

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – the welcoming committee

Image of the day

The welcoming committee

It's a tough gig being the welcoming committee on the coastal highlands near Ballintoy, County Antrim, but we think you would agree these guys are doing a grand job! As did Sixmileimages with the photograph. More at - The Ultimate Ireland Travel Guide <https://lovetovisitireland.com/the-ultimate-ireland-travel-guide-2/>

People and places

Funding: Openreach's boost for communities

The Openreach Community Fund – formerly known as the Telecommunity Fund – is now open to a range of organisations to help support local communities across Northern Ireland.

The newly branded fund is managed by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI), who have matched Openreach investment since the fund began in 1989, and have been supported since its inception by the Communication Workers Union (CWU).

With over 569 awards made since its inception, the fund has supported 293,122 beneficiaries within local communities.

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Around £50,000 per year is allocated to a range of community organisations — with an average award value of £1,356.

Speaking about the Openreach Community Fund, Garrett Kavanagh, director at Openreach in Northern Ireland, said: “Our ongoing investment in communities is having grassroots impact, not just through our financial support for local projects, but also through the Openreach team's volunteering in-kind support.

“This fund demonstrates our long-standing commitment to supporting local communities in Northern Ireland in which our team of employees live and work.”

Orla Black, grants director at CFNI, said the organisation was “proud of the positive impact” the fund has achieved.

“By equipping and empowering local people to create change, communities right across Northern Ireland have benefitted greatly.”

One of the many beneficiaries which has experienced first-hand the positive impact of the fund is Sensory Kids NI.

Kathryn Davidson, founder of Sensory Kids in Antrim, said: “The support received from the Openreach Community Fund has made such a difference to our work to provide sensory support to children and young people, and to provide families with a secure environment that promote development and reduce anxieties.”

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Applications for the fund must be submitted by January 30, with the next wave of applications later this year. To apply, visit communityfoundationni.org.j

817 Lisburn Squadron Royal Air Force Air Cadets enrolment



“On Thursday night we were delighted to have our Padre Rev Jason Kernohan Of All Saints' Eglantine attend the Sqn to officially enrol our newer cadets. This is a very important part of the cadet journey and officially welcomes all cadets to the Royal Air Force Air Cadets.



Farewell to a clerical colleague

The clergy of Antrim Rural Deanery met this week over lunch to say their farewells to their much loved Rural Dean Rev Canon Derek Kerr, who is leaving the Diocese to begin a new chapter in his ministry in the Parishes of Tynan, Aghavilly and Middletown in the Diocese of Armagh.



Derek's Service of Institution will take place on Shrove Tuesday 13th February.

His colleagues say - Please pray for Derek in the months ahead that God would bless him and his new church family, and also for guidance to the parish of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion as they begin to discern the future.

In a footnote Derek said - "These kind folk hosted me to a meal and gave me lovely gifts. It's been a pleasure to work with you".

YOU ARE WARMLY INVITED TO

LAUNCH EVENT



COALITION OF CHRISTIAN VOICES
AGAINST POVERTY IN
NORTHERN IRELAND

*BEYOND BENEVOLENCE:
REAWAKENING A CALL FOR COMMON GOOD*

 TUESDAY 30 JANUARY 2024

 10.30AM-12.30PM

 EMMANUEL CHURCH
38 MEADOW LANE, PORTADOWN
BT62 3NH



LYNDA GOULD
*Project Coordinator
Faith-based Engagement
NICVA*

REV BRIAN ANDERSON
*Mission Superintendent
East Belfast Mission*

DR CIARA FITZPATRICK
*Lecturer of Law
Ulster University
Cliff Edge Coalition*

SARAH CORRIGAN
*Director of Innovation
and Engagement
Law Centre NI
Cliff Edge Coalition*

Guest Speakers



Sign up via link in email or by scanning the QR code

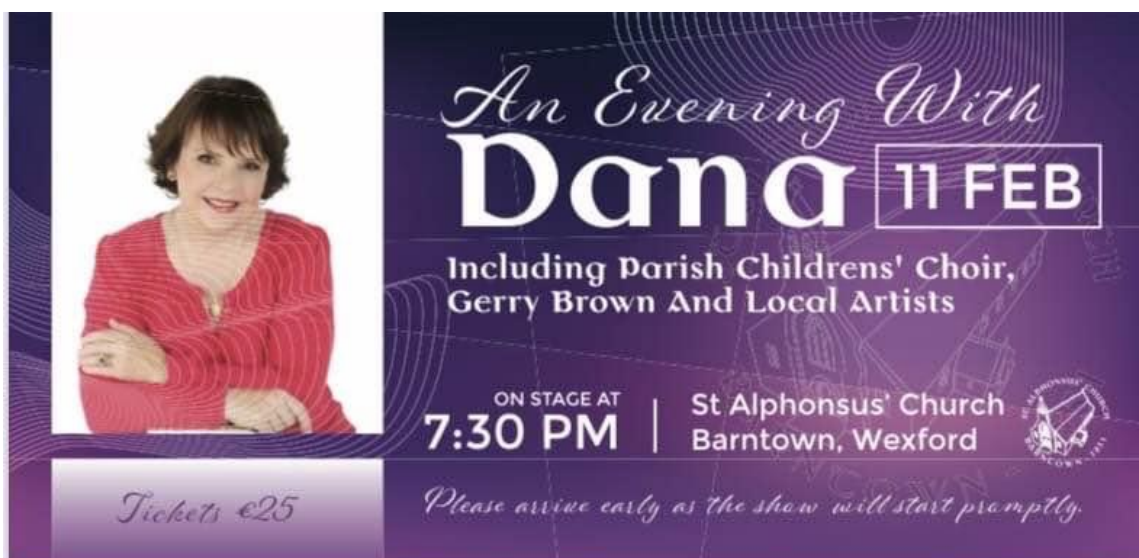
Launch of Coalition of Christian Voices Against Poverty

Many Christian organisations have come together to work for change in a more collaborative way. The Coalition of Christian Voices Against Poverty will be launched on 30th January and you are invited! Scan the QR code or email Danielle Mcelhinney (d.mcelhinney@eauk.org) or lynda.gould@nicva.org

Tributes to Offaly woman who was sacristan in local church for 66 years

Tributes have been paid this week after the sad death of Nuala Quinn (née Murphy) who served as the sacristan in St Peter's Church in Rhode, Co Offaly, for 66 years.

The 97-year-old pillar of the community passed away peacefully this week surrounded by her loving family. She was predeceased by her husband Paddy. Tributes have been flooding in for Nuala. One person wrote: "Sincere sympathy to all of Nuala's family of nieces and nephews. She was such a lovely lady and was especially loved by all the altar servers who she looked after and she always remembered and asked about them when they moved on. She loved playing cards and has been missed these last few weeks. Rhode's loss is Heaven's gain. May she rest in peace." Another said: "Saddened to hear the news of Nuala's passing she was an absolute lady and like another Nana to us all. We are lucky to have so many fond memories of her growing up, we will cherish these forever." - Offaly Express.



An Evening With
Dana 11 FEB

Including Parish Childrens' Choir,
Gerry Brown And Local Artists

ON STAGE AT
7:30 PM | St Alphonsus' Church
Barntown, Wexford

Tickets €25

Please arrive early as the show will start promptly.

Sunday, 21 January–Saturday, 27 January



Catholic Schools Week 2024

Catholic Schools: Serving Our Communities



Catholic Schools Week 2024 highlights schools as communities of service

Across the island of Ireland, from 21 to 27 January, the annual celebration of Catholic Schools Week will be marked by parish communities, says Bishop Tom Deenihan

During this dedicated week, school communities will pray, explore and discuss the 2024 theme which reflects the contribution of Catholic schools as 'Communities of Service' in our society.

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According to Bishop Tom Deenihan, Bishop of Meath, who chairs the Council for Education of the Irish Bishops' Conference, "Thanks to the commitment of our school communities – pupils, parents, staff and parishes – Catholic schools set a high standard when it comes to education provision. Our schools look to Jesus Christ as our role model and teacher.

"Generations of people have benefited from Catholic schools and our society is all the better for their contribution to the common good. Our schools, following the example of Jesus, serve every person regardless of creed, background, faith, social status or age. Jesus showed those around Him how our Heavenly Father is compassionate, courageous and forgiving by His own actions.

"For Catholic Schools Week 2024, we will reflect on the theme of our schools exemplifying communities of service. Each day of CSW has a dedicated focus: Service in Our Community of Friends; Service in Our School Community; Service in Our Family Community; Service in Our Local Community; and, Service in Our Faith Community," Bishop Deenihan said.

Easy day's resources draw on the overarching theme of Catholic schools contributing as 'Communities of Service'. These resources offer scriptural reflection on prayer, action, student voice, and concern for our common home, and are available here.

Bishop Deenihan will celebrate Mass for Catholic Schools Week in The Cathedral of Christ the King, Mullingar, at 12.00pm on Monday, 22 January, with students attending

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from the local Catholic Post-Primary Schools. For more information on CSW 2024, please visit www.catholiceducation.ie

Bishop Tom Deenihan is chair of the Catholic Schools Partnership and is a member of the Council for Education of the Irish Bishops' Conference.

In the media

Churches paying lip service to shared education 26 years after peace, says QUB expert - Belfast Telegraph

A world-leading authority on the role of shared education in divided societies has challenged the churches here to do more to ensure a more diverse enrolment in their schools, Mark Bain reports.

Professor Tony Gallagher of Queen's University said his research shows little has changed since the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

Prof Gallagher, whose paper on religion and diversity in schools is published this morning, said a recent review of education should provide renewed impetus for the churches to move on from saying they welcome change to actually deciding to effect it.

He added: “Traditionally, most schools in Northern Ireland have had largely Protestant or Catholic enrolments until the integrated schools came along from 1981 onwards.

“After the Good Friday Agreement, most of the churches made it very clear that they welcomed a more diverse intake and wanted to attract young people from all religions and none.

“My main conclusion is that they haven't changed very much.”

One sector in particular has shown an inability to embrace diversity.

He said: “The least level of change is in the Catholic schools.

“The vast majority still have a largely Catholic enrolment despite the churches being clear after the Good Friday Agreement that they wanted the schools to become more diverse.

“There has been a greater degree of change within the schools which traditionally had a strong relationship with Protestant churches, but there it's a reduction in the number of young people who identified as Protestant and an increase in the number who identified as 'other'.

“There was always a very small number of those that had a significant Catholic proportion in enrolment, and that hasn't changed very much.

“Apart from the rhetoric from the churches themselves about welcoming change, the recent report of the Independent Review of Education identified more diverse enrolment as one of a number of ways education could help to create more opportunities for engagement by young people.

“Simply declaring the intention that diversity is a good thing isn't enough. You actually have to do something about it.

“The schools themselves have to change in some way in order to provide a welcoming environment.

“That's the challenge for all the churches. They have to look self-critically, reflectively, at some of the aspects of the school, that maybe they're putting some people off.

“They need to look at some aspects of the ways parts of the curriculum are taught, particularly religious education, which at the moment has a very denominational character and probably doesn't help an awful lot.

“There's also the issue of teacher recruitment. Schools should be proactively trying to recruit a more diverse workforce.

“The key is that schools have to do something to change so they actually become a more welcoming environment. If everyone agrees that's a good idea, then let's take it away from just being a good idea to something that actually happens in practice.”

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools was contacted for a response.

Nato warns of war with Russia in the next 20 years - Daily Telegraph

Public told to prepare for a life-changing conflict as Putin triples military spending, Matt Oliver and Joe Barnes write.

Civilians must prepare for all-out war with Russia in the next 20 years, a top Nato military official has warned.

While armed forces are primed for conflict, private citizens need to be ready for a war that would require wholesale change in their lives, Adml Rob Bauer said yesterday.

Large numbers of civilians would need to be mobilised and governments should put in place systems to manage the process, Adml Bauer told reporters after a meeting of Nato defence chiefs in Brussels. “We have to realise it’s not a given that we are in peace. And that’s why we \[Nato forces] are preparing for a conflict with Russia. But the discussion is much wider. It is also the industrial base and also the people that have to understand they play a role,” he said.

The Dutch naval officer, who is chairman of Nato’s Military Committee, praised Sweden for asking all of its citizens to brace for war ahead of the country formally joining the alliance.

Stockholm’s move, announced earlier this month, has led to a surge in volunteers for the country’s civil defence

organisation and a spike in sales of torches and battery-powered radios.

“It starts there,” Adml Bauer said. “The realisation that not everything is planable and not everything is going to be hunky dory in the next 20 years.”

About 90,000 Nato troops will next week begin the bloc’s largest military exercise since the Cold War.

The Steadfast Defender 2024 operation has more than doubled in size since it was announced last year, and is explicitly designed to prepare the alliance for a Russian invasion.

Britain has committed about 20,000 soldiers, as well as tanks, artillery and fighter jets to the drills taking place across Europe until May. But senior Nato officials are increasingly concerned that governments and private arms manufacturers are falling behind in preparations on the domestic front.

Stockpiles of weapons and ammunition have been drained by the conflict in Ukraine and will take years to replenish at the current rate of production.

Meanwhile, Russia has tripled its military expenditure to 40 per cent of the entire national budget, while speeding-up manufacturing lines. “We need to be readier across the whole spectrum,” Adml Bauer said. “You have to have a system in place to find more people if it comes to war, whether it does or not. Then you talk mobilisation, reservists or conscription. You need to be able to fall back on an

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industrial base that is able to produce weapons and ammunition fast enough to be able to continue a conflict if you are in it.” More -

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Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Insight on theology at Union College

Prof Gordon Campbell answers the question, "How does UTC nurture students?"

Applications to start the BA Hons Theology in September 2024 can be accessed via this link:

<https://www.union.ac.uk/programmes/ba-hons-theology-ba>

4 Corners Festival 2024 reveals programme highlights

The annual 4 Corners Festival is set to return to Belfast in February 2024, with a packed line-up of events including talks, discussions, exhibitions, music and literature.

Now in its 12th year, the festival was conceived as a way to inspire people from across the city to transform it for the peace and wellbeing of all.

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The festival features a range of music, discussion, sport and faith–inspired events and will run from February 1 to 11 in venues in all four corners of the city.

Speaking at the launch at The Hub Belfast, committee member George Sproule said: “We’re great at telling stories, but sometimes we need to challenge the stories that we do tell. The other thing is that sometimes we’re not very good at listening to other people’s stories.

“A well written and well told story changes the way you think about things and changes the way you look at the world.

“Our theme this year is OUR STORIES...Towards A Culture Of Hope. We want each other to listen to each other’s stories and the events throughout the festival are designed to do just that.”

The 4 Corners Festival is supported by The Executive Office’s Central Good Relations Fund, The Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund and Belfast City Council Good Relations Fund.

All festival events are free of charge, with most open to the public, although advance booking of tickets is mandatory. Select events will be streamed online on the official 4 Corners Festival YouTube and Facebook accounts.

Tickets for the event will be available to book on the website.

Highlights

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Attendees of the launch were given a unique preview of the Blue Lights story when journalist Tyree Patton interviewed screenwriter Declan Lawn. At the festival in February, Declan and Tyree will be joined by Declan's writing partner, Adam Patterson.

Declan said: "I was really gratified to see the tagline of the festival, towards a culture of hope. For those of you who have seen the show we made, Blue Lights, there is a lot of darkness in it, it's sort of a valley of darkness in many ways, but it is profoundly hopeful and profoundly optimistic. That's the message of the show."

The 4 Corners Festival believes in embracing our shared humanity, fostering connections, and creating a space where meaningful conversations can flourish. Each year the festival returns with a renewed purpose of transforming hearts, bridging divides, and leaving a lasting mark of positivity on Belfast.

The Cancer Focus 'Sing For Life' Choir was on hand to entertain with a range of big hits and gospel numbers.

Revealing the highlights of the festival was volunteer Shannon Campbell who said: "We have some pre-festival events in the run up to 4th February, but the 4 Corners Festival officially starts on Sunday 4th.

"That evening, we're going to have author Claire Hayns in Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, who is one of the chaplains at Christ Church, Oxford. Her book Unveiled is about the lesser-known women in Scripture. Claire's going to be

talking to us a bit about her book and she will be joined by her son who illustrated the book.

“On Monday, university students from across the city will gather at Queen’s University, where Claire will host a lunchtime discussion with students about the book.

“On Tuesday February 6th, we’re going to have Elma Walsh joining us at Ekenhead Memorial Halls. Elma is the mother of Donal Walsh who was diagnosed with cancer in his teens. Donal was moved by his situation, and also by the pretty harrowing suicide statistics in Ireland that year, to make a difference and to spread the message of hope among young people throughout the UK and Ireland. Elma and his whole family set up the Donal Walsh Foundation to continue that message of hope today among young people. Elma will speak to us about that and the Live Life message.

“On Wednesday, we will have our Blue Lights story event which will be taking place in All Saints College on the Glen Road and it will take the form of a Q&Q.

“On Thursday 8th, Celebrating Young Voices Hopes For The Future at 7.30pm at 2 Royal Avenue. So we’re going to hear about the stories of young people who are leading the way in various spheres of influence.

“The festival will officially draw to a close on Sunday February 11th with an event entitled Towards A Culture Of Hope at St Comgall’s on the Divis Street, where Revd Doug Gay will be talking about what a hopeful imagination looks like, and how we can discover that on the streets of our city.”

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For more information about the festival and to keep up to date with programme updates go to 4cornersfestival.com.

Poem for today

The Good by Brendan Kennelly

The good are vulnerable
As any bird in flight,
They do not think of safety,
Are blind to possible extinction
And when most vulnerable
Are most themselves.
The good are real as the sun,
Are best perceived through clouds
Of casual corruption
That cannot kill the luminous sufficiency
That shines on city, sea and wilderness,
Fastidiously revealing
One man to another,
Who yet will not accept
Responsibilities of light.
The good incline to praise,
To have the knack of seeing that
The best is not destroyed
Although forever threatened.
The good go naked in all weathers,
And by their nakedness rebuke
The small protective sanities
That hide men from themselves.
The good are difficult to see

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Though open, rare, destructible;
Always, they retain a kind of youth,
The vulnerable grace
Of any bird in flight,
Content to be itself,
Accomplished master and potential victim,
Accepting what the earth or sky intends.
I think that I know one or two
Among my friends.

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
