibbutzim near the Gaza Strip, terrorists went door-to-door butchering innocents.

A hundred days may have passed, but more than 100 hostages remain in captivity or unaccounted for. Accounts I read of those who have returned, in particular women who endured sexual violence and psychological torture, will stay with me forever.

January 16, 2024

Within Israel and the wider Jewish community, there is always passionate political debate – as we saw last year in disputes over constitutional reform. Such debates are the hallmark of healthy democracies.

What should not be a matter for debate is whether Israel can let these crimes go unanswered. The state of Israel can and must defend itself. It can and must act to prevent such atrocities from happening again. And it is clearer than ever that many of those who deny Israel's right to self defence start from the premise that Israel has no right to exist at all.

The scenes from Gaza are desperate and heartbreaking. I despair at the scale of suffering and loss of life. We must be clear where responsibility lies. Such is Hamas's disregard for Palestinian lives that they had no hesitation in digging their tunnels, storing their weapons and planning their attacks under schools and hospitals.

Understandably, much of the focus now is on what happens next in Gaza and the implications for the region.

The affinity with Israel among British Jews runs deep – this is unsurprising when you realise that 70 per cent of the community have family members currently living in Israel. An even higher proportion will have other friends and connections in Israel. So the events of October 7 and since feel very close to home.

Many British Jews will also be reflecting on the new reality they are experiencing every day. It pains me to say this in 2024 – but I have never seen British Jewry more under attack or witnessed a more hostile environment. The

January 16, 2024

Community Security Trust (CST), which seeks to secure safety for the UK Jewish community, has collected figures on anti-Semitism for 40 years. Its records were shattered in the weeks following October 7, with anti-Semitic incidents up more than 500 per cent on the year before.

This has understandably generated fear in our community – and frustration as those who have taken to the streets calling for violence against Jews go unpunished. Jews know all too well how offensive language can soon turn into physical violence. Just ask the Jewish pupil assaulted outside his school earlier this month by attackers who tried to force him to say “Free Palestine”.

Despite this, there is cause for hope – and an overwhelming feeling of pride in the resilience we have shown. The community has come together as never before, determined to get through this together.

We have collectively taken important steps to protect ourselves, thanks to the work of the CST. Whilst we wish additional security was not needed, we are doing what is required to ensure children can still go to school and families can still go about their lives.

We have also drawn strength from the support we have received from members of wider society. We have seen peaceful events and rallies uniting Jews and non-Jews against anti-Semitism, showing our ability to pull together in the face of hate.

We are proud to be British Jews and of our contribution to the fabric of this country. We have a deep and rich history

January 16, 2024

across the UK that we are determined to persevere. Britain must remain a tolerant home for our entire community.

Whilst Jews have had to endure unacceptable levels of hostility in the last 100 days, it is clear that we will not be cowed. I take solace in our community's response and know our resolve is steadfast.

Claudia Mendoza is chief executive of the Jewish Leadership Council

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Celtic Psalms by Candlelight concerts in Derry and Belfast

Celtic Psams music allows a space for the ancient words of the Psalms, combined with soulful Celtic melodies, to bring people together in shared humanity, across community divides.

These concerts are enabled by Music Capital and their beautiful Lúmináre concerts. Celtic Psalms said - It's about time we shared a concert with Eilidh Patterson, the talented singer songwriter well known to many in N.I. It will be a beautiful evening.

Lúmináre | Celtic Psalms 

Special Guest Eilidh Patterson

January 16, 2024

Lūmināre Kiran Young Wimberly & The McGraths

Celtic psalms

Candlelight Concert



Special Guest
Eilidh Patterson

Mon 25th March
St Augustines Church
Palace St Derry

Tue 26th March
Fitzroy Presbyterian Church
University St Belfast

Tickets £15+ BF
Doors 6.45pm
Show Starts 7.30pm

Tickets available from www.musiccapital.org

MUSIC CAPITAL

Tickets/Info <https://bit.ly/CelticPsalms>

Mon 25th Mar St. Augustine's Church - Londonderry,
Palace Street, BT48 6PP

Tues 26th Mar Fitzroy Presbyterian - University St, Belfast.
BT7 1HL

Shows start 7.30pm / Doors 6.45pm

Could your child be a chorister at Belfast Cathedral?

January 16, 2024

This month the cathedral launching a chorister recruitment drive, looking for enthusiastic boys (aged 7-12) and girls (aged 11-18) with a love of music.

Full details can be found below, and to sign up for an audition please visit:

<https://forms.gle/pjfkvCrC8BPjKidbA>

<https://www.belfastcathedral.org/music/become-a-chorister>

Church Coordinator post at Ballybeen

St. Mary's team wishes to appoint a Church Coordinator (part time/permanent) to assist the Rector in leading the church's life and witness by taking responsibility for the general coordination of the parish. For more information and to apply, please download the Job Description and Application Form at <https://www.stmarysballybeen.com/jobs>

The post is for 16 hours per week with a salary of £10,365 – £10,717.

Closing date: Monday 5 February, 2024, 12 noon.

Administration Assistant at Belvoir

Belvoir Parish has a vacancy within its team for an Administration Assistant.

The hours are 20-30 hours per week. Must be willing to be hands on with local community and self motivated.

January 16, 2024

Work duties include, typing, set up for groups, taking minutes, reconciliation of petty cash, data entry, designing posters, Facebook posts and recording footfall etc.

For more info call James on 07738081992 or send your CV to james@belvoircommunityhub.co.uk

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

The publication of Church News Ireland is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD. He may be contacted at houstonmckelvey@mac.com
