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People and places

Beyond the Stereotype - major research into educational underachievement in controlled schools

A significant new research report into educational underachievement in controlled schools – commissioned and funded by the Transferor Representatives' Council – has been launched by Stranmillis University College.

The Transferor Representatives' Council oversees the appointment of more than 1,500 governors to controlled schools; these transferor governors are nominated by representatives of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, and noted by the Education Authority.

The new report, *Beyond the Stereotype*, is based on group interviews with principals, teachers and pupils in eight primary and post-primary schools in suburban, town and rural areas, and also with school governors and other leaders in those communities.

The study aims to go 'beyond the stereotype' of the well-documented challenge of underachievement among Protestant working class boys in inner-city areas, and to 'cast the net wider' to provide a broader and more representative picture. It raises important questions about the purpose of education and how we measure success.

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The study finds that while pupils view educational achievement as largely related to success in external exams (such as GCSEs and A-levels), many school



and community leaders (including employers) place greater value on a wider range of skills and abilities, and pupils' mental and physical health, self-confidence, happiness and willingness to learn.

Particular challenges in rural communities, which have not been reported extensively to date in previous studies, are identified with some school leaders speaking of the difficulty in motivating boys to work hard towards GCSEs.

Disadvantage across generations and a lack of educational aspiration, often associated with inner-city working-class contexts, are also reportedly strong features of many farming communities.

Beyond the Stereotype also finds that schools lack support in terms of sourcing standardised tests for pupils, which are bought in from private companies in the absence of government-funded tests. A resulting variety of approaches

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in testing at primary level mean that post-primary schools often test pupils within their first few days at their new school; this, in turn, adds to an impression among pupils that post-primary education is about tests and scores.

School leaders are doing ‘sterling work’ in keeping education going throughout the pandemic with one positive consequence of this crisis being that ‘schools and families are often now better connected than ever before’ due to the increased use of remote technology.

Many community leaders speak of their passion for supporting schools and helping local children to succeed. A range of perspectives – supportive and critical – on the role of Protestant Churches in education is heard; the study affirms that where school leaders are open to church involvement (which cannot be assumed) and where a local church engages meaningfully, tangibly and unconditionally in its local school, ‘there is enormous potential to improve educational outcomes.’

The report is available on the Stranmillis University College website – www.stran.ac.uk – and the Transferor Representatives’ Council website – www.trc-churcheducation.org.

Irish Churches Creation Care conference

The Irish Churches Creation Care conference will explore the theology and mission response to the climate and nature emergency.

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Explore the theology and mission of creation care with leading theologians, mission practitioners and senior church leaders.

Speakers:

Rev Dr. Chris Wright, Theologian

Prof Katharine Hayhoe, Distinguished Climate Scientist

Dr Ruth Valerio, Director of Global Advocacy and Influencing at Tearfund,

Rev Bob Kikuyu, Global Advisor for Theology and Church Partnerships, Christian Aid

Archbishop John McDowell, Primate of All Ireland

Rev Dr. David Bruce, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Rev Dr. Sehr Yambasu, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland

Bishop Martin Hayes, Laudato Si' coordinating bishop for the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

Hannah Malcolm, Anglican ordinand and Radio 4 Thought for the Day contributor

Justin Kilkiluan

This one day conference on 8th April 2022 starts at 10:00 am and runs until 4:00 pm. Lunch is included in the conference fee of £20.

A limited number of Bed and Breakfast rooms are available in the conference centre. Please contact the organisers if you would like to book B&B the night before the conference.

[\[https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/irish-churches-creation-care-conference-tickets-250651424157\]](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/irish-churches-creation-care-conference-tickets-250651424157)

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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Date and time - Fri, 8 April 2022. 10:00 – 16:00 BST
Location - Dromantine Conference Centre, 96 Glen Road
Newry, BT34 1RH



Kildare's Feile Bride 2022

Féile Bríde is a week-long festival dedicated to St Brigid of Kildare, running 31 January - 6 February at Kildare Town in Ireland's County Kildare.

This year it is being celebrated in person and online, which organisers hope will help create a sense of belonging and reconnection. All are welcome to join the festival on the theme: 'Brigid - Flame of Justice and Peace.' Organisers include the Brigidine Sisters.

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The programme of events includes Pilgrimages, Meditations, Customs and Traditions associated with St Brigid, a Sacred Dance and 'The Hidden Secrets of The Curragh'. On 4 February the annual Celtic lecture 'Brigid Woman of Wisdom - Woman of Peace' will be given by Deirdre Ní Chinnéide. A Justice and Peace Conference will feature on Saturday 5 February, with Mass from St Brigid's Garden Well the following day to round off the Festival.

St Brigid is a fifth century saint and one of the Patron Saints of Ireland. She is celebrated for her love of and service to the poor, the sick, the elderly, the environment and animals of all kinds. Full details on the website:

<https://solasbhride.ie/>

Plans lodged for all-weather pitch and playground at Donegal church

Plans have been lodged for the extensive development on the grounds of a Donegal church which include an all-weather pitch, a children's play area and a community garden.

Archdeacon David Huss on behalf of Laghy Church of Ireland parish church has applied for planning permission for the development at the church.

The plans included an extension and alteration to existing church hall, an all-weather pitch, combined tennis and basketball court, children's play area, community well-being

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and sensory garden, riverside walkway and the addition of a footpath to the entrance of the riverside walkway.

A decision from Donegal County Council on the development is due in March - Donegal Live reports.

News Reports

Vicar accused of bullying says she is victim of sexist behaviour

A female vicar accused of bullying choristers has claimed she is the victim of sexism and an “immoral” campaign against her after a bishop ordered her to apologise.

The Rev Catherine Relf-Pennington, 64, alleged that the Bishop of Norwich, the Right Rev Graham Usher, had taken the side of “a small circle of white, wealthy, strongly interconnected men” rather than supporting his own clergy.

The vicar has been accused of bullying a choir at a 12th-century church and in November she was ordered by her bishop to apologise to everyone who complained about her.

She has faced a string of complaints about her supposed “authoritarian style” since taking on her role at Wymondham Abbey, Norfolk, five years ago. They include claims that she assaulted a chorister after banning her from the choir and reversed her truck into a parked car in the car park, causing a “6in-long gash”, before driving away.

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The vicar has previously argued that she was bullied by the choristers, who were “anti-woman priests” and she has accused her bishop of conducting an “unethical, immoral and self-serving” campaign against her.

The accusations were made in a 12-page broadside claiming she and her wardens were the victims of “false allegations, delays and threats, and unremitting criticism of a church community doing its best in very difficult times”.

In response, a diocese statement said yesterday that the vicar had a legal duty to comply with the bishop’s directions and failure to do so could lead to disciplinary action for misconduct.

It said that the bishop notes the response from the vicar and her churchwardens to his directions published in November, following the formal visitation to the parish last year after “a number of concerns relating to the ministry of Wymondham Abbey”. “He will be working to ensure that these matters are properly addressed,” it said.

The row dates back to a few months after the vicar was appointed in 2017, when 37 complaints were made against her, alleging inappropriate behaviour, all of which she denied.

It led to an investigation in 2019 by a retired High Court judge, Sir Mark Hadley, who ordered the two sides to resolve their differences.

Last November, the bishop issued a series of recommendations for the vicar and the abbey’s church

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council, including ordering her to apologise to her congregation.

Last year, the bishop said the allegations against the vicar “reflect a deeply felt division of opinion between parishioners who are supportive of the vicar and those who are not”.

However, her 12-page response – which has been published on the church website – said that she and the wardens “have been harassed” amid “unrelenting” pressure.

Pope Benedict admits he misled child abuse inquiry

Pope emeritus Benedict XVI admitted this week misleading a German investigation into paedophile clergy, saying he had given them incorrect information in error about a meeting regarding a predatory priest.

Pope emeritus Benedict XVI told a German investigation into clergy sex abuse that he was not at an event he did attend

Groups representing victims of clerical sexual abuse called for the former pontiff to be stripped of his title “emeritus”, which he has had since resigning as head of the Catholic Church nearly a decade ago.

The German investigation, released last week, found that when he was archbishop of Munich, from 1977 to 1982, he failed to take action against four predatory priests. He had told the investigation into the German Catholic Church that

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he did not remember going to a meeting in 1980 in which the case of a priest was discussed. The priest was allowed to continue work, even though he was known to be a paedophile.

But on Monday in a statement released from the Vatican, where Benedict has lived since resigning as pontiff in 2013, he acknowledged that he was at the meeting. The 94-year-old said his mistake “was not committed in bad faith”. He said that it was “the result of an error in the editorial drafting” of his statements to the investigation.

He said he was “very sorry” and asked for forgiveness.

Benedict intends to explain how the mistake happened once he has studied the 2,000-page report, said Archbishop Georg Ganswein, his personal secretary. “He is carefully reading the statements... which fill him with shame and pain about the suffering inflicted on the victims,” the archbishop said.

When the report was presented last week, lawyers said Benedict, at the time Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, failed to take action against four cases of abuse.

In one case, Peter Hullermann, a paedophile priest, was transferred to Munich from Essen, in western Germany, where he had been accused of abusing an 11-year-old boy. He was reassigned to “pastoral duties” and continued to reoffend for many years.

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The report, by a German law firm, was commissioned by the archdiocese of Munich and Freising to examine how abuse cases were dealt with between 1945 and 2019.

Lambeth Conference to be confined to University of Kent

A decision has been taken to discontinue plans to run the official hospitality program (also known as the Big Hello) for the Lambeth Conference in its current form.

Instead, a new approach to providing a “Welcome to Canterbury” program for all Anglican bishops will be held at The University of Kent.

The Big Hello was originally designed to host delegates traveling from overseas for the Lambeth Conference in U.K. dioceses. The program would provide time for rest, preparation, prayer and fellowship with the diocesan hosts, in church and community accommodation, ahead of the event in Canterbury.

With the outbreak of COVID-19, planning for the Big Hello was put on hold and the Lambeth Conference was rescheduled to 2022. Since that time, the conference organizers have been monitoring health and travel advice and adapting event logistics to enable the full participation of people making the journey to the U.K. in 2022. This has led to a decision not to run the Big Hello in its original format.

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Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan under attack

Two persons have been injured in an attack against the Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan in Bor Town, Jonglei State.

The Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan has been under attack in Bor Town, Jonglei State, according to a statement released by the Primate, Archbishop Justin Badi Arama. Bishops were attacked in the Church compound at 3am on 22 January. Two people were injured.

This is the third time such an incident has happened on the church premises in Bor. Early in 2021, two youth members were shot by the police in the church compound, and later in 2021, two bishops were stopped at Bor airstrip and deported back to Juba by the government of Jonglei state.

In a statement released on 22 January, Archbishop Justin Badi Arama said: “The ECSS [Episcopal Church of South Sudan] leadership condemns in the strongest possible terms the continuous attack on the ECSS in Bor Town...It is sad to learn that some senior politicians from Jonglei are misleading innocent citizens to practice such evil acts against the church. We appeal to all Christians in Jonglei to refrain from violence and we continue to pray for the safety of bishops, clergy and other ECSS workers as they carry on with their pastoral activities.”

He ended the statement by saying: “We pray for peace and harmony in Jonglei State and the whole of South Sudan.”

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Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts and books



Pope Francis calls for a day of prayer for peace over Ukraine situation

<https://catholicnews.ie/pope-francis-calls-for-a-day-of-prayer-for-peace-over-ukraine-situation/>

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Launch of LiveLent

Join online this Thursday at 7pm, as the C of E launches this year's LiveLent theme with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby.

Learn more about the resources to use in your church over the coming weeks, and hear a powerful and thought-provoking discussion on justice, with special guests. Find out more at cofe.io/LentChurchResources.

Resources on tsunami in Tonga

USPG has responded to the tsunami in Tonga by sending support to the Diocese of Polynesia via Angmissions' emergency appeal.

Read more about USPG's response here: uspg.org.uk/communications...

Perspective

Attacks on Catholics just one part of the 'Belfast pogrom' story by Jason Burge

Both communities suffered in the forgotten conflict of 1920's

The lesser-known Belfast troubles of 1920-1922 was a particularly vicious and sectarian black mark on the history

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of this city and of the island as a whole. Just under 500 people were killed in just over two years of inter-communal violence.

Historian Dr Alan Parkinson (author of Belfast's Unholy War: The Troubles of the 1920s) has described it as a 'forgotten conflict', a period in time not only neglected by historians but buried by the trauma which emanated from what occurred.

Belfast society had not the adequate time nor space to come to terms with what went on between 1920-22; the Irish civil war and the hungry thirties soon became the Second World War, and two decades after the war's end we were on the precipice of yet another period of conflict that would last for 30 years.

Twenty-four years after the 'end' of our most recent period of conflict, and with the benefit of a peace and reconciliation process, we are still coming to terms with what happened.

The Twenties troubles, however, had no such post-conflict process, the wounds merely turned into sores over many years.

For many others, though, this episode is readily accepted as a 'pogrom' that was perpetrated against the Catholic community in Belfast by their Protestant neighbours.

The use of the word pogrom to describe the 1920-22 violence appears to have originated in the contemporary columns of the Irish News and has stuck ever since.

Father John Hassan's inaccurate and controversial pamphlet 'Facts and Figures of the Belfast Pogrom' written

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in 1922 served only to confirm the false narrative of a pogrom.

Those who choose to use this terminology have at times admitted themselves that it is not an entirely accurate description.

Kieron Glennon in his article 'The Dead of the Belfast Pogrom' concedes that 'pogrom' is a disputed term and that he 'acknowledges that what happened in Belfast does not strictly conform to dictionary definitions of the word'.

Why does he use it then?

Glennon tells us that, despite the term not being an accurate description of what went on, it nonetheless respects the 'lived experience' of nationalists who felt that a pogrom was being perpetrated against them.

In other words, the nationalist community in Belfast perceived there to be a pogrom (rightly or wrongly) and therefore history must reflect that perception as fact.

This is problematic, not least because it validates only one version of the lived experience over others which were as keenly felt and are (or should be) equally as legitimate.

The rise in nationalist violence from 1920 created a fearful unionist minority across Ireland.

In Ulster, the IRA saw itself as continuing the violent campaign of the War of Independence that was raging in the south.

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In which case the unionist response, as reprehensible as it was, should be seen in the context of a wider IRA campaign that they felt was nudging ever closer to their door.

This might also be referred to as a 'lived experience', or a perception, albeit one that has been mostly ignored at the expense of the dominant 'pogrom' narrative.

Glennon is correct in one sense though, that the dictionary definition of a 'pogrom' does not match up with events on the ground.

The Collins Dictionary definition of a pogrom tells us that it is 'an organised persecution or extermination of an ethnic group', derived from a Russian word meaning 'destruction'.

Its use implies that blame for the 1920-22 violence should somehow be owned by one community in Belfast, despite the fact that there were two aggressors.

It is this version of events, despite its obvious inaccuracies, that has dominated the popular understanding of the period ever since.

Far from being exterminated or destroyed, the Catholic population between 1911-1926 in Belfast actually increased, which, by the yardstick of a 'pogrom' is quite an unusual outcome to say the least.

Moreover, far from bearing sole responsibility for the violence which occurred, Protestants suffered some of the worst examples of it.

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Some 44% of the 498 killed in this period were from a Protestant background.

They include William Patterson, Thomas Maxwell and Thomas Boyd; three Protestant civilians who were gunned down by an IRA gang at Garrett's Cooperage on Little Patrick Street on May 19, 1922.

Upon asking for the religion of the men, one Catholic worker was permitted to escape unharmed while the others were shot for the crime of admitting their Protestant faith.

Also murdered that month was Unionist MP William Twaddell, assassinated while travelling on foot to his business premises in the centre of Belfast.

It meant that May 1922 was the bloodiest month of the entire conflict with 75 deaths, a direct consequence of an IRA escalation of violence, their 'Northern Offensive'.

It strikes me, however, that patterns of nationalist violence such as this (and others throughout the period) are incompatible with the pogrom narrative.

That the Catholic community suffered disproportionately in Belfast is evident from the facts, but one must consider all of the facts in the round, and when doing so I think any reasonable observer would come to the conclusion that the so called 'Belfast pogrom' was not a pogrom, rather a much more complex episode in which both communities suffered.

Jason Burke is an historian

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Poem for today

Postscript by Seamus Heaney

And some time make the time to drive out west
Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore,
In September or October, when the wind
And the light are working off each other
So that the ocean on one side is wild
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit
By the earthed lightning of a flock of swans,
Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,
Their fully grown headstrong-looking heads
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.
Useless to think you'll park and capture it
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,
A hurry through which known and strange things pass
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.

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