



Lisburn team first outside visitors to Yei exiles in two years

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Mission team members from Lisburn Cathedral, currently in the Rhino Refugee Camp, Uganda, are the first outside visitors to Yei Church since they were exiled nearly two years ago.

The team, made up of the rector, **the Very Rev Sam Wright, Dean of Connor**, his wife Paula, Margaret and Denis Fullerton and Jill and Martin Lester, travelled from Entebbe to Arua on April 14. Their first week had been spent working with Abaana projects in Kampala.

Arriving in Arua, they were met by **Bishop Hilary of Yei**. In their latest Facebook post, the team wrote: "Bishop Hilary could not over emphasise that the church of Yei in South Sudan, and in exile in Uganda, would not be where it is without the commitment of CMS Ireland."

Along with Bishop Hilary, the team met others who would be involved in helping them run a Clergy Retreat for Refugee Church Leaders in the camp during the week.

WELCOMED

On Sunday April 15 they visited the OCEA Zone of the Rhino Refugee Camp. "We were welcomed by children with small branches with leaves being waved and laid on the road for around a half mile up to the church, singing 'we welcome you Bishop / visitors with a clean heart,'" the team reported.

Dean Sam Wright, Paula and Jill took part in the service at Unity Church with Bishop Hilary, whilst Lay Reader Denis, Margaret and Martin took part at the nearby Peace Church.

The team wrote:

"We feel that the significance of our visit for the Yei Church in exile should in no way be underestimated. We have been the first outside visitors since they were exiled nearly some two years ago. This was made clear in a letter to us from Bishop Hilary where he said that 'While they have endured great tragedy, your visit will remind them that are not forgotten.' A fact that is very close to the heart of the Bishop in his role."

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The team said the pivotal role that the Mothers' Union plays in the church life in Africa was apparent, adding that their standing in the church is comparable to that of honoured visitors.

WELL ORDERED

The team found their expectations of the conditions at Rhino Camp were misplaced. "Our expectation that the camp would be a tightly packed seething mass of humanity was completely wrong. There is a well ordered community of well-spaced tukals throughout the area of the overall Rhino Camp, which is spread over a number of zones within which there are districts.

"The camp as a whole is so large that we were driven for one and half hours, and were yet still only just beyond the centre. The camp has a current population of some 87,800 people – mainly women and children as the men have stayed behind to fight the war in South Sudan, or have been killed."

But the team said this camp is still not home for the South Sudanese. "There is the uncertainty as to how long they will be there, and they do not know what they will return to when they do go back to South Sudan.

"Whilst they do have a community, it is only one that can survive on a temporary basis; long term there would need to be a better structure of schooling, farming and business."

The team said that was not what the people wanted – their desire is to return home to South Sudan. Yet despite a perception that Yei Town may be safe, it is understood that outside of the town it is still dangerous.

RETREAT

Linda Abwa, Partnership co-ordinator from CMS Ireland, joined the team on Monday April 16, and the week-long residential Clergy Retreat for pastors from the South Sudan Zones of the Rhino Camp got underway, with some 24 pastors present.

The team wrote: "This is the first opportunity that these pastors have had to be able to meet together since they left South Sudan

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two years ago. This week will be a time for them have fellowship to support and strengthen each other.

“We heard many heart rending stories of people losing their homes, family members, their churches being burned, and having to hide in the bush for up to two years before eventually arriving at the refugee camp in Arua.”

You can follow the team’s updates on the [Lisburn Cathedral Facebook](#) page.

Godly Play introduced in Cork

The Children’s Ministry Group in Cork, Cloyne and Ross organised a very enjoyable Workshop on ‘Godly Play’ on Saturday, 14th April. It was led by Cora O’Sullivan. Cora O’Farrell is a Godly Play trainer with Godly Play Ireland. She uses Godly Play in her work with student teachers at the Institute of Education, Dublin City University.

Over 30 attendees were spellbound by the Cora’s demonstration of the Godly Play approach which can help children to explore their faith through story. Godly Play technique, based on Montessori teaching principles, gently teaches religious language while enhancing the children’s spiritual experience through wonder and play.

Jars4Journeys funds reminder

The C of I’s Bishops’ Appeal has issued a reminder that - It’s now time now to send on the funds raised through Jars4Journeys so that Bishops’ Appeal can support three community initiatives building resilience and combatting climate change around the world. If you raised the funds as part of a parish initiative, please check if the parish will collect the funds before sending a total on to Bishops’ Appeal. Otherwise, Bishops’ Appeal is happy to process cheques, bank transfers, bank notes and even jars!



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Details for sending in donations can be found [here](#) and donations can still be made online at <https://store.ireland.anglican.org/donations/the-bishops-appeal>

More than 1,000 people signed petition rejecting plans for a four-schools amalgamation in Downpatrick

Proposals to merge three post-primary schools in Downpatrick and a fourth in Portaferry are going ahead without “thought or consideration”, according to some parents opposed to the plan.

There has been some resistance to the plans, particularly among St Patrick's Grammar parents, to bring the four schools together on the Red High site in Downpatrick in a ‘super school’ that would have around 1,600 pupils.

An explanatory note on the [online petition](#) states: “A plan by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) to merge four schools in south Down. The proposal would see Downpatrick’s De

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La Salle High (CCMS), St Mary's High (CCMS) and St Patrick's Grammar (whose Trustees are the De La Salle Congregation), as well as St Columba's College in Portaferry (CCMS), become a single 'super school' by 2021 on the current St Patrick's Grammar campus which would accommodate around 1,600 pupils in the town.

"St Patrick's Grammar School's (known locally as The Red High) Parents & Friends Association (PFA) have totally rejected this merger plan.



American Anglicans would face 'consequences' over gender neutral wedding services

Anglicans in the US have been warned by the Church of England there would be "stringent consequences" if proposed gender neutral wedding service plans receive the go-ahead.

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The Episcopal Church (TEC) has been warned its place within the international Anglican family could be placed in jeopardy if it departs from standard Anglican practise by replacing references to a "husband and wife" with "the union of two people".

In a letter seen by The Times, the Church of England's general secretary William Nye said "the pressure to dissociate the Church of England from TEC in all manner of ways would increase".

The TEC clashed with conservative elements within the Anglican Communion in 2015 when it became the first Anglican church to allow same-sex weddings.

The Times reports a proposed new wording for marriage ceremonies conducted by TEC priests would also see the intention of marriage no longer "for the procreation of children" but with offering "the gift of children".

In his article, Times reporter Kaya Burgess described the proposed new marriage rites as "gay friendly" and "more inclusive of same-sex couples who may want to adopt".

In an eight-page document, Mr Nye, the Church of England's most senior lay person, said many people would feel the proposed changes would leave the TEC "no room to remain authentically part of global Anglicanism."

Catholic bishops say they're committed to pastoral care of transgender people

Catholic bishops in England and Wales have said they believe in the distinction between male and female but wish to have mercy on transgender people.

The bishops discussed the issue of gender at their conference in Leeds last week.



Bishop John Sherrington, the auxiliary bishop of Westminster said: "We recognise that there are people who do not accept their biological sex. We are concerned about and committed to their pastoral care."

He added: "We wish to extend compassion and accompany them in the way that they live out their faith."

Wanting to highlight how the Catholic Church desires to be understanding towards those struggling with gender, he said: "There is a place of welcome for everyone in the Catholic Church."

However, Bishop John added that Catholic teaching maintains that "God creates human beings male and female", quoting Genesis 1:27.

He explained their position theologically remains the same: "Therefore we emphasise these foundational differences and the way in which they do shape our understanding - that's in contrast to those that argue that the individual is free to define himself or herself today."

In a joint statement, the bishops said: "We are deeply concerned that this ideology of gender is creating confusion."

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"We hope for a renewed appreciation of the fundamental importance of sexual difference in our culture and the accompaniment of those who experience conflict in their sense of self and God-given identity."

Justin Welby breaks ground for new library

Work began on a new, bigger library at Lambeth Palace last Friday when the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby symbolically "broke ground" for the building. It is the first new building at the Palace in more than 100 years. The new library will bring together what's thought to be one of the largest historical ecclesiastical book collections outside the Vatican. There will also be easier access for the public to see these treasures.

The collection is made up of more than 5,000 volumes of manuscripts, more than 200,000 printed books, and nearly 10,000 linear metres. Most of this is kept in the primarily medieval Lambeth Palace buildings but some are also stored in the Church of England Record Centre warehouse, where they face pollution damage as well as fire concern.

When asked about the importance of the library, Archbishop Justin responded "I feel very strongly, and I know Declan in charge of this project feels, that there's no point in having these things if they're never seen. Why have them? They do two things; they tell us a huge amount about the history of the nation, particularly in the pre-reformation period. And secondly they testify to generation after generation who were disciples and followed after Jesus Christ and that speaks volumes about the centrality of faith in the life of the nation over its history."

The library's collection holds books and artefacts that tell the story of Anglicanism and its relationship to the UK as a nation. It includes is Henry VIII's personal and annotated copy of *Invicta veritas*, published by Thomas Abell, which denounced the King's wish to divorce himself from Katherine of Aragon. Henry VIII's annotations



pointed out his disagreements with Thomas Abell’s argument, which ultimately led to the King splitting from Rome and creating the Church of England.

The Archbishop also explained the library’s purpose in building relationships. He shared that when guests visit Lambeth Palace, he challenges the Library to find something to show them. For example, a couple of years ago when a senior Nigerian minister visited Lambeth Palace, the Library was able to show him the history of the Church of England’s engagement with Nigeria in the 19th century with photographs, letters, and other documents. According to the Archbishop, the minister was “absolutely blown over with this sense of where we’d come from and the things we had in the past.”

Archbishop Justin called the project exciting, “because of the access to scholars, because of the way it will enable us to witness to Christ through what we have acquired over the centuries and to be much more open about our history and the history of the nation and the interrelation of the two.

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This new building, designed by architects Claire and Sandy Wright, will be a “zero carbon building” with humidity controls to protect the collection. Its location at the far end of the grounds against the boundary wall on Lambeth Road means that it will only take up 3% of the site’s footprint. The library is due to finish in 2020.

Church of Scotland’s new book on organs...pulls out all the stops...

The magnificent sounds of a church organ might seem like the natural accompaniment to congregational singing. Many of us then will be surprised to learn that 19th century churchgoers were scandalised at the prospect of introducing organ music into Scottish Presbyterian services.

Dismissed as "a kist o' whistles with the devil in every pipe", the instrument was scorned after the Reformation.

In fact it wasn't until 1864 that the General Assembly agreed to allow them in Church of Scotland worship if presbyteries agreed. "Before this the Church of Scotland didn't tolerate their use", says Alan Buchan, a husband of the manse and organist for some 45 years.



"Afterwards there was still often tremendous disagreement within presbyteries. "

"There was a view that only the human voice is a legitimate



way to praise God."

Mr Buchan has spent seven years compiling every pipe organ ever to exist in Scotland, a labour of love that has given us his recently published book *Organs in Scotland*.

Whilst much of the book is an in-depth catalogue that records every organ in Scotland, it also contains some fascinating insights into the history of the organ.

"Originally organs would play to give monks or cathedral clergy a break from chanting," he says, noting that initially the Benedictines were pro and the Cistercians against the addition of the instrument in worship.

After the Scottish Reformation, organs were frequently destroyed in acts of iconoclasm.

In 1687, for example, James VII's organ installed in the Royal Chapel at Holyrood was destroyed by an anti-Catholic mob, who "pull'd it all to pieces".

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The first Church of Scotland organ unveiled after the 1864 decision was at Anderston Parish Church in Glasgow on 15 January the following year.

Meanwhile, as the book reveals, Scottish American industrialist Andrew Carnegie was passionate enough about the value of the organ to part-fund more than 7,600 of them around the world.

At a time when women were excluded from many official aspects of the church, Mr Buchan says that they took up roles as organists from the very beginning.

Asked about the appeal of playing the organ Mr Buchan explains that it's a unique instrument.

"I took it up when I was 16. Like a lots of boys I liked making a lot of noise", he says.

"It's a very exciting instrument to play. You have a whole orchestra at your disposal."

Unsurprisingly he has a preference for traditional organs.

"I prefer those which are in their original state - you feel closer to the music if you have mechanical action", he says.

Although the peak time for new organs has passed, there are still a healthy number of players in Scotland.

Schemes such as the [Scottish Churches Organist Training Scheme \(SCOTS\)](#) are helping to support the musicians of the future.

The book is published by the [Edinburgh Society of Organists](#).

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