

Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – Methody Musicians receive
Coronation medals**

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Methody Musicians receive Coronation medals

The girl choristers who sang at the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla have been awarded Coronation medals.

Methodist College, Belfast commented - "It is with great pleasure that we can report that the seven girl choristers who sang at the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla have been awarded Coronation medals. Three music staff members, Mrs McCartney, Mrs Rolston and Mr McCullough, were also awarded medals.

"We are immensely proud of the achievement of these Collegians, and this well-deserved honour reflects their hard work and commitment. They rehearsed for several months in Belfast before joining with the Choir of Westminster Abbey and seven girls from Truro Cathedral for rehearsals in London in April and May. Singing in the Coronation on May 6th was an experience they will never forget, and it is fitting that they have such lovely mementos of the occasion.

"Principal, Mrs J Lendrum presented the medals to the girls and staff."

People and places

Newtownstewart parishioners view mission anew

A new parish-wide initiative has been launched in the Ardstraw, Baronscourt, Badoney Lower & Upper and Greenan Group of Parishes that encourages parishioners to actively consider how they view mission.

It was introduced for the first time on the First Sunday of Christmas and the last Sunday of 2023, at Ardstraw Parish Church in Newtownstewart, by the Group's Deacon Assistant, Rev Sean McClafferty. It places a particular emphasis on our collective approach to mission, reaching out and physically sharing the Gospel in a local parish context.

The initiative is led by Rev McClafferty and supported by the Rector of the Parish Group, Rev Ivan Dinsmore. It enjoys critical support, too, from Good News For Everyone (Foyle Branch) who have provided a complimentary supply of New Testaments. The missionary outreach encouraged the parishioners at their fifth Sunday United Group Service, to take a New Testament and reach out to at least one person they knew, who may have drifted away from church or active communal worship, or may have had no church connection,



Pictured, from left to right, are: Ronald Duddy, Rev Sean McClafferty, Stanley McFarland and Anne Murphy (Parish Readers)

and encourage them to reconnect with church and reconnect with God at the start of a fresh new year.

Referring to the Gospel of the day, from Luke 2:15-21, Rev McClafferty said, "Just like the shepherds who came to worship the Christ Child on that first Christmas and became

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the first evangelists, we all, too, have a responsibility as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ to go out and share the Gospel. A new year offers us all an opportunity for a fresh start and perhaps a new opportunity to serve God, to consider how we serve God and how we can serve God in our local area."

Rev Sean concluded: "This initiative, which will be rolled out in all five churches in the group throughout January, is a great way of encouraging all our loyal and faithful



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**New Irish Arts
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Donard Methodist**

An evening with musicians from New Irish Choir and Orchestra

37 Central Promenade, Newcastle
Saturday 13th January at 7.30pm
Supper included
Suggested donation £10 at the door.

Tickets reserved by contacting Richard on richard.wright@irishmethodist.org or by text at 07702 090 486

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parishioners to consider their mission focus, connect with others and share the Good News in 2024."

Presentation to Cremore Sunday School Superintendent



Christian congregations depend very greatly on volunteers, dedicated people who give their time and use their talents freely and who serve their community in the name of Christ.

In Cremore Presbyterian Church recently the congregation presented a painting to one such person, Miss Eleanor Flack, as a small token of their great thankfulness for her many years as Sunday School Superintendent.

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She is pictured with the congregation's Ruling Elders - one of whom she taught at Sunday School. The minister of Cremore, Fourtowns and Poyntzpass is Rev Dr Mark Wilson.

Rector appointed Rural Dean in Armagh diocese

The Archbishop of Armagh has appointed the Rev'd Iain Jamieson, Rector of Moy and Charlemont, as Rural

**ARMAGH PARISH
HOLY SPIRIT
PRAYER GROUP**

*Eucharistic
Healing Retreat*

LED BY FR. BRENDAN WALSH & EILEEN KING

**The Servite Priory, Benburb
Saturday & Sunday
13th & 14th January 2024**

Registration from 9am
Starting at 10am - 7pm

- Holy Mass
- Adoration
- Rosary
- Praise & Worship
- Talks
- Healing Service
- Confessions

"And now, I kneel in the presence of the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth has received its name. May he strengthen in you the inner self, through his Spirit..."
(Ephesians 3:14-16)

All Welcome

Booking by Friday 5th January is essential
Registration Fee: £40 per person



Dean of Tullyhogue, with immediate effect, to replace the Rev'd Diane Matchett, who has moved to become the Dean of Tuam.

The Archbishop said “I wish the Rev'd Diane well and every blessing in her new sphere of ministry in the West of Ireland. I was delighted when Rev'd Iain Jamieson agreed to take up the reins as Rural Dean of Tullyhogue, which is a busy role, and believe that Rev'd Iain's experience and talents will help him settle well into this new post.”

Revd Iain Jamieson added “I was pleased to be offered the post of Rural Dean of Tullyhogue. It's a geographical area that's new to me. I know the southern portion of our diocese well and the middle. The north will be a learning curve. I would like to thank Archbishop John for this opportunity, and look forward to serving the Church in whatever way I can in coming years.”

Towards a Culture of Hope theme of 4 Corners Festival

The annual 4 Corners Festival is back for another packed lineup of events this year from February 1 to 11 in venues across the city.

The Festival is supported by The Northern Ireland Executive, Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) and Good Relations programme, The Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund and Belfast City Council Good Relations Fund.

The organising committee has announced its dates for 2024 and the theme which will be OUR STORIES...Towards A Culture Of Hope.

The festival, which will feature a range of art, music, discussion, sport and faith-inspired events, runs from February 1 to 11 in venues across the city.

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.

The 4 Corners Festival is an embodiment of the change the organising committee wishes to see in Belfast – a manifestation of the Gospel's teachings in action.

The festival believes in embracing our shared humanity, fostering connections, and creating a space where meaningful conversations can flourish. Each year the

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festival returns with a renewed purpose of transforming hearts, bridging divides, and leaving a lasting mark of positivity on Belfast.

Co-founder, Father Martin Magill explained that while in the past there was a focus on peace-making, the festival was about the next step.

God's Whole Mission for God's Whole Church

FREE Workshop on Global & Local Mission

Special Speaker:

Rev Dr Chris Wright,
Global Ambassador

Mission workshop topics:

1. Reading the Whole Bible for Mission
2. Integrating our Mission Around the Centrality of the Gospel
3. What About our Local Church?


Tea/coffee supplied. No lunch supplied


Time and Venue:

16th February 2024
10am-4pm

Belfast Bible College
Glenburn House,
Glenburn Road South,
Dunmurry,
Belfast.
BT17 9JP

To register, contact Mark Armstrong,
Langham Supporter Development Officer
mark.armstrong@langham.org
Mobile 07523180611

 BELFAST BIBLE COLLEGE

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uk.langham.org/mission

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“I see the 4 Corners Festival as making a contribution towards peace building, where people meet, get to know one another and are encouraged to keep meeting long after the festival has finished for another year. In many 4 Corners is a catalyst in building relationships.” he said.

Fellow co-founder, Reverend Steve Stockman said the traditional divides have changed much in recent years and that’s one of the things that keeps him involved.

“It is those moments where people come to a part of the city they’ve never been in before and they meet somebody across whatever the divides are,” he explained.

“Of course, we have the traditional Catholic/Protestant divide and that’s one of our major divides in Belfast, but there are other races in Belfast now too so there are all those kinds of divides, but there’s also class divides.”

OUR STORIES... Towards A Culture Of Hope is about inviting everyone to contribute their narratives, weaving a tapestry that reflects the essence of belonging and unity within the city’s diverse community.

The upcoming festival’s suite of events is designed to entice people out of their own ‘corners’ of the city and into new places where they will encounter new perspectives, new ideas and hopefully meet new friends.

“There is a correlation between the stories we tell and the culture we live in. Stories can highlight common ground, increase understanding and create connections. They hold the power to have a positive impact on our community and

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promote hope for the future” explained Megan Boyd, 4 Corners Festival Administrator.

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 in early December.

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

News

Let priests marry, says Pope Francis adviser

Catholic priests should be allowed to marry in a dramatic reform that would overturn centuries of Church tradition, an adviser to Pope Francis says.

Priests all around the world strike up clandestine sexual relationships with women and have secret children because of the official ban on marriage, according to Archbishop Charles Scicluna from Malta.

He said there was nothing in the Scriptures forbidding priests from marrying and said the ban had only been in place for the past few hundred years.

“It was optional for the first millennium of the Church’s existence and it should become optional again,” said Archbishop Scicluna, who holds one of the most influential positions within the Holy See as adjunct secretary of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

“If it were up to me, I would revise the requirement that priests have to be celibate. Experience has shown me that this is something we need to seriously think about.

“A man may mature, engage in relationships, love a woman. As it stands, he must choose between her and priesthood and some priests cope with that by secretly engaging in sentimental relationships. This is a global reality; it doesn’t just happen in Malta. We know there are priests around the world who also have children and I think there are ones in Malta who may have too,” he told the Times of Malta.

The time had come to “discuss the issue seriously” and take practical steps, the archbishop said, acknowledging that his forthright views might be seen by some Catholics as heresy.

“This is probably the first time I’m saying it publicly and it will sound heretical to some people. Why should we lose a young man who would have made a fine priest, just because he wanted to get married? And we did lose good priests just because they chose marriage.” Archbishop Scicluna, 64, who is a respected figure in the Catholic hierarchy and has had a leading role in prosecuting clergy sex abuse cases, said he had raised the issue in the Vatican but admitted that the final decision rests with Pope Francis, 87.

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Earlier on in his papacy, Francis seemed cautiously open to the idea.

Some bishops argued at a synod in 2019 that there was a dearth of priests in many parts of the world, particularly in remote areas such as the Amazon. Allowing married men to become priests could address the recruitment problems, they suggested.

However, a few months after the synod, Francis ruled against allowing married men to be ordained. He stuck with the traditional Catholic line that the life of a priest should be devoted exclusively to God and his congregation, without the distraction of a family.

It was only in the 12th century that the Church required priests to be celibate – before that they had been allowed to marry and have children.

In the media

Vennells' bishop likens damning ITV drama to The Crown - Daily Telegraph

Paula Vennells, the disgraced former Post Office chief executive, should not be judged on an ITV drama that is a “bit like The Crown”, a spokesman for her bishop said, Robert Mendick, Chief Reporter writes.

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Ms Vennells, 65, was ordained as a priest in 2006 and had been an associate minister in the diocese of St Albans while at the same time running the Post office.

She stepped down from her post in 2021 after the Court of Appeal cleared 39 sub-postmasters of any wrongdoing. Ms Vennells is accused along with other Post office bosses of presiding over the greatest miscarriage of justice in British legal history.

‘The television show is a bit like The Crown where it diverges from actual fact into TV’

The case has been thrust back into the limelight by an ITV drama Mr Bates vs The Post Office, but a spokesman for the Bishop of St Albans said it would not be right to judge Ms Vennells until all the facts are known in the wake of an ongoing public inquiry.

The spokesman said: “It [the television drama] is a bit like The Crown where it diverges from actual fact into TV.

“The television show has ... diverged from established public fact and that is why we need the appropriate processes to go ahead.”

A disclaimer at the beginning of the programme accepts that some names have been changed and some scenes imagined. Ms Vennells is placed at the centre of the scandal and no other chief executives are included in the drama.

Ms Vennells was chief executive for seven years from 2012 to 2019, but her predecessors oversaw the installation of the

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Horizon IT system that caused the huge discrepancies in accounting and led to sub-postmasters being wrongly convicted.

The spokesman said the Bishop of St Albans the Rt Rev Alan Smith had been in contact with Ms Vennells and the Church was offering her support. She retains a licence that allows her to perform certain clerical duties but has declined to do so since stepping back in 2019.

Heritage



Cathedral Doors Limerick

The English Cathedrals web site recently visited Limerick, photographed aspects of the doors and posted the following comment -

According to tradition,
Domnall Mór Ua

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Briain, the last King of Munster, gifted his palace to the Church in 1168 thereby creating Saint Mary's Cathedral, Limerick.

It is understood that the only part of the palace to survive is the doorway, thus making it the city's oldest doorway still in use!

See all the doors on the link below

<https://www.englishcathedrals.co.uk/latest-news/cathedral-doors/>

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Book Well second-hand Christian Book Sale

The Book Well's annual second-hand Christian Book Sale is taking place in the Heyn Hall of St Mark's, Dundela on Saturday 27th January.

Hundreds of kindly donated pre-loved books including commentaries, biographies, theology, Christian fiction, children's books and resources as well as Christian music CDs. There is free admission in, and no price will be set on the books.



“Proceeds this year will be going to E3 Schools Project - East Belfast , so if you're coming, all we would encourage you to do is to take as many books as you like and give whatever you can. Tea and coffee will also be available to purchase. As always we'll be looking for willing volunteers who may be on hand to help out in the days running up to the sale, particularly the Friday, so if you can help in any way, please get in touch”.

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'Far be it from me to discourage people from reading new books, but I can't help thinking there's still an awful lot we can learn from the old ones.' ~ Michael Brooks

<https://thebookwell.co.uk/>

Perspective

Christianity cannot be is moderately important - CS Lewis

“One of the great difficulties is to keep before the audience's mind the question of truth. They always think you are

recommending Christianity not because it is true but because it is good.

And in the discussion they will at every moment try to escape from the issue "true-or false" into stuff about a good society, or morals, or the incomes of bishops, or the Spanish Inquisition, or France, or Poland -or anything whatever. You have to keep forcing them back, and again back, to the real point.

@CSLewisMovie

"Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important."

-C.S. Lewis

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Only thus will you be able to undermine \[their] belief that a certain amount of "religion" is desirable but one mustn't carry it too far. One must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."

- CS Lewis, "God in the Dock And Other Essays: Christian Apologetics".

Poem for today

Noel

by J.R.R. Tolkien

Grim was the world and grey last night:
The moon and stars were fled,
The hall was dark without song or light,
The fires were fallen dead.
The wind in the trees was like to the sea,
And over the mountains' teeth
It whistled bitter-cold and free,
As a sword leapt from its sheath.

The lord of snows upreared his head;
His mantle long and pale
Upon the bitter blast was spread
And hung o'er hill and dale.
The world was blind, the boughs were bent,
All ways and paths were wild:
Then the veil of cloud apart was rent,

And here was born a Child.

The ancient dome of heaven sheer
Was pricked with distant light;
A star came shining white and clear
Alone above the night.
In the dale of dark in that hour of birth
One voice on a sudden sang:
Then all the bells in Heaven and Earth
Together at midnight rang.

Mary sang in this world below:
They heard her song arise
O'er mist and over mountain snow
To the walls of Paradise,
And the tongue of many bells was stirred
in Heaven's towers to ring
When the voice of mortal maid was heard,
That was mother of Heaven's King.

Glad is the world and fair this night
With stars about its head,
And the hall is filled with laughter and light,
And fires are burning red.
The bells of Paradise now ring
With bells of Christendom,
And Gloria, Gloria we will sing
That God on earth is come.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

A new choir for 2024 *Join now!*
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www.thesanctuarysingers.org

Starting on January 11th, a new choir singing sacred music, open to all. No audition and no requirement to be able to read music. First rehearsal free of charge!

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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

