

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Connor ordinations

Image of the day

Connor ordinations

At Belfast Cathedral on Sunday afternoon, Shona Bell was ordained to serve in the Parish of Holy Trinity, Ballywillan, Portrush; Melanie Sloan to serve in St Patrick's Parish, Broughshane; and Cameron Mack to serve in Belfast Cathedral.

Rt Rev George Davison was assisted by the Archdeacons of Connor, Dalriada and Belfast and the Director of Ordinands, the Rev Canon Kevin Graham. The preacher was the Rev Dr Andrew Campbell, rector of Broughshane, with the rector of Ballywillan, the Rev Canon Peter McDowell and the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, also assisting with the service.

People and places

Corrymeela's UN International Day of Peace in Belfast Cathedral

The Leader of Corrymeela says, "For many years I wondered if we could turn the UN International Day of Peace into a real annual event in Northern Ireland. Last year was Corrymeela's first attempt.

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“This year we are going to the heart of the Cathedral Quarter in an event at St Anne’s Cathedral that will profile great music from established musicians and those who have come to our shores seeking asylum. We will profile the beauty of religious and cultural diversity in our society through the words and music of some truly beautiful people. Please mark this date in your diary if you live near Belfast and consider joining us. St Anne’s Cathdral, Belfast, 21st September.

“Sign up at our Eventbrite link here

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/un-international-day-of-peace-celebration-of-difference-tickets-706963566057>

Cashel Children & Families Diocesan Rep appointed

**Congratulations to
Carlow parishioner
Carolyn Good on her
appointment, by
Bishop Wilkinson, as
the Children &
Families Diocesan
Rep for Cashel, Ferns
& Ossory.**

Carolyn is already an
active member of the



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Church of Ireland Board for Ministry with Children & Families, but in this new role she will be working with the other diocesan reps and with Rachael Murphy, the Development officer for the Board, to help develop this ministry in her diocese. Her first meeting with the diocesan reps is online this week.

Westmeath school to seek court orders over Enoch Burke's attendance

A Co Westmeath school has brought a new application before the High Court that could see teacher, Enoch Burke return to jail over his continued attendance at the school despite being sacked, RTE reports.

Lawyers for Wilson's Hospital School told the court this afternoon they are seeking permission to notify Mr Burke that they intend to seek orders directing him to be brought to court and imprisoned due to his continued breach of a permanent injunction directing him to stay away from the premises.

Barrister Rosemary Mallon told Ms Justice Emily Egan that Mr Burke has attended at the school every day since the new school year began in late August, despite having been suspended and eventually dismissed from his position as a German and History teacher.

Mr Burke has claimed that he was dismissed because of his Christian beliefs and his opposition to "transgenderism". The school said he was dismissed because of his conduct and concerns about what his conduct would be in the future.

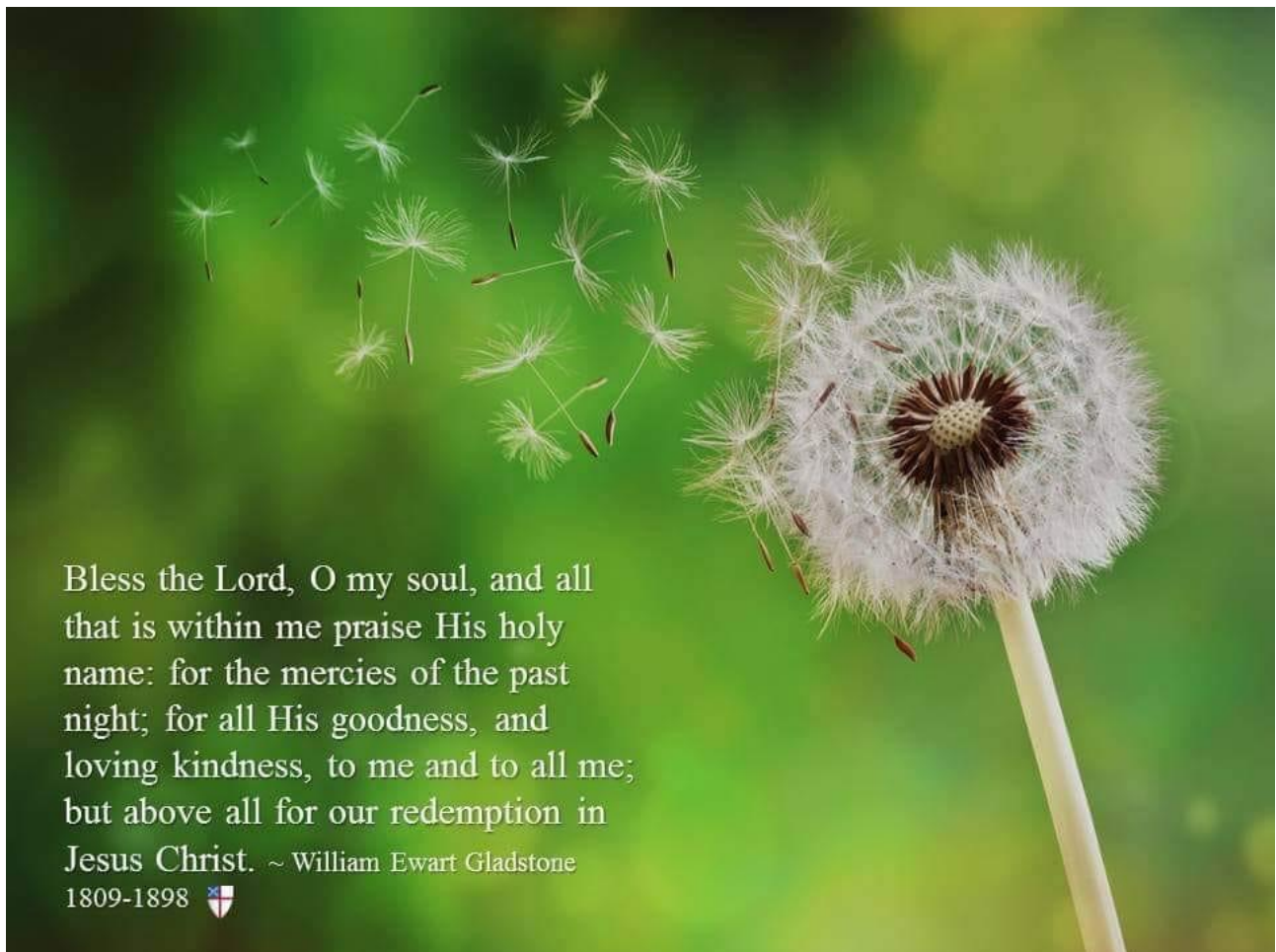
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Ms Mallon said Mr Burke's attendance "outside and inside the school" was in breach of a permanent injunction granted by the high court earlier this year.

Ploughing a Prayerful Path at the National Championships

Visitors to stand 326 at the National Ploughing Championships in Ratheniska, County Laois will be asked to name their favourite saint.

The question is being asked by Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin in whose diocese the 3-day Ploughing Championships will be held from 19 – 21 September. 'I expect that people will name saints from all over the world,



Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all
that is within me praise His holy
name: for the mercies of the past
night; for all His goodness, and
loving kindness, to me and to all me;
but above all for our redemption in
Jesus Christ. ~ William Ewart Gladstone
1809-1898 

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saints they pray to daily or in times of trouble, the saint whose name they chose at Confirmation or perhaps, the saint associated with their locality,' he said.

Bishop Denis went on to say that that he thought it would be 'fascinating to discover Ireland's most loved saint. Ireland was once known as the isle of saints and scholars. Kildare & Leighlin has links to many saints such as Conleth, Abban, Fiacc, Laserian, Columbanus, Willibrord and of course Brigid. But every county and indeed every country has its own saints. I look forward to seeing how many different saints will be nominated and which one will be the favourite.'

The quest to discover our favourite saint comes in the year when the country's newest bank holiday, Saint Brigid's Day, was first celebrated.

During previous Ploughing Championships, the diocese held competitions to find Ireland's favourite poem, prayer, and hymn. This year, visitors to stand 326 will be asked to nominate their favourite saint and the favourite will be decided by a vote on day 3.

Since April, a year-long campaign has been underway to promote discussion in families, parishes, and schools encouraging vocations to the diocesan priesthood. Kildare & Leighlin are delighted to welcome representatives from the National Office for Vocations to Stand 326 to further promote and encourage this discussion.

There will be a photographic display of some of the highlights of how faith is lived and celebrated in the Diocese.



This week please pray for the Church Army Conferencing Team at their Wilson Carlile Centre in Sheffield.

Visitors to the stand will be invited to help re-create Saint Brigid's Cloak and they will also see the traditional Saint Brigid's crosses being made.

The very popular packets of blessed salt will be available once again. The salt can then be spread on gardens and farms – a traditional practice in many areas of the country.

News reports

Minister appointed to strengthen presence of Reformed Church in Rome

A minister has been appointed to strengthen the presence of the Reformed Churches relating to the



Vatican and other ecumenical bodies in Rome, and provide spiritual leadership to the Church of Scotland's congregation in the Italian capital.

Rev Tara Curlewis will serve in two roles:- as the new minister of St Andrew's Church and as the Reformed Ecumenical Officer for the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

She said she was looking forward to taking up a calling that is grounded in an international and multicultural congregation and "exercising ministry in an exciting ecumenical setting".

Ms Curlewis said ecumenism "is in her DNA" and churches are "at their best when their voices unite to advocate for shared concerns together".

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The Reformed Ecumenical Officer role will see her develop dialogue, engagement and joint action for peace and justice with ecumenical partners and give momentum to Reformed initiatives in the ecumenical setting.

Ms Curlewis will act as a liaison to support cooperation amongst the WCRC and its member churches, the Waldensian Church, and the Church of Scotland with the Roman Catholic Church, particularly with the Dicastery for



God, we pray for all the people of the world.
Bring peace for people caught in the
indifferent destruction of war.
Bring hope for all those who cannot see an
end to their struggling and despair.

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Promoting Christian Unity and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Employed by the Church of Scotland as a Mission Partner on a fixed-term four-year contract, the Uniting Church of Australia minister will also cooperate with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, Conference of European Churches and World Council of Churches.

She will also engage with the British and Australian Ambassadors to the Holy See and other members of the diplomatic corps.

Bishop David Hamid, Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese in Europe announces retirement

Bishop David Hamid, suffragan bishop of the Diocese in Europe and one of the longest serving bishops in the Church of England, has announced his plans to retire in February 2024.

Bishop David said: “For over 20 years I have been blessed to have one of the most fulfilling and enriching jobs in the Church. At times the Diocese in Europe is difficult to explain to outsiders and to many in other parts of the Church of England, but I can sum up from my experience that it is a family, a family of committed and loving people, a truly rich and diverse, if scattered community, which seeks to live the Christian life in the Anglican way. The diocese embodies a profound vision of ecumenical outreach and collaboration



and is a beautiful multicultural and multiethnic mosaic. These particular aspects of her life are very close to my own heart and have added to my joy in serving the diocese as one of its bishops.

"I am grateful beyond words for the kindness and generosity that is shown to me in my pastoral visits, and I give thanks to God for all the many signs of growth in faith and Christian witness and service that I see from the shores of the Baltic to the Mediterranean, and beyond. Throughout these years, I have been dependent on the encouragement and support of both the late Bishop Geoffrey Rowell and Bishop Robert Innes, as well as from a wonderful group of colleagues in the Senior Staff, and the wisdom, patience and commitment of my Chaplain Deacon Frances Hiller who has served me throughout my episcopal ministry.

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"I am 68 right now, and while I can continue until I turn 70, the time seems right for Colleen and me to look towards the next phase of our life. However, there is still much on my agenda before the end of February! But when the day comes, I know that I will take into retirement a heart filled with thanksgiving for these past couple of decades and a heart which will always hold the people of this wonderful diocese in my prayers".

Bishop David was consecrated as a bishop in October 2002, and installed as suffragan bishop of the Diocese in Europe, where he has served for almost 21 years.

In the media

[Ireland prepares for ECHR legal challenge over Troubles Bill](#)

Ireland is taking legal advice ahead of a possible European Court of Human Rights challenge against the UK Government's Troubles legacy Bill, James Crisp writes in The Telegraph.

Westminster is expected to pass the controversial legislation, which offers an amnesty for atrocities committed during Northern Ireland's 30 years of conflict, in the coming days.

"We have asked for legal advice," Micheál Martin, Ireland's foreign minister, told The Financial Times at a British-Irish Association event in Oxford

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“I’ll get that legal advice in the next fortnight and then we’ll consider that in terms of what action we subsequently take,” the former prime minister said. Mr Martin said there were concerns the Bill did not comply with Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which protects the right to life.

“Nothing is ruled out and we approach this with victims at the centre of our concerns,” he added.

The Bill will stop new inquests and civil cases, and set up an Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery. It returns to the House of Lords today and is expected to go to the Commons for approval shortly afterwards.

It is opposed by the DUP and Sinn Fein, as well as the government in Dublin, rights groups and all the other political parties on the island of Ireland.

They argue that its conditional amnesty to accused killers during the Troubles will rob victims of justice from the IRA or British forces.

Sir Keir Starmer has said Labour will repeal the law, which has been amended in a failed attempt to win more support in Northern Ireland, if it wins the next general election.

“The legacy Bill will become law,” said Chris Heaton-Harris, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

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He said the chances of convictions 25 years after the Troubles ended were slim and called on Dublin to cooperate with the new commission.

The legal challenge could derail improved UK-Irish relations after February's signing of a new Brexit deal over the Irish Sea border.

Courtesy James Crisp in The Telegraph. 04/09/2023

Catholic PSNI officers asking whether to bring firearms to Mass after data breach

Catholic officers in the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) have sought advice on whether they should take a gun to Mass due to security fears following an unprecedented data leak, Westminster MPs have heard, Seanin Graham writes in The Irish Times.

The chair of an organisation representing serving officers from a Catholic background told the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee that he had been approached by younger members after personal details of 10,000 PSNI members and staff were accidentally posted on the internet last month.

Supt Gerry Murray, who joined the RUC over 50 years ago and oversees the Catholic Police Guild of Northern Ireland, said one officer with a young family had recently resigned out of concern that he could be targeted by paramilitaries.

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The PSNI has said it believes the data – which appeared online for over two hours in response to a Freedom of Information request – is “in the hands of dissident republicans”.

“We’re coming from a position where policing for Catholics, whether it be for staff or police officers, is not in their DNA,” Mr Murray told MPs on Monday.

“When young Catholics join the police they’re know they’re leaving areas they’re not going back to. They’re divorced straightway from their backgrounds.

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“Some haven’t even informed their families of what has happened with regards to the breach. Our members are frightened. I have had instances of young Catholic officers asking me if they should carry their personal protection weapons when they go to Mass.

“The advice I give is, ‘yes, you do’. The idea is that they should feel safe entering the Catholic Church and leaving the Catholic Church. And there’s no better way.”

The Westminster hearing into the big breach took place the morning after PSNI Chief Constable Simon Byrne resigned from his post.

Mr Byrne, who was due to give evidence to the scrutiny committee, had faced mounting pressure to step down after a series of controversies.

Committee chair Simon Hoare described the job as “probably the most difficult gig in policing” and that anyone who “steps up to the plate of Chief Constable” deserves recognition.

Mr Hoare also expressed disappointment that the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the oversight body which holds the PSNI to account, had failed to show.

The board has held four emergency meetings over the past month amid the policing crisis. All have been held in private, the MP Claire Hanna noted, saying that while the body was in “choppy waters”, she was concerned it has yet to be questioned on its role.

Mr Hoare responded: “We will hear from them. Whether we have to use our right to summon witnesses, which we can, or whether they can find a time voluntarily to appear before us.

“But the board should be in no doubt at all that they will appear before this committee to take our questions and will do so in public.”

Among the other policing representatives giving evidence was Liam Kelly, the head of the Police Federation, the body representing more than 6.500 rank and file PSNI officers, who described his members’ view of policing as being in “a dark place”.

“We’re in a downward spiral,” he added, and said the challenge was not only building “public confidence but

officers' confidence" and knowing that the PSNI's senior management team "has their backs".

Mr Kelly said it was the "right thing" for Mr Byrne to resign but expressed concerns about the role of the Dept Chief Constable, Mark Hamilton, confirming he had invited him to a federation executive meeting tomorrow.

"I'll be candid here. Mr Hamilton, as deputy chief constable, is now the most senior officer in our service ... he is still vulnerable in my eyes in relation to whether he continues in service or not or has the confidence of our officers."

During the evidence session, the committee heard that almost 4,000 PSNI officers and staff had now contacted a dedicated 'Emergency Threat Assessment Group' set up by the PSNI set up following the big data breach.

"I am deeply sorry this happened on my watch," PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Chris Todd told MPs, who revealed that costs associated with the breach could reach an estimated €280 million in extra security for officers and potential legal action.

Staff sickness absence in the PSNI rose to around 800 a day in the week after the big data breach, Mr Todd added.

Tracey Godfrey of NIPSA, a trade union representing 2,500 civilian staff, outlined concerns among her members about "delays" within the Northern Ireland Office in signing off security measures for staff who asked for home protection.

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President of the Police Superintendents' Association of Northern Ireland (SANI), Anthony McNally, said the continuing fallout from the data breach would put further financial strain on the force as it tackles a multimillion pound budget deficit and "pause" on recruitment.

The senior police officer added that his colleagues were "deeply troubled" by the events of the past month and heightened security threat.

"The mood music is probably one of sadness," he told MPs, "here we are 25 years on from the Good Friday Agreement and still checking under our cars," he said.

Sea in Graham is the Northern Correspondent of The Irish Times

American conservatives are not more Catholic than the pope

Washington Herald - "They got angry, but let's move on, move on," the pope said. Translation: In the Catholic Church of the future, those who go backward are likely to be left behind.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/09/04/pope-wars-against-american-bishops/>

Britons have given up on the Church – we'd rather worship ourselves

Not long ago, I attended a wedding in which the vicar referred to the state of holy matrimony as being “a bit like a garden shed”. To protect it from the elements, he said, we need to paint it with creosote. “That means regular trips to B&Q. It means putting in the work.” Celia Walden writes in The Telegraph. 05/09/2023

The rest of his pedestrian little analogy was drowned out by my outrage – for the bride and groom, and for the congregation. They had come to celebrate the sacred union of two loved-ones, but also to be lifted, briefly, to a loftier place. Only to be brought crashing back to “You can do it if you B&Q it.”

I thought of that vicar yesterday after reading, in a poll of almost 1,200 active Church of England clergy, that most back moves to turn churches into “places where people gather for non-religious events, activities and amenities”. More than 70 per cent of priests would happily “offer their buildings for use, outside of service times, by community groups such as playgroups and yoga classes, for exhibitions and concerts, and for amenities such as cafés and post offices.”

Only 4 per cent of young people now describe themselves as Christian. Three-quarters of serving C of E priests believe that the UK can no longer be called a Christian country. So let’s just rip out the pews! Some 250 churches per year are already applying for permission to get rid of these space wasters to make way for matcha lattes, flapjacks, downward dogs and soft-play mats. That cracking sound you hear is Britain’s moral backbone crumbling.

To those who criticise the Church's gradual descent into community centres, they'll say that it brings in money, and that the Church was always an all-purpose building, buzzing with secular activities. Maybe, once people are inside these holy confines, playing crazy golf, their dormant Christianity will be reawakened and they'll be inspired to return as worshippers?

That won't happen. When you're ripping out pews, the message is: "we've given up". The church should be a place where you could escape yourself and reflect on something bigger. But we've given up on trying to elevate people above themselves, to get them to focus on the metaphysical. As someone once said: "civilisations don't give out, they give in".

The number of Brits who said they had "no religion" may have risen 12 points at the last census, to 37 per cent, but that's not strictly true. They have a religion, an institutionalised set of attitudes and beliefs: they worship daily at the altar of "me".

It's all about wellness in the church of "me", about physicality, beauty, defying time and mortality by working out our bodies at the Pilates studio and the gym.

It's ironic that, as a secular society, we've thrown ourselves into the cult of self, precisely because we're flailing, with no basic spiritual scaffold to keep us steady. The idea of being handed out nourishment in the form of the "blood and body of Christ" is ridiculed, but we'll guzzle down our green juices and "superfoods" in the hope they'll give us what our empty souls are lacking.

So how's that working out for us? Well, we're experiencing the biggest mental-health crisis in our country's history, with rates of mental-health difficulties in children having risen by 49 per cent over the last five years, and a 22 per cent rise of "mental illness and nervous disorders" in adults.

You know what has been proven to improve mental health, reduce isolation and give us the sense of belonging and community we crave? Altruism, charity, spirituality – the real kind, where you're faced by something bigger than that suffocating "you". I'd suggest nipping into your local church, but the pews have probably been ripped out to make way for a legs, bums and tums class.

The Telegraph. 05/09/2023

Climate crisis is putting children in harm's way, says WCC study

Church Times - Crises induced by climate change are increasing the risk of all forms of violence against children, a new study co-produced by the World Council of Churches (WCC) suggests.

The social-ecological study, *The Climate Crisis and Violence Against Children*, was published in both *The Lancet* and *Child Abuse and Neglect* journals last week. It reviews selected existing research to "examine how the climate crisis exacerbates the risk of violence against children at the continually intersecting and interacting levels of society, community, family, and the individual levels".

It concludes that there is a direct link between two. Climate change increases the risk of armed conflict, forced displacement, poverty, income inequality, disruptions in critical health and social services, and mental-health problems, it says, which all heighten the risk of violence against children.

This “violence can be physical, psychological, and sexual, as well as abandonment, neglect, forced marriage, witnessing violence, and child labour,” it explains.

The study continues: “Furthermore, we posit that the climate crisis serves as a threat-multiplier, compounding existing vulnerabilities and inequities within populations and having harsher consequences in settings, communities, households, and for children already experiencing adversities.”

Children are adversely affected by pre-existing inequalities and “overlapping” environmental and humanitarian crises in low-income countries, the study says — all exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. Almost half the global population of children live in countries that are at high risk of exposure to environmental shocks.

The study calls for more decisive action by governments, corporations, and global organisations to reverse the adverse effects of climate change. It also calls “for urgent efforts from researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to further investigate the specific empirical links between the climate crisis and violence against children, and to design, test, implement, fund, and scale evidence-based, rights-

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based, and child-friendly prevention, support, and response strategies to address violence against children”.

The senior adviser on child rights for the WCC, Frederique Seidel, said: “This study underscores the urgent need to recognise that inadequate responses to the climate emergency pose a profound ethical concern affecting every aspect of the rights, physical and emotional wellbeing of children.

“As people of faith, we are called to tackle the root causes of the climate emergency, as an urgent measure for protecting children from the dire consequences of a warming world.”

Courtesy Church Times 04/09/2023

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

C of I Children & Family Ministry online workshop

“Join us on September 14th at 7.30pm for our next online workshop looking at how to connect your church with the local school and positively grow that relationship. We will be joined by Principal's, Prayer Spaces in School & Play It By Ear”. Open to Clergy, Volunteers, Staff and Teachers in the Church of Ireland. Register here: <https://bit.ly/3R6xXzY>

Byzantine Icon painting retreat

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CR Mirfield still have places on the Byzantine painting retreat taking place in December. This five-day course explores all of the ancient techniques used to gild & paint a Byzantine panel icon.

<https://mirfield.org.uk/events/event/byzantine-icon-painting-retreat/>

KidsMatter – A New Programme to Help Parishes Support Families in Need

The C of I Board for Ministry with Children and Families is delighted to partner with KidsMatter to bring its fantastic parenting programme to our parishes.

“With thanks to the Priorities Fund, we can enable 11 parishes (one from each diocese) to access KidsMatter facilitator training and support, so that they can run the programme for families in their local community. Whilst all parents need support, the KidsMatter programme has been created specifically to be effective and accessible for families who have low incomes and limited support networks.

“There are two programmes: KidsMatter and BabiesMatter. Each parish taking part in the training can decide which programme best suits their current ministry with local families.

“The facilitator training will take place online over four days and each church will put forward ideally two people to take part. These facilitators will then run the programme at least twice during the following year. As this is a peer-led

programme, those taking part as facilitators do not need to have any previous experience of delivering training, there are no flip charts or PowerPoints in sight! The programme is designed to be accessible to those with limited literacy skills, so it is more conversation and relationship-based rather than ‘school-style’ teaching. The programme itself has six sessions with a taster session at the start and an additional booster session a month after completion.

“With a rise in children under 15 being referred for mental health problems and fast dwindling resources to meet the need – particularly in the area of early intervention and especially for those children raised in financial adversity – it is increasingly vital that we as a Church find ways to support parents and carers in our communities. Through the KidsMatter programme, churches will offer useful parenting tools for families to grab hold of and stay alongside them as they grapple with those tools, offering genuine community and relationship”.

Sarah Fretwell in Mount Merrion Church (Down and Dromore) has completed her facilitator training and is currently running the pilot scheme for us in order to help encourage future parishes to run the programme. She said: “KidsMatter has impacted the relationships with local families, as I think they recognise that I care for their own well-being and families’ well-being and not just providing a weekly tots’ group for their children. I think this programme is essential for our local community, as it gives an opportunity to build small groups of parents that can help and support one another.

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“The course material is beautifully laid out and evidence-informed which has given me confidence in delivering it. I would say, ‘You need to do Kids Matter!’ The programme is easy to follow and provides lots of personal reflection. It gives parents a space to feel heard and to work through things in a supportive environment.”

For further information, you can view the video on our website here: <https://cfm.ireland.anglican.org/kidsmatter>

If you feel that this programme would be of particular benefit to your parish, then we ask you to complete the expression of interest form which can be accessed here: <https://form.jotform.com/231853196492060>

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

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