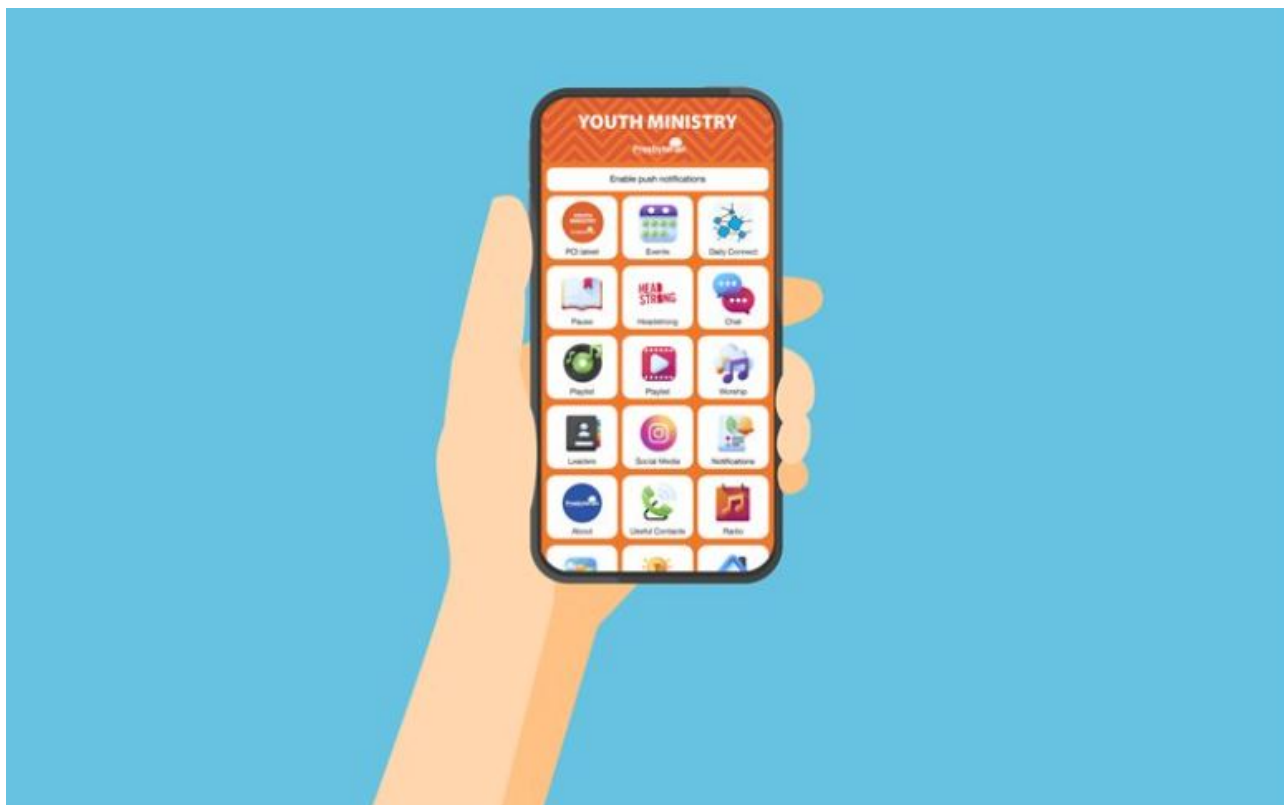




Image of the day - Lincoln Cathedral



Keeping in touch: The new PCI Youth App

For many reasons, the last 14 months have felt much longer than their actual 60 weeks, since the first Covid lockdowns came into being on the island of Ireland.

The pandemic has touched every aspect of life North and South, and church life in particular. In these difficult and changing circumstances, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has sought to respond to the impact of the pandemic by supporting and developing congregational life across PCI's 500-plus churches with a range of resources. The latest initiative is the brand new PCI Youth App.

Rev David Thompson, Secretary to the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, explained that one of key elements of fruitful youth ministry is effective communication, which was challenging before Covid-19, but

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has become even more so in present circumstances. The new app will allow congregations to safely and effectively keep in touch with young people, leaders and parents.

“The Council for Congregational Life and Witness exists to support and resource the development of the week-by-week work of local congregations. It goes without saying that the pandemic, and its disruption to church life at every level, has made the period since last March very challenging,” David Thompson said.

“One of the biggest interruptions has been to those moments in which members can be together to catch up for a chat, and find out what is going on in each other’s lives, as well as benefiting from being together for more organised activities of fellowship, and for mutual encouragement. The new Youth App from PCI helps bridge that gap for young people and their leaders, especially when they continue not to be able meet in more regular ways, which enables them to keep in touch and share with one another.”

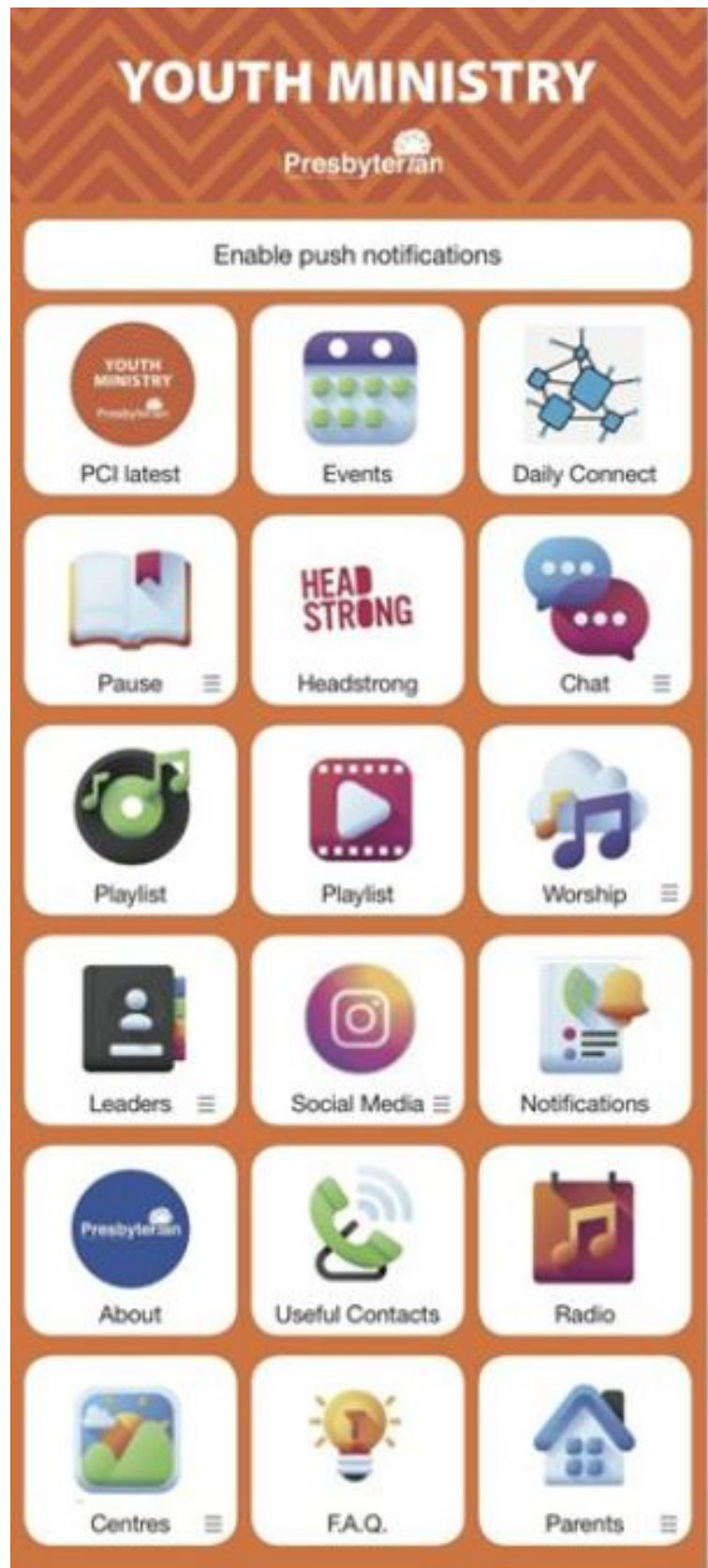
With a number of default ‘pages’, which can then be customised by congregations as their own ‘affiliate’ app, it brings everything together in one place, that is easily accessible to everyone involved in a church’s youth ministry. This enables congregations to not only communicate with young people in a safe and controlled way, but with their parents as well.

Congregations with less time and resources can start off with a basic template and build as their needs change, but others may want to be a little more adventurous, which makes it not just a useful tool for these times of additional

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challenge, but one that will continue to be useful long into the future.

David Thompson explained that this makes the App very flexible, “As a Council, we were delighted to receive funding from Northern Ireland’s Education Authority to make the App freely available to 75 congregations and we have really been encouraged by its steady uptake by congregations. We hope that it will prove invaluable in effectively communicating not only what is happening, when and where, especially when our youth groups can’t meet in person, but Christ’s gospel message of hope, which is for everyone, regardless of age.”



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Explaining more about it, Graeme Thompson, PCI's Youth Development Officer, said that it is an exciting new tool, as it can be completely flexible to the needs of individual congregations. "Each page of the app can not only be personalised, so you can have your own devotional resources, playlists and social media input, but every page can be changed to just about any content that is required.

"There is also the facility to send direct notifications to all app users, or to specific groups like parents, leaders or one particular organisation. This makes it not just a useful tool for these times of additional challenge, but one that will continue to be useful long into the future. We are really hopeful about the App's potential over the months ahead, and very grateful to the team at Summer Madness who developed this resource and shared the technology so generously."

Church of England schools encouraged to avoid singing hymns with strong confessional lyrics

The Church of England has told its schools to avoid singing hymns that include explicit Christian rhetoric to ensure collective worship is "inclusive, invitational and inspiring".

In a new statement addressing its more than 4,000 schools in England and 200 in Wales, The Church of England is encouraging all its school staff to make sure parents, pupils and teachers feel included, regardless of their faith, when taking part in collective worship.



“Music and liturgies used in worship should reflect the best of traditional and modern Anglican worship, it should connect with the theme and explore the sacred to educate and engage. Music used should reflect the diverse worship experience of the wider Christian community.

“Care should be taken to ensure that pupils and adults do not feel compelled to sing strongly confessional lyrics. There should be no assumption of Christian faith in those present,” the statement reads.

The Church of England argues that in the same way that worship is evolving and “being reimagined” in churches, it should also change and be dynamic in church schools and reflect the local context, pupils' cultural background and the faiths of the school communities it serves.

“There should be no compulsion to ‘do anything’. Rather, worship should provide the opportunity to engage whilst allowing the freedom of those of different faiths and those



who profess no religious faith to be present and to engage with integrity. The metaphor of ‘warm fires and open doors’ captures this idea,”

The guidance continues by saying that collective worship should inspire pupils to “become courageous advocates of causes” and “encourage them to think searchingly about their faith, beliefs and/or philosophical convictions”.

It adds that both pupils and parents should feel they have the space to disagree as well as always having the right to stop participating in the activity if they wish to do so.

About one million children attend Church of England schools in England.

Ground war will take Gaza into the depths of hell, Christian Aid warns

As conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory continues to escalate, Christian Aid's head of Middle East William Bell said:

“As soon as we report the numbers killed in Gaza they go out of date as the violence escalates. But we are duty bound to record these deaths: at least 65 so far in Gaza, including 16 children, according to the health ministry; in Israel it is 7, including one child. Even without a threatened ground invasion these figures will go up; with one, they will take us into the depths of hell.

“The international community cannot afford to continue failing in their responsibility to use every possible measure to stop the violence immediately. But they must not stop there. As the violence across Israel and the West Bank demonstrates, it is the status quo that led us to this point. It is the inequality, discrimination, incitement and abuse of power that has led some to a false sense of security and others to despair.

“Speaking to our colleagues in Gaza through the night we heard people exhausted with fear, desperately trying to protect their children as the bombing intensifies. Rana Abdallah of the Women's Affairs Center in Gaza, told us: ‘Buildings not far from my house were hit at least with 20 airstrikes...it was terrifying for the kids. My eldest didn't leave my side. I could hear her throbbing heartbeats all night.’

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“Palestinians and Israelis have never been treated as equals by the international community and until they are, there will be conflict, often violent. And it is innocent civilians who always pay the price for that political failure.”

The Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, the Most Revd Hosam Naoum, offers a statement on the eruption of violence throughout the Holy Land.

Click to read the full statement: [https://
anglicancommunion.org/communications](https://anglicancommunion.org/communications)

Clerical



Willowfield Parish - Down & Dromore

The Revd Clive Atkinson has been instituted as incumbent of Willowfield after 18 years of ministry with the Anglican Church in Switzerland.

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It was a joyful night for the parish following an interregnum of 18 months occasioned by the rector becoming Bishop of Down and Dromore. And so, the new rector was instituted by the previous rector, the Rt Revd David McClay.

The preacher at the service on 16 May was Dr Alan Wilson, a visiting lecturer at Irish Baptist College and an associate tutor at Belfast Bible College. It was when serving as a pastor in Switzerland that he and Clive became friends.

The service was live-streamed, allowing many others at home and abroad to join in the worship. More at -
[[<https://www.downanddromore.org/news/2021/05/a-new-rector-for-willowfield-church>]

Mallow Union and Kinneigh Union - Cork, Cloyne and Ross

Two new rectors in the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross had their first opportunity since their arrival in the Diocese to worship together with their parishioners in person in their local churches in recent days. Both had been instituted by the Bishop, Dr Paul Colton, during the post-Christmas lockdown.

The Reverend Meurig Williams was instituted on the Feast of the Epiphany (6th January) to Mallow Union and the Reverend Ivan Ruiters was instituted to Kinneigh Union on 4th February.

As well as celebrating the Eucharist in Saint James' Church, Mallow for parishioners on Ascension Day, the Reverend Meurig Williams welcomed the Reverend Tony Murphy who
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The Reverend Meurig Williams (right) with parishioners in Mallow Union of Parishes, and also with the Reverend Tony Murphy (in Christian Aid vest)

was passing through Mallow on his sponsored walk across the Diocese in aid of the Diocesan Maize Project in Burundi. More at -

[[] <https://churchofirelandcork.com/>]

Armagh deacons

Congratulations to Rev Colm Hagan and Rev Stephen Wilson who were ordained deacons in St Patrick's Cathedral on Sunday afternoon by Archbishop Martin.



Rev Colm Hagan and Rev Stephen Wilson with Archbishop Martin.

Media review

Stormont on brink of collapse but we will work to save it, vows new UUP leader Doug Beattie

Belfast Telegraph

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/stormont-on-brink-of-collapse-but-we-will-work-to-save-it-vows-new-uupleader-doug-beattie-40434450.html>]

GCSE and A level examinations to return next year, announces Weir but students will sit fewer exams

Belfast Telegraph

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[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/gcse-and-a-level-examinationsto-return-next-year-announces-weir-but-students-will-sit-fewer-exams-40435294.html>]

Bobby Storey funeral: Watchdog report finds no police bias

BBC News

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-57134874>]

PSNI recruitment 'a challenge' in working class areas of Northern Ireland

BBC News

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-57131155>]

Gerry Adams will 'avoid conviction' over alleged involvement in Jean McConville murder, House of Lords hears

Belfast Telegraph

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/gerry-adams-will-avoid-conviction-over-alleged-involvementin-jean-mcconville-murder-house-of-lords-hears-40436388.html>]

President Higgins speaks on Covid, events in the Middle East as part of National Famine Commemoration

The Journal.ie

Higgins called the famine a defining moment for Ireland, saying that it unleashed a “cataclysmic period” of Irish history

[[] <https://www.thejournal.ie/higgins-famine-memorial-5439006-May2021/>]

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British 'policy of non-intervention' was a key factor in Irish Famine, says President

The Irish Times

Britain could have prohibited the export of grain from Ireland, especially during the winter of ... “In an atmosphere of rising 'Famine fatigue' in Britain, Ireland at that point and for the ... of some of the most basic of human freedoms including religious practice or participation in the ... Irish Times News.

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/british-policy-of-non-intervention-was-a-key-factor-in-irish-famine-says-president-1.4566548>]

'It brings mortality to the table' – Jason Ferguson on father's brush with death

The Journal.ie

Jason has directed a film charting Alex Ferguson's road to recovery from a 2018 brain haemorrhage.

[[] <https://www.the42.ie/jason-ferguson-5439501-May2021/>]

Pope taps fellow Jesuit to lead sensitive Hong Kong church

ABC News

Pope taps fellow Jesuit to lead sensitive Hong Kong church ... Chow, a native of Hong Kong, was educated in the U.S. and Ireland before ... AsiaNews, a Vatican-affiliated missionary news agency which follows the church closely in ...

[[] <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/pope-taps-fellow-jesuit-lead-sensitive-hong-kong-77734547>]

News Briefing: Britain and Ireland

The Tablet

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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Bishop Michael Duignan of Clonfert, the youngest bishop in the Irish bishops' conference, has spoken of the future for the Irish Church post-pandemic.

[[] <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/14146/news-briefing-britain-and-ireland>]

Appeal for young bell ringers to keep tradition alive

RTE.ie

Four bell ringers came together at Christ Church, Taney in Dundrum last Thursday, ahead of a service officiated by the Church of Ireland Archbishop of ...

[[] <https://www.rte.ie/news/2021/0515/1221756-appeal-bell-tradition/>]



Pointers for prayer

Mighty God,
in whom we know the power of redemption,
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,

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we will share in his resurrection,
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,
and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love,
and peace,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his
resurrection,
teaching them to love all people as neighbours.
As his disciples in this age,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe
in which we are privileged to live
and our neighbours with whom we share it.
Open our hearts to your power moving
around us and between us and within us,

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until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy,
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Holy God,
you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,
and to care for those who are our companions,
not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.
Seeking to be true friends of all,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world.
Guide us in the path of discipleship,
so that, as you have blessed us,
we may be a blessing for others,

Speaking to the Soul - Purpose in the Pain

A Reading from James 1:1-15

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

2 My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; 4 and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

5 If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. 6 But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is

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like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; 7, 8 for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

9 Let the believer who is lowly boast in being raised up, 10 and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field. 11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. It is the same with the rich; in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away.

12 Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. 13 No one, when tempted, should say, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. 14 But one is tempted by one’s own desire, being lured and enticed by it; 15 then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.

Meditation

As a swashbuckling movie hero once observed, “Life IS pain. Anyone who tells you different is selling something.” Scripture confirms that pain and trials are inevitable; they’re a part of life. But that isn’t ALL of life. It doesn’t have to make us miserable — especially if we can learn to “count it all joy” — to recognize that as difficult, or even excruciating as it can be, pain can serve a greater purpose. Our pain can actually serve us.

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Pain can test us, pain can teach us. It can help us develop discipline, strength, and endurance, wisdom and maturity. All at the same time the same time, pain can sharpen our focus, broaden our perspective and pinpoint our true priorities.

Pain can drive us deep into the heart of God, as we cry out for him. Pain can lead us to a new and profound experience of his presence, his peace. Pain can help us more closely identify with and follow the example of Jesus, the “Man of Sorrows” who himself “learned obedience from what he suffered” (Heb. 5:8).

Pain can motivate us to take action — to make changes in our own lives or make a difference in the world around us. Pain — ours and others — can compel us to stand up for truth and righteousness, speak up on behalf of the poor and the oppressed, those who cannot speak for themselves.

Perhaps most significantly, our experience of pain can give us greater compassion for the hurting people we encounter every day. It can show us how to help. What a joy to love others as God has loved us, to be empowered to comfort them with the comfort he has given us (2 Cor. 1:3-4)!

