



Six Churches Choir sing at ‘Women’s House of Stories’ launch in Rossinver



A new Leitrim/Fermanagh cross border women’s project was launched recently with the aim of supporting rural women in this area.

‘Women Along the Border’ is an initiative of the North Leitrim Women’s Centre, with the support of the Leitrim County Council through the Leitrim County PEACE IV Partnership.

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The project will work with women along the Fermanagh Leitrim border, comprising the areas of Kinlough, Rossinver, Garrison, Kiltyclogher, Glenfarne, Cashel and Belcoo.

This project has been supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).



The launch took the form of a 'Women's House of Stories' in the atmospheric setting of the Ballagh Centre, formerly a Church of Ireland, now a community run centre in Rossinver.

Special guests were the Six Churches Choir, a musical collaboration between local Fermanagh Church of Ireland and Catholic Churches, directed by Louise Leonard and accompanied by Joy Graham.

There were poetry readings from Audrey Ovens, songs from Catherine Maguire and from Robert Johnston, sketches from 'The Border Girls' and compere for the evening, Rosie Stewart was

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joined in song by two of her sisters, Kathleen Meehan and Peggy McGovern.

‘Women Along the Border’ project worker, Isobel Cleary said, ‘The project aims to support rural women in this border area to live, learn and socialise in an open, inclusive and supportive environment, and this is exactly what we did in our House of Stories, and intend to continue.’

‘Women Along the Border’ will run a series of workshops, events and classes in the area. The next scheduled event is ‘Stitching Stories – The Power of the Needle and Thread’ a talk by Roberta Bacic, born in Chile and resident of Northern Ireland, who is the founder of Conflict Textiles, an international collection of ‘arpilleras’ or ‘story quilts’ from around the world, illustrating women’s experiences.

Roberta’s talks will be on Thursday, 26 April at 3pm in The Healthy Living Centre, Belcoo and at 8 pm in the Gillaroo Centre, Garrison and will lead to a series of craft workshops with an opportunity to depict experiences of living in this border area.

For further information about this project, please contact Isobel at North Leitrim Women’s Centre: Phone +353(0) 719856220 or email womenalongtheborder@gmail.com

Report courtesy The Leitrim Observer.

Campaign launched to raise £131,000 to save iconic Donegal church spire

A fundraising campaign has been launched to save an iconic Donegal church spire that was badly damaged by a Christmas Day lightning strike two years ago.

More than €150,000 (£131,000) is needed to repair the spire of the 190-year-old Donegal Parish Church, which is an instantly recognisable feature on the Donegal Town skyline.



The interior of the Church of Ireland building was extensively repaired following the 2016 lightning strike, but damp is causing the stonework of the historic spire and tower to crumble.

The Archdeacon of Raphoe David Huss said urgent action is needed to repair the stonework and to re-point the entire tower and spire. He added that the project has failed to secure government funding.

“The cost of the entire repair project is estimated at €150,000,” he said.

“To our great disappointment, we were recently turned down by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for a grant under the Structures at Risk Fund.

“To date we have received no funding from local or national government, although we continue to explore these avenues and to engage with our local elected representatives and grant-making bodies.”

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The parish is organising a number of fundraising activities over the next months.

Details on all of these activities can be found at the parish's new Facebook page, 'Save our Spire Donegal', which will also have details of how donations can be made.

"Any support will be greatly appreciated," said Archdeacon Huss. "Together we can ensure that this much-loved landmark stands tall and continues to serve the community for many years to come." Report courtesy News Letter.

RTÉ One to broadcast mass on World Day of Prayer for Vocations

This Sunday 22 April the World Day of Prayer for Vocations will be celebrated.. To mark this 'Good Shepherd Sunday', RTÉ One will broadcast a special Mass from their Donnybrook studios at 11.00am celebrated by Bishop Denis Brennan, Bishop of Ferns and supported by the choir of the National Centre for Liturgy, Maynooth.

Each year on Vocations Sunday, the Church throughout the world prays for vocations. Catholics are asked to make a special effort to ask the Lord for more vocations to the priesthood and religious life. In his letter for Vocations Sunday 2018 Pope Francis reflected on when Jesus returned after his time of prayer and struggle in the desert, He did three things before he began his mission. He listened to the word, He discerned the content of the mission entrusted to Him by the Father and proclaimed that He came to accomplish it today (Luke 4:16-21). This model – listening, discerning and praying – can be followed by all of us as we each try to live out our vocation.

The Holy Father said 2018 is a special year for vocations because the Synod of Bishops will reflect on 'the relationship between young people, faith, and vocation' at its two-yearly gathering in October.

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International author Jeff Cavins and ‘The Priests’ to participate at Family Faith Day in Belfast

As part of the ongoing preparations for the World Meeting of Families which will take place in Dublin in August, the Diocese of Down and Connor will host a family faith day on Saturday 21 April at Our Lady and Saint Patrick’s College, Belfast.



Organised by the Down and Connor Living Church Office, the family faith day will welcome international author and Director of Evangelization for the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Mr Jeff Cavins, as guest speaker. Renowned musical artists The Priests will also take part in the event and will lead prayers and music on the day.

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Speaking ahead of the event, Bishop Noel Treanor, Bishop of Down and Connor said, 'Within the Diocese of Down and Connor, the family is the beating heart of the Church. It is within the lived reality of family life, day and daily, that we encounter God in a vibrancy and panorama of faith.'

He continued, 'As we prepare for the World Meeting of Families which will be held in August, I warmly invite all to our Diocesan Family Faith Day which will be celebrated in Our Lady and Saint Patrick's College. This will be a wonderful occasion to celebrate the giftedness of each family and the diversity of family life within diocesan parishes and broader society. This event will also provide an opportunity to reflect together on how to further spiritually and pastorally affirm and support these families as domestic churches.'

The family faith day will open at 9.30am with tea and opportunity for attendees before the opening prayer lead by The Priests at 10.30am.

Following the opening prayer, Jeff Cavins will lead the first of two sessions focusing on the values and traditions that Jesus will have grown up in and what we can learn from the Holy Family and bring into our own homes. In his second session, he will draw on the writings from St Paul and the advice given to us to create Church – a family of families.

Following lunch a series of workshops will be offered by guests Emily Cavins, on sharing the Scriptures with children; Petra Conroy on 'Explaining the Church's teaching on Family with charity and clarity'; and by Jeff Cavins on sharing faith with family who don't believe.

All are welcome to the event though booking is essential. For more information please see www.downandconnor.org.

The World Meeting of Families 2018 will take place from 21–26 August in Dublin on the theme, 'The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World'. Pope Francis has confirmed that he will attend the World Meeting of Families during a presentation of the WMOF2018 Icon of the Holy Family in Rome on Wednesday 21 March.

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For more information on WMOF2018, please see www.worldmeeting2018.ie.

BAME clergy to receive special mentoring in Church of England bid to boost diversity



The Church of England now has more women entering the clergy but the overwhelming majority are still white.

Black and ethnic minority future clergy will receive special mentoring under a scheme to be set up by the Church of England.

Officials are trying to tackle a shortfall in minority ethnic groups taking holy orders with latest figures showing that 92 per cent of clergy, and 94 per cent of senior clergy, are white and British.

Following the likes of the BBC and PwC, who have special mentoring schemes for people of minority backgrounds, the



Guli Francis-Dehqani was previously curate training officer and adviser for women's ministry in the diocese of Peterborough.

programme for potential BAME clergy will be launched this autumn to drive a boost in take-up.

Last year there was a 14 per cent increase in the number of people going forward for ministry, the 2017 statistics revealed, and for the first time in 15 years there were more female than male ordinands.

However just 3.5 per cent of clergy are BAME and among new ordinands last year only seven per cent were from minority ethnic backgrounds.

There remains a 'significant challenge' around recruiting more BAME clergy, the Church has admitted.



Rose Hudson-Wilkin is chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons and is one of the few senior CofE clergy who is BAME.

'God calls people from all walks of life, and our ministers should reflect the society we are part of,' it said on a page announcing the mentoring scheme.

Last year the Church created a bishop specifically for BAME communities. Canon Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani was an Iranian refugee to the UK and became the first ever bishop of Loughborough specifically tasked with supporting the Church's BAME clergy and will be based mainly in Leicester, one of the UK's first primarily non-white cities.

Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed, the CofE's first national minority ethnic vocations officer, said a mentoring scheme was 'nothing new' and was just drawing on best practice.

'It has a proven track record of encouraging people by giving them people who are "like themselves" to accompany them on their journey to whatever they are doing. In our case that is ordination,' she told Christian Today.

'It is an urgent thing because it is commonly understood that at the moment we are not as representative as the society that we serve,' she added. 'Within our churches there are people from all sorts of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.'

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'It is important for our churches to have diversity of leadership because that is how our society is. Our society is rich and diverse. Why not have that in our church leadership and structures? People learn from each other about themselves but also a different worldview that they probably haven't heard of before. That nourishes their faith and how they go to scripture and what they see in the world which they hadn't seen before because all they have around them is people like them.'

It comes as the CofE urges its 30,000 serving ministers to lead campaigns in their parishes around Vocations Sunday this week. Although aimed at both ordained and non-ordained members, the Church of England is looking to increase the number of people becoming priests by 50 per cent by 2020 if it is to reverse the overall decline in clergy numbers.

Although the numbers of new ordinands are increasing, the overall number of clergy is falling because of the rate at which older ministers are retiring.

The Great Vocations Conversation campaign is encouraging ministers to have discussions around people's purpose in life with people who are 'significantly different from how you would identify yourself'.

'This is particularly important where people have historically been excluded for reasons of gender, class, ethnicity, age, disability, mental health, sexuality, culture, or academic background,' the Church's website on the campaign said.

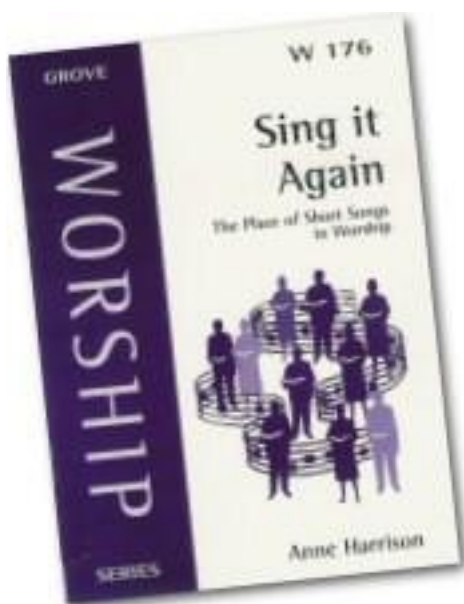
The bishop of Guildford, Andrew Watson, is chair of the CofE's ordained vocations working group and said: 'As I look back over my Christian journey, I've been so grateful for those who have given me various nudges along the way, encouraging me to take my vocation seriously. *The Great Vocations Conversation* gives us a wonderful opportunity to be one of those people for others, as together we respond to the call of Christ to "bear fruit that will last".'

Rev Dr Catherine Okoronkwo, a curate in Lichfield Diocese, who was ordained a priest last year, said: 'Conversations have played

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an enormously influential role in my path to ordained ministry, from a chance meeting with the Archbishop of York to talking with diocesan clergy tasked with encouraging vocations in the Church of England.

'Clergy and lay people can play a vital role in helping people to realise their potential and encouraging people to explore their vocation. At the heart of my journey was being open to God's prompting, leading and timing.'



Sing it Again: the place of short songs in worship

The repeated use of short songs has become popular in charismatic worship - but it is also an important part of worship in other traditions. Here, repetition has been found to offer a surprising freedom, creativity and depth in worship.

This book examines how and why these discoveries were made, explores the value of repeated short songs, and looks at practical ways in which the use of these songs can add new dimensions to worship in the local church.

The author Anne Harrison has a broad experience of music for worship. She works part-time for the Royal School of Church Music, edits 'News of Hymnody' and is actively involved in musical training in the Diocese of Durham.

It includes a full list of further resources.

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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[Download extra resources](#) for this book.

<https://grovebooks.co.uk/collections/worship/products/w-176-sing-it-again-the-place-of-short-songs-in-worship>

Partnership for change: Christian Aid in Burundi

Christian Aid has been working in Burundi since 1995. A spokesperson said, “Our work here was initially established to provide humanitarian assistance to restore the dignity of civil conflict survivors, especially women and children.



“The Christian Aid supported sunflower project has changed my life as it means I now have enough money to support my six children through school and no longer have to worry about unexpected medical bills”,Melanie Niyonzima, 45, sunflower farmer, Rutana Province

“The focus is now shifting towards building resilience through provision of essential needs and services and promotion of pro-poor markets that empower people economically.

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“We address the root causes of poverty through governance projects and by tackling the spread of HIV and the related stigma and discrimination.

“In order to respond to the challenges of the moment, we have committed to remain visible on the ground and to continue assisting communities in health, agricultural production and value chain development, humanitarian needs and tackling gender-based violence.

“We will continue to work in partnership with influential faith, interfaith and secular partners.”

[Find out more about our work in Burundi here](#)

