

June 20

**CNI**

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## **Interfaith service to remember migrants lost at sea**

Dublin City Interfaith Forum is organising an Interfaith Service today Tuesday June 20, to remember through prayers and readings the migrants who have lost their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

The service takes place at the Famine Monument on Customs House Quay, Dublin 1, from 10.30 am to 11.15 am .

The Interfaith Service will be followed tomorrow evening by a symposium and photo exhibition hosted by DCIF and the Irish Refugee Council in Wood Quay Venue.

‘Refugee Stories of Faith and Hope’ and a photo journal of the hidden lives of refugees living in the ‘EU Hotspot’ camp on the Greek island of Lesbos by Syd Bolton will begin at 6.00 pm.

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## **Cork C of I schools' teachers complete RE course**



**The course participants (from left to right) Trína Jennings (Templebreedy NS, Crosshaven), Laure Twomey (St John the Baptist NS, Midleton), Giselle Campbell (St Mary's NS, Carrigaline), Peter King (St John the Baptist NS, Midleton), Máire Goggin (St Luke's NS, O'Mahony's Avenue), Cecilia Whitford (St Luke's NS, O'Mahony's Avenue), Claire Chambers (The Model School, Dunmanway), Susan Hosford (St John the Baptist NS, Midleton), Aoife Fletcher (St John the Baptist NS, Midleton), Niamh Coughlan (St Luke's NS, O'Mahony's Avenue) and**

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**Jacqui Wilkinson (Church of Ireland Centre, DCU).**

In recent weeks, 10 teachers from primary schools in the Church of Ireland Diocese of Cork have completed the Religious Education Certificate Course (*Follow Me*). This course is offered by the General Synod Board of Education and was coordinated and taught by Jacqui Wilkinson (Church of Ireland Centre, DCU) in Northridge House Education and Research Centre (at St Luke's Charity, Mahon, Cork) over the course of five evenings.

The course builds on the teachers' prior classroom experience in teaching RE in Church of Ireland schools and aims to extend their skills, knowledge, confidence and resources in this important subject area.

The teachers ended the course on Tuesday 6th June with a short service in St Luke's Home Chapel, led by the Rev. Sarah Marry.

At the Service, prayers were included for the teachers and schools represented by the participants.

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## Church buildings influential in forming young people's faith



A Church of England Bishop has spoken of the power of church buildings, after research indicated that visits to them have directly contributed to young people turning to faith. The Bishop of Worcester, John Inge, said church buildings are powerful for all sorts of reasons: “They give a sense of stability and also the sense that the Christian faith has inspired people to build these extraordinary buildings,” he said.

The study, commissioned by Christian youth organisation Hope Revolution Partnership and

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carried out by ComRes, suggested that levels of Christianity were much higher among young people in Britain than previously thought. Around thirteen percent of teenagers said that they decided to become a Christian after a visit to a church or cathedral, according to the figures – and more than 1 in 5 (twenty-one percent) of people between the ages of eleven and eighteen describe themselves as active followers of Jesus.

The influence of a church building was more significant than attending a youth group, going to a wedding, or speaking to other Christians about their faith. Jimmy Dale, the Church of England's national youth evangelism officer, said his team had been "shocked" by the results: "Things which we would class as old hat methods are some of the more effective ways. It's a real wake-up call for the church – we've got lots of young people who are coming into churches with school groups and that's a really integral part of them becoming a Christian," he said.

Senior Church of England figures said the findings showed the importance of keeping churches and cathedrals accessible. Only nine of Britain's 42 cathedrals currently charge for entry, but there are concerns that more could be

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forced to do so because of financial pressures. There are some sixteen thousand Church of England buildings and Bishop Inge is leading a campaign to persuade parishes to keep churches open, instead of locking their doors: “I’m passionate about church buildings staying open. The cathedrals are the jewel in the crown but when thinking about all those young people, it’s just as likely to be one of the parish churches which they have been inspired by,” he said.

## **Bishops respond to Finsbury mosque**

The Archbishop of Canterbury has responded to an attack outside the Muslim Welfare House in Finsbury Park on June 18:

The freedom to worship without fear is a right we cherish as a nation and was won at great human cost over many years.

The appalling attack on Muslims in Finsbury Park is an attack on us all and on the culture and values of our country.

At a time when we are all grieving the loss of so many precious people in London and Manchester, this brutal attack can only

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compound the trauma. Violence only begets more violence — it serves only the interests of those who would terrorize others.

This wanton and cruel act can produce no good and cannot be justified or excused. In exactly the same way as previous recent attacks it is a crime against God and against humanity.

The Rt. Rev. Adrian Newman, Bishop of Stepney, visited the scene and met with members of the mosque, the local Muslim community, other faith leaders, and politicians, including the Prime Minister Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition.

In a statement issued early on June 19, Bishop Newman said:

An attack on any faith is an attack on us all. As a church, we stand together with Finsbury Park Mosque, in the wake of this morning's appalling news. It sadly comes after a weekend, in memory of Jo Cox MP, that celebrated all that brings us together, and I know that the Mosque, hand-in-hand with other local faith and community groups, was at the heart of events in the Finsbury Park area.

We will offer up our churches to help our friends at the Mosque in any way we can. We will not be

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cowed by those who seek to terrorize our communities.

## **Church calls for day of prayer after Grenfell protesters plan day of rage**

A local church near Grenfell Tower has launched a new prayer initiative after protesters have declared Wednesday 'A Day of Rage.'

Protesters plan to march on Parliament to 'shut down London' and 'bring down the government'.

Latymer Community Church has been working with survivors of the fire.

Jamie Sewell, a leader of the church, said the purpose of their 'Day of Prayer' is to pray for peace and justice amidst the tragedy.

He told Premier news, "The council for a long time have been looking at redevelopments and our community haven't felt listened to for a long time, not just after Grenfell tower.

"I think in aftermath Grenfell Tower, if anything positive can come after such a tragedy, it's that



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all of a sudden our community is being listened to and we have a voice.

Sewell added that it's important the community uses its voice effectively.

He added: "My greatest fear is that we have a repeat of 2011 where we had the riots where anger spilled over into negativity and then people lose their voice. It's not effective and actually the victims end up looking like the perpetrators."

The church has encouraged everyone to pray for London on Wednesday and hope people come out in the hundreds.

## **METHODIST CHURCH CONFERENCE REPORT**

### **FRIDAY - Proposed new Connectional Structures, President designate and Lay leader designate**

The normal pattern of Conference resumed, following the previous morning's suspension for the funeral of the Rev Margaret Ferguson.

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### **British Vice-President Rachel Lampard**

Worship was led by the British Vice-President Rachel Lampard, who, in following her theme of ‘Our relationship with creation’, asked Bishop Paul Bofo from the Methodist Church in Ghana to give Conference a flavour of the effect of climate change in his country. Rachel told us that the people most affected by climate change are the poorest on our planet and that change is all happening very quickly. We need to change

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our outlook rapidly, so that all creation can move together towards our creator God.

The first item in of business was a discussion on Connexional Finance introduced by Harold Baird who reported a reduction of 9.5% in the comprehensive assessment. The proposed new Connexional structures should not result in an increase in the assessment. Speaking for the Audit Committee, Mr Baird told us that although overall finances were in a healthy position with £m21 on the balance sheet, that should not take away from the fact that 28% of Irish circuits ended the year in deficit. A report on Ministers' stipends by John Buchanan recommended a 4% increase and that stipends and allowances be consolidated so that ministers with children should not be adversely affected by recent changes in taxation.

Conference then moved into the subject that was to be the main discussion point for the day – the revision of Connexional structures. The topic was introduced by the Home Missions Secretary the Rev Dr Heather Morris who told us that the proposal was for the eight current districts to be reduced to three. However, the three District Superintendents would be 'separated' appointments, not part-time appointments as at present. The new DSs

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would report to a Connexional Team and the whole process would be reviewed after five years. There was prolonged discussion following the report with concerns about financial implications, authority and loss of local input. However, the general tenor of the discussion was in support of the changes, particularly from those with experience of other Connexions where separated appointments were the practice and the overall principle of the changes was endorsed.

Following lunch there was some further discussion on details of the proposed changes in Connexional structures. There was also discussion on the Church's attitude towards the impending Brexit, on alcohol abuse, City Missions, the Ministry of Healing, MWI and the Methodist Historical Society.

The Rev Billy Davison was elected as President Designate and *Methodist Newsletter* readers will be proud to learn that the senior editor Lynda Neilands was elected as Lay Leader designate.

## **SATURDAY - A people on the move**

Saturday morning at Conference began with a challenging Bible study from Rachel Lampard,

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the Vice-President of the British Methodist Conference, in which we reflected on the story of Ruth and Naomi and its application to the situation of the many people coming to our shores as refugees and asylum seekers.

We heard the story of one Syrian refugee, Milad Korkis, who had come to live in Northern Ireland and whose overwhelming need during his first years here was for friendship and community which he sorely missed after leaving all his family and friends behind in Syria. We were reminded that through Ruth came David the great king of

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Israel and that every refugee or asylum seeker has the potential to, and in many cases, is already contributing greatly to society here.

Much of the morning's business was taken up with discussion around the future shape of ministerial training within the Church and the fact that that ministry is not confined to ordained clergy but is the responsibility and privilege of all members in response to God's call.

The nature and location of that training for ministry – both lay and ordained -will continue to take place in Edgehill College, which will in addition become the Connexional headquarters of many Church departments such as IMYC, WDRC and the Trustees Office. Ministerial formation may now vary quite considerably in length and outline depending on the age and previous experience of the candidate. There will also be a new *Worship: Leading and Preaching* course for local preachers which is currently being piloted with eleven participants.

After lunch, Conference heard more from the Rev Dr Laurence Graham on his Presidential theme of the Rhythm of Grace – Meeting Jesus, Sharing Jesus. We were asked if we were truly hungry for God and examined the concept of priesthood. Conference spent some time in Buzz

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Groups discussing the image of priesthood and the idea that we all now have direct access to God and are called upon to bring God to others and to bring others to God. Then we will be living stones: mobile, missional, a people on the move.

## **SUNDAY EVENING - Ordination service**



**The Ordinands (from left): the Revs Sharon Connor, Alan Craig, Philip Gallagher and Mark Durrell. Photo: William Newell**

On Sunday evening 18 June at Fisherwick Presbyterian Church in Belfast, four ministers participated in that defining moment of their journey

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when they became ordained presbyters of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

This is always a deeply meaningful service. The scene this year was set by the President of the British Conference, the Rev Dr Roger Walton, who examined the calling of a minister in a very thoughtful and challenging sermon. The response of the congregation came through in the wonderful organ playing and enthusiastic singing. Then it was the turn of the four ordinands to give accounts of their journeys thus far which were very concise and to the point.

The Rev Sharon Connor was the first to speak.

Sharon described her early call, but said she had an initial unwillingness to answer it. However, the influence of others, especially the Rev Tommy Stevenson, prompted her to candidate. She said she learned that there was nothing special about her – she was a vessel to be filled with the wine of Christ.

The Rev Alan Craig described the way God spoke to him after his mother died. The words ‘Do not let your hearts be troubled’ had a particular resonance for him and he started reading his Bible. The first verse of Isaiah 61: ‘The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news...’ set him off on the path of local preaching and ultimately candidating for the ministry. In that journey, the words of the Rev



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Winston Graham were a great encouragement to him: 'Alan, we are not called to do great things. We are called to be beacons. It is God who does great things.'

The Rev Mark Durrell said that it only seemed like yesterday that he had prayed to God that he would make him the person that he wanted him to be. He wasn't sure how God was answering that prayer, but there was a restlessness in his heart that the Rev Andrew Kingston suggested might be a called to ordained ministry.

Initially, Mark ignored this but eventually gave in, the restlessness disappeared and God took him on a journey in which he was also greatly helped by his friends, including Mandy who was to become his wife.

The Rev Philip Gallagher said that he had his first feelings of a call to ministry around seven years ago and typed out an email to the Rev Dr Heather Morris who was at that time Director of Ministry in Edgehill College. He was still debating whether or not to send it when he realised he had pressed the 'send' button.

Looking back, he knew he wouldn't have had it any other way. He had family support through thick and thin and it was the grace of God that had brought him to where he was today – to God be all praise.

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Following the laying on of hands and the acclamation that the presbyters were 'worthy', the entire congregation took part in the Sacrament of holy Communion. It was an uplifting and encouraging service.