

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – University installation and graduation in Belfast Cathedral

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University graduation in Belfast Cathedral

Congratulations to Dr Colin Davison, installed yesterday at a ceremony at Belfast Cathedral as the 6th Chancellor of Ulster University.

Congratulations also to Honorary Doctoral Graduates: Rafeal Bengoa Renteria, David Blevins, Patrick Doherty, Wilma Erskine, Bishop Ken Good, Alastair Hamilton, Brendan Kerr, Lisa McGee and Maire Thompson.

People and places

“I’ll miss the miracles,” retiring hospital chaplain

Yesterday marked the end of an era in the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe as Rev Canon David Ferry retired after 20 years’ service as a hospital chaplain in Londonderry.

“I’ll miss the miracles,” the Tyrone man says of his “special calling”. He will be succeeded from tomorrow by the Rector of St Augustine’s Church, Rev Nigel Cairns.



Canon Ferry (above) retired as Rector of the Balteagh group of churches in 2019 but carried on ministering to patients, families and staff in Altnagelvin and Waterside hospitals. It was a role he had first embraced under the late Bishop James Mehaffey.

“Chaplaincy’s a special calling,” Canon Ferry says. “It’s one of the ministries that Christ set apart – care for the sick, care for the disadvantaged – so to be called to that, and to be involved in that, always spoke to me about some sort of special vocation. It’s just an enormous privilege. To be with people, to hear people’s stories, to have the end of life conversations with people, to be the last person to say a prayer with them, it’s an amazing privilege.

“The last two years have been particularly trying, given how Covid has affected hospitals. Canon Ferry and his

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colleagues found themselves supporting not only patients and relatives, but staff too. “That was a big part of it, but I think their lives were being refined too. There’s nothing like a good furnace to do a bit of refining – so Scripture tells us. There was a whole mixture of bad things [during Covid] but, in that, there was a whole lot of good stuff happening as well, an awful lot of good stuff.”

The last two years tested your vocation,” Canon Ferry concedes. “Everybody in the hospital was tested, whether they knew it or whether they didn’t. Nurses in here were trying to organise not only their nursing life but home education for their children, so everybody was tested.

“We [chaplains] did the same thing [we always did] but we just did it differently. We had FaceTime with patients. That to me was so far removed from how I would do ministry – I take people by the hand, but we couldn’t do that. The staff were very good, though; they kept us all safe; they advised us what PPE to use. Families really appreciated it. We would make a telephone call. I found it very difficult because it wasn’t the way I operated, put it that way. But you’d say to the family, put your phone on speaker and I’ll pray for you all. And it didn’t matter where they were sitting – they could be at home – and I’d say put your phone on speaker and I’ll pray for you all. It was different. It was very different.

”Hospital chaplains are confronted with death and serious illness on a daily basis, but Canon Ferry says the relentlessness never got him down. “As Christians, we’re called to a great hope,” he says. “The world tells us that death is the end of all things. As a Christian, as a Christian chaplain, my hope is – for them, and for me – that death is

not the end. Death is an experience we will all have in life. It's the only thing in life that makes us all equal. But it's not the end. Whenever you are there with a family and can reassure them through scripture – 'In my Father's house are many mansions and I'm going to prepare one for you' – whenever you bring people to that sort of understanding, then death becomes....different.

"The prospect of retirement holds little appeal for Canon Ferry. "I've no clue about what retirement's going to be like," he says. "I've always tried to live each day in God's plan as best I can, but it's not something I'm really looking forward to. I'd love to have a gripe about the Bishop, or the Church or the hospital – it'd make it easier to go – but I don't. I never ever had a gripe. I don't know what a gripe is. I'm sure it'll be great some morning when it's teeming out of the heavens and I don't have to get up.

"Will he miss chaplaincy work? "Oh aye. I'll miss the miracles," he says. "You see, as a hospital chaplain, every day you see the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear and the dead raised. You see those miracles every day. Somebody comes in here not able to walk, they go down to surgery, in two days they're skipping. They come in here, they can't see, [surgeons] take off their cataract and they see the very best. Put a hearing aid in...we have become so used to that, and we don't see the miracle.

"I'm not going to start preaching but I think we need to look, we need to see the miracles. I often say – it's a Presbyterian thing – but I always say you need to see the burning bush. There's loads of them [miracles], loads of them, so I'll miss the miracles. I'll miss what the patients teach me: they teach

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me to be thankful, to appreciate the people I need to appreciate.

After twenty years in the hospitals, what in his opinion are the qualities that make for a good chaplain? “I think a good chaplain needs to stay out of God’s way and to know that we’re neither in control nor responsible,” Canon Ferry suggests. “I’m not in control of your life, I can’t keep you alive no matter what prayers I say. If it’s God’s decision that you’ll pass away today then you’ll pass away today. It’s my job to tell you that: God’s in control, not me. And I’m not responsible for you if you pass away; I’m not responsible for where you end up eternally. My responsibility – as the good book tells us – my job is to stand in the gap between God and his people, and as a chaplain that’s what I do, I stand in the gap between God and the patient.”



Rev Nigel Cairns

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Canon Ferry has certainly earned his retirement. From tomorrow on, the task of 'standing in the gap' between God and the patients in Derry's hospitals will fall to the Rector of St Augustine's Church, Rev Nigel Cairns.

During his training for the ministry, the new chaplain watched his predecessor at close quarters, so he has a good understanding of what he's letting himself in for. "I did a placement with Canon Ferry," Nigel says. "It's a frighteningly big commitment, but I enjoyed hospital chaplaincy very much. I appreciated the opportunity to journey with people through the worst of times and through the best of times.

"Miracles do still happen," Nigel says, "and sometimes hospitals are the places where we see them occurring.

"I regard it as a great privilege to step into Canon Ferry's shoes. I would like to acknowledge the loyal and dedicated way in which David has nurtured and developed the role of chaplain, widening it to include not only patients and families but the hospital staff too. The importance of that was very evident during the pandemic."

Bishop Andrew Forster of Derry & Raphoe has paid tribute to the outgoing chaplain and offered words of encouragement to his successor. "Canon David Ferry's ministry to the sick and dying, to anguished relatives, and to hardworking staff in our hospitals has been of enormous comfort, often at the most difficult moments in people's lives. In particular, I'd like to acknowledge the immense work he and his colleagues did during the pandemic, when hospital visiting was severely restricted. I thank God for the many

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qualities David has which equipped him perfectly for the role of chaplain. Our Diocese is immensely grateful for all that he has done to further God's kingdom."

Obviously, David is a hard person to replace, but I am confident that in Rev Nigel Cairns we have found a worthy successor. Nigel has many of the same pastoral gifts as David, and I have no doubt that patients, families and healthcare staff will benefit greatly from his care and support as chaplain."

Protestants and the Irish Language – Webinar shares perspectives on the language North and South

The Church of Ireland Centre at Dublin City University hosted a fascinating event focused on Protestants and their engagement with the Irish language on Wednesday evening past.

The event, which took place online with a small studio audience which included the Archbishop of Dublin, featured Canon Gary Hastings, Rector of Holy Trinity, Killiney, who hails from Belfast and Linda Ervine, manager of the Turas Irish language project in East Belfast. Both spoke of their experiences of learning Irish as adults.

There were four respondents to their presentations: Danny Kennedy, chair of the Ulster Unionist Party; former Irish rugby international Trevor Ringland who is involved in cross community organisations in Northern Ireland; Ida Milne,

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historian and co–editor of Protestant and Irish; and Deirdre Nuttall, author of Different and the Same.

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The event was recorded and you can watch it on YouTube:
[] https://youtu.be/pefZr_0v4AI []

Linda Ervine told the gathering that her journey with Irish came about unexpectedly when she did a taster course 10 years ago and fell in love with the language. She didn't think that a Protestant learning Irish was a big deal but it attracted interest as her husband, Brian, led the Progressive Unionist Party. She said there were a range of responses varying from interest to hostility. She was accused of leading Protestants down the green brick road into the bog.

Her learning about Irish led her to discover that there were links between the Irish language and her own community, even the name Belfast comes from the Irish: Béal Feirste. "As I started to learn Irish I started to realise that it was all around me – in our speech, our churches, in organisations that were Protestant and should have a natural link to the Irish language, yet there was. In some ways it gave me permission to learn the language. It's strange that I needed to justify it to myself," she said.

She spoke of her initial dismissal of Ulster Scots but said she became intrigued with it and noticed an overlap between two distinct languages. "The people who polarise the languages have got it wrong. When you embrace one, you embrace the other [...] I get despondent when I see the polarisation of communities, language and culture that exists in Northern Ireland and that you're only allowed to fit into one box and the majority don't fit into one box [...] The



Linda Ervine and Gary Hastings

journey I'm on, I don't know if I'm going to be líofa (fluent) at the end of it. The destination is not the important part but the journey is. I've spent the last 10 years helping and encouraging other Protestants to do the same," she explained.

Gary Hastings spoke of his background growing up in loyalist east Belfast. His father worked in the shipyard and his uncle was president of Glentoran. He never knowingly met a Catholic until he was 18. He went to Coleraine to study physics and became interested in traditional music. This was the first time he came across Catholics and met a few people who spoke Irish. He said he had never suspected this existed and described them as exotic.

Gary fell in with people who loved traditional music and Irish and their enthusiasm was infectious. He left his physics course and decided to pursue Irish studies. He recalled that his own people were bewildered by the choice but only because they wanted to know if he could get a job from it. Irish was something obscure to them and he might as well

have been studying Serbo–Croat, he said. He and his wife Caitríona brought their children up through Irish as much as they could. While the language of the home was Irish he said both children were now passively fluent but rarely spoke it.

“For the last 40 years I’ve spoken Irish 40–50% of the time. I had time to step out of the narrow ghettoised society I was reared in without leaving the country. When I had the chance to throw my leg over the fence, it was the same but different [...] I’ve worked in the Free State for 30 years. My experience here with Protestants is that in the main the Irish language is rarely an integral part of how they see themselves,” he stated.

In more recent years there had been a growing relationship between members of the Church of Ireland and the Irish language in the south, he noted. There were Irish language services and thanks to the work of Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise, it was no longer as strange as it was. He said that tribal groups were becoming irrelevant in the South and people could be interested in Irish if they wanted. He said he understood the fears of Protestants in Northern Ireland who were afraid of not belonging or being cast out of their own world by learning the language but he had done both and hadn’t lost his own faith.

Responding to the presentations, Danny Kennedy said he grew up in south Armagh and didn’t have a lot of interest in the Ulster Scots language but was very committed to Ulster Scots culture, particularly through the Royal Orders and bands. He said his grandfather in the 1900s was fluent in Irish and was curious about how that tradition had

disappeared. But on Newry and Mourne District Council, of which he was a member for 25 years, it was rammed down their throats. “Irish has been politicised and that is to the detriment of it. In a very divided society in Northern Ireland I worry that Irish continues to be used as a political weapon which is a great tragedy,” he said.

Ida Milne said she had been charmed to see how Linda Ervine was depoliticising the Irish language. Growing up in a Protestant family in Wexford, Ida said she was six–eighths Cromwellian so she shouldn’t like Irish. But she loved Irish in school and it was only when she moved outside the south east that she learned that some Protestants saw it as an imposition on their education and others felt they were not genetically disposed to speak it. But she said for some Protestants, particularly in more rural areas, speaking Irish had been a way of engaging with their communities because they wanted to fit in.

Trevor Ringland pointed out that cultural debate was important in building relationships. He said hatred needed to be removed from the debate. He suggested that the Irish language was thriving in Northern Ireland and asked how better communication around language and culture could be achieved and how it could be de–weaponised. “What people tend to forget is that we love this part of the island. We have to take it off people who use it to divide [...] We have to find ways to work together,” he contended.

Outlining her background, Deirdre Nuttall said she went through the Catholic education system and didn’t consider herself part of the Protestant community. She suggested that in independent Ireland there were two ways of

responding – some education institutions didn't really engage with Irish while others engaged with Irish as a way to feel Irish without getting into political views. More importantly, she said, was that knowing Irish was a mode of becoming socially upwardly mobile. Lower income Irish Protestants would have left school at 14 to work on a farm or go into service. But if they had Irish they could get scholarships through Coláiste Mabhí and become teachers. They could also encourage others to become socially upwardly mobile through teaching in Church of Ireland schools.

Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir, Deputy Dean of the Institute of Education at DCU, said the seminar had been really interesting with a range of perspectives and insights. He thanked Professor Anne Lodge, director of the Church of Ireland Centre for organising the webinar.

Eglinton's "Coolest" Church

It's no secret that churches, like other bodies in society, have faced a challenging time recently, with congregations impacted by the Covid pandemic and finances hit by the spiralling cost of living.

This, on top of the ongoing challenge of communicating the message in an increasingly indifferent society, where many see the church as outmoded and irrelevant.

Never shy of facing a challenge, Canon Paul Hoey and the Select Vestry of St. Canice's church in Eglinton have recognised the problem and have decided to tackle it head



on by rebranding the name of the church. From today the church will no longer be known as “St. Canice’s” but as “COOL” church.

Canon Hoey explains the rationale for the change: “We’ve been thinking for a while now that linking our church with the name of a rather shadowy figure from the 6th century isn’t in tune with popular culture. So, we decided to think up something that would have greater appeal to today’s generation. We considered several possibilities for renaming the church, including MOD (Modern Ordinary Disciples) Church or HOT (Holy, Obedient, Thankful), but finally, after some debate, we’ve settled on calling the church COOL (Contemporary, Open, Orthodox, Lively)”. Of course, not everybody will be happy with the rebranding exercise. One stalwart of the parish, who prefers to remain

anonymous, is quoted as saying, “I think it is a big mistake to rebrand St. Canice’s as Cool. One of the main reasons I go along is because it’s always warm and cosy, and I can save a bit on the soaring cost of heating my home. If people think it’s going to be cooler, they just won’t turn up.”

As well as the church’s name change, the Select Vestry has also decided that Canon Hoey’s job title should be rebranded. No longer to be addressed as “Rector,” Canon Hoey is delighted that he will now be known by a title that, he says, “reflects our desire to be a church for the grass roots. Since I see myself above all as the Pastor of the People what better title could I have than “Pop”?”

COOL is holding a community celebration this Saturday at 7:00 pm. to celebrate the rebranding. The event will begin with a symbolic act in which a parishioner dressed as St Canice will ceremonially open a cool box and remove dozens of iced lollies which will then be distributed to members of the congregation. “I am sure that no-one present will be able to miss the symbolism as we all eat our lollies,” comments Canon Hoey. “We will see the church literally become cool before our eyes.”

The event will conclude with a new hymn penned especially for the occasion:

“Alleluia! We are COOL,
Full of hope, our hearts joyful.
Praising God we’ll never stop
As we are led by Canon “Pop”.
Alleluia! Church is COOL
And today is known as

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Please note - This was published on the parish Face Book on the morning of April

News reports

Malta prepares for visit of Pope Francis

Malta is preparing to welcome Pope Francis this weekend. This will be the third time a Pope has visited Europe's southernmost country. St John Paul II came in 1990 and 2001, and Benedict XVI, made the journey in 2010.

During the General Audience, Pope Francis asks for prayers for his weekend Apostolic Journey to Malta, and thanked all those involved in the preparations.

The Pope said he was looking forward to visiting that "luminous land" following in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul, who was warmly welcomed there after being shipwrecked at sea on his way to Rome.

He said this trip will offer a unique opportunity "to go to the wellsprings of the proclamation of the Gospel" and experience for himself the Christian community there whose lively history goes back thousands of years.

Pope Francis also paid tribute to the hospitality and generosity of the people of Malta today who have welcomed "so many brothers and sisters seeking refuge."

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Set in the centre of the Mediterranean, the islands, with a population of less than half a million, have been a landing point for many migrants and refugees seeking safety and a better life. (About 90 per cent of the population is Catholic, according to a 2018 survey.)

Pope Francis will arrive on Saturday morning at around 10am and, after the welcome ceremony, will head to the Grand Master's Palace in Valletta - once the seat of the Grand Masters of the Knights of St John, who built the palace in 1571. There Pope Francis will meet the President of the Republic of Malta, George William Vella, and Prime Minister, Robert Abela, who has just been re-elected to lead the country's government. A speech in the Great Council Hall to the Maltese authorities and the diplomatic corps will close the first part of the day. After a stop at the Apostolic Nunciature, the Holy Father will visit the Marian shrine of Ta' Pinu on the 'sister island' of Gozo. In the large square in front of the shrine, Malta's most important place of pilgrimage, the Pope will preside over prayers with the faithful, together with Maltese Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, along with Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta, and Bishop Anton Teuma of Gozo.

On the morning of Sunday, 3 April, Pope Francis will meet privately with members of the Society of Jesus and then, at around 8.30am, he will go to the Grotto of St Paul in Rabat. It was there, according to tradition, that the Apostle of the Gentiles landed after being shipwrecked in 60 AD. After lighting a votive lamp and prayers, Francis will greet 14 religious leaders, as well as a number of sick people assisted by Caritas. One of Malta's largest open spaces, the

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Piazzale dei Granai in Floriana - the city that extends beyond the walls of Valletta - will later host the Holy Mass celebrated by the Pope at 10.15, followed by the Angelus.

'They showed us unusual kindness' is the motto of this 36th apostolic journey of Francis, which concludes at around 6.15 pm with a visit to the 'John XXIII Peace Lab Migrant Centre' in Hal Far, which hosts people from Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan who embarked in Libya to cross the Mediterranean. It is a place where great educational work is carried out in the field of human rights, justice, solidarity, and medical assistance. About 200 migrants will meet the Pope in the structure's open-air theatre. A farewell ceremony at the airport is scheduled to take place at 6.15 pm, with the return to Rome expected at 7.40 pm.

Cardinal Mario Grech, who was bishop of of Gozo from 2005 to 2019 told Vatican Radio the visit will be "a moment of grace because I believe that the presence of Peter on the island of Paul will confirm us in our faith. And when I say that the Holy Father would strengthen our faith, I also mean that I am waiting that he will send a wake-up call to my nationals because although we are a Catholic nation with a strong Christian tradition, we are part of the world. We are a European country, so what is brewing on the continent is also present in our island. That is why I strongly pray the Holy Spirit will assist Pope Francis to make the most of his visit and to help us in our New Evangelization, I know my brothers in the episcopate of Malta are committed to this New Evangelization project."

In the media

Millions from LGBT community ‘thrown under the bus’ by Johnson

Belfast Telegraph

An LGBT campaigner within the Church of England, charity Mind and the British Medical Association have condemned the U-turn on conversion therapy.

Millions of people from the LGBT community have been “betrayed” and “thrown under the bus” by Boris Johnson after he U-turned on a pledge to ban so-called conversion therapy, campaigners have said.

Jayne Ozanne, an LGBT rights activist within the Church of England, said the Prime Minister has “shown his true colours with regard to the LGBT community” and the decision will “horrify people right across the country”.

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/millions-from-lgbt-community-thrown-under-the-bus-by-johnson-41508844.html>]

€192k grant to preserve two Clare heritage buildings

Clare Champion

Well-known Clare heritage sites, St Flannan’s Church of Ireland Cathedral and Frawley’s Bar in Lahinch and have been awarded significant funding to conserve notable historic structures.

The sites have been awarded funding for diverse reasons including renewal of timber structures and reinstallation of slates, repairs to buttresses, re-pointing of masonry etc. to prevent serious damage to historic fabric and internal ornate elements.

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St Flannan's is to receive €152,000 for significant reslating, repairs to buttresses, repointing of masonry to prevent serious damage to historic fabric and internal ornate elements.

[[] <https://clarechampion.ie/e192k-grant-to-preserve-two-clare-heritage-buildings/>]

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Podcast– Ministry to Young Adults

Refined
Ardens sed Virens



This conversation flows out of a recent event held in Assembly Buildings for young adults called NOW.



This evening event focused on the themes of discipleship, church engagement and friendship to help the 18-25 year olds present reflect on these important issues.

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Two of the speakers from that event, Zara Miskimmin Made For More and Chris McBurney (Christian Unions Ireland) share with Rick Hill some of what they spoke about, as well as reflect more generally on wider themes of ministry to young adults.

This might be an episode to share with young adults in your own congregation!

<https://audioboom.com/posts/8056354-055-let-s-talk-about-young-adults>

Voices from the World Church

Irish Methodist World Mission Partnership are hosting, 'Voices from the World Church' on Zoom with Mission Associate, Stephen McCann next Thursday 7th April, 7.30pm - 8.30pm.

Stephen has been serving with 24-7 Ibiza since November 2016. 24-7 Ibiza is rooted in prayer, mission and justice and exists to care for the emotional, physical and spiritual needs of the community.

Join us! Register here: bit.ly/voices-reg

Poem for today

A Prayer in Spring by Robert Frost

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Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers to-day;
And give us not to think so far away
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here
All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white,
Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night;
And make us happy in the happy bees,
The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.

And make us happy in the darting bird
That suddenly above the bees is heard,
The meteor that thrusts in with needle bill,
And off a blossom in mid air stands still.

For this is love and nothing else is love,
The which it is reserved for God above
To sanctify to what far ends He will,
But which it only needs that we fulfil.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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