

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Bishop for Down & Connor

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Bishop for Down & Connor

His Holiness Pope Francis has appointed Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ, Bishop of the Diocese of Raphoe, as the new Bishop of the Diocese of Down and Connor. The news of this Episcopal appointment was made public yesterday morning at 11.00am Ireland time (12.00pm in the Vatican). See pages

People and places

Lisburn student gains place in European Union Youth Orchestra

Jamie Howe had a very happy 22nd birthday this week.

Jamie has just been offered a place in the European Union Youth Orchestra with a six-week tour in the summer with some exciting concerts lined up which should keep him busy. It is an amazing opportunity. 109 players from 27 different countries. A real international adventure. Jamie happens to be the grandson of two C of I clergy - Canon Will Murphy of Connor and the late Canon Charles Howe of Derry. Both his parents are musically talented.

Council's free bus run to Roselawn Cemetery

Belfast Council's free bus service to Roselawn is running on Tuesday 6 February.

The wheelchair-accessible bus for older people runs on the first Tuesday & third Friday of each month.

The pick up point on Tuesday 6 Feb leaves from the Spectrum Centre, 331 Shankill Road, at 9.45am.

The return bus leaves the cemetery at 12 noon and drops passengers back to the Spectrum Centre at 12.30pm.

Call 028 9027 0296 to book a space.

15th Annual Sheep's Head Hike raised over €14k

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November 2023, a cheque for over €14k was presented to Christian Aid Ireland.

New chapter opens in Killyleagh

A new chapter has opened in Killyleagh Parish with the introduction of Revd Eben Grobelaar as Priest-in-charge.

Eben is a long way from home having come from Johannesburg and he received a very warm welcome to County Down.

The Revd Henry Blair, Mission Coordinator for SOMA UK & Ireland and the National Director for Ireland, gave the address at the service which took place on Wednesday 31 January. Eben is the former leader of SOMA South Africa.

It was a wonderful evening, and the last word from Eben summed everything up perfectly... 'Let's do this together'.

Church Leaders welcome political progress in Northern Ireland

Yesterday, 2 February, the Church Leaders Group (Ireland) welcomed the anticipated restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland and recognised the challenges in reaching necessary accommodations to enable this to happen.

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From left to right: Church Leaders, Bishop Andrew Forster, President of the Irish Council of Churches; Archbishop John McDowell, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All Ireland; Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All Ireland; Rt Rev Dr Sam Mawhinney, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland; and, Rev David Turtle, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland

In a joint statement, the leaders of the Church of Ireland, Catholic Church, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in Ireland, and the Irish Council of Churches said, “As Church leaders we have consistently called for the UK Government to take all necessary steps to facilitate the restoration of

good governance in Northern Ireland and the return of fully functioning and resourced devolved institutions, north-south and east-west bodies.

“As the final steps are taken that should lead to the welcome restoration of devolved government, it is important to recognise that government is never simply an end in itself, but rather a means to an end. A re-established Executive and Assembly are first and important steps towards re-establishing hope and a vision for the future. However, for that to be achieved it will mean a commitment to focus on the common good. It will mean prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised of our fellow citizens. And it will mean at times taking the long over-due hard decisions necessary to transform our public services, many of which are close to breaking point.”

The Church Leaders continued, “Partnership government will almost always be challenging, but at its best it can be much more than the sum of its collective parts. It can be the means of delivering together a better and more secure future for all of our fellow citizens, as problems are faced up to and solved, and the new opportunities opening up are grasped.

“In November 2023, we met separately with each of the main Northern Ireland political parties and those discussions were both positive and constructive. Each party expressed a desire and willingness to step up to the mark and play their part in restored institutions, if only the challenge of restoring devolution could be overcome. We are now approaching that moment.”

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The Church Leaders concluded, “As in these coming days our political parties seek to move forward together, acting for the common good and governing for all, they do so with the support and prayers of many in our society, ourselves included.”

Pope Francis appoints Bishop Alan McGuckian as Bishop of Down and Connor

Life and ministry of Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ

Bishop Alexander Aloysius (Alan) McGuckian SJ was born on 26 February 1953, the youngest of six children of the late Brian and Pauline McGuckian in Cloughmills, Co Antrim.

Having completed primary schooling in Cloughmills and post-primary studies in Saint MacNissi’s College, Garron Tower, Bishop Alan undertook a year of First Arts in Queen’s University, Belfast, where he studied Irish and Scholastic Philosophy (1971-1972). In October 1972 he then joined the Jesuit novitiate in Clontarf in Dublin.

Bishop McGuckian is proficient in a number of modern languages and has studied an undergraduate BA in Latin and Spanish from University College Dublin (1974-1977) and later graduated with an MA in Irish Translation from QUB, Belfast. His training for the priesthood involved the study of Philosophy in the Milltown Institute in Dublin



Bishop McGuckian at St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast

(1977-1979) and Theology in the Toronto School of Theology specialising in the study of Scripture (M.Div and STL – 1981-1985).

After his ordination to the priesthood on 22 June 1984, Father McGuckian worked as a teacher in secondary education in Clongowes Wood College SJ, Co Kildare (1984-1988). This was followed by a six-month period of spiritual renewal in southern India and an experience of serving in a shanty town in Quezon City in the Philippines, before taking his Final Profession as a Jesuit on 15 February 1997.

From 1992-2003, Father Alan served as appointed as Director of the Jesuit Communication Centre in Dublin. During this period he was involved in setting up the websites sacredspace.ie and catholicireland.net. Along with Mr Tony Bolger he set up Church Resources and Church Services TV. At the same time his commitment to the Irish language led him to serve for over ten years as editor of both An



Timire and Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta. Later, when already living in Belfast, he translated the autobiography of Saint Ignatius Loyola from the Spanish original into the Irish language under the title Scéal an Oilithrigh (Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta).

In 2011, Father Alan collaborated with Philip Orr in writing the drama 1912; one hundred years on, marking the centenary of the fateful year that saw the Home Rule Bill accepted by the House of Commons and the signing of the Ulster Covenant.

In Belfast, Father Alan served as chaplain to many of the Gaelscoileanna in the Diocese of Down and Connor and was, for a few years, Chaplain in the University of Ulster at Jordanstown and Belfast. He also served as spiritual director to the Diocesan Seminary.


From 2012 to 2017, Father Alan worked closely with the Diocese of Down and Connor in the 'Living Church' project. Beginning with a Listening Process in 2011 which aimed to hear the hopes and fears of the priests, religious and the lay faithful across the diocese culminating in the publication of the Living Church Report in 2012. Father Alan was invited to set up and lead the Living Church Office to take forward

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the Diocesan Pastoral Plan commissioned by Bishop Noel Treanor.

Father Alan was the first director of the Permanent Diaconate within the diocese. The diocese now has sixteen serving permanent deacons, several of them married, ministering in parishes and chaplaincies across the diocese.

On 9 June 2017, Pope Francis appointed Bishop Alan as Bishop of Raphoe in Co Donegal, and he was ordained



St Philip and St James
Hollywood Parish Church

Choral Evensong
Sunday 4th February
5.30pm

St Philip and St James + Choral Evensongs at St Philip and St James

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Bishop on 6 August 2017 in Letterkenny. Since this time, Bishop Alan has served in a number of responsibilities as a member of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, including as a member of its Standing Committee, as the Conference's representative to the International Commission for English in the Liturgy, as chair of the Council for Justice and Peace / NICCOSA, as a member of the Council for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development, and as liaison Bishop with Pax Christi Ireland.

Down and Connor is the one of the largest Catholic dioceses, by area, in Ireland, and Bishop McGuckian succeeds Archbishop Noel Treanor who was appointed as Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union in November 2022, after leading the diocese from 2008.

C of I bishops welcome new Bishop of Down and Connor

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison and the Bishop of Down and Dromore, the Rt Rev David McClay,, have welcomed the appointment by His Holiness Pope Francis of Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ, Bishop of the Diocese of Raphoe, as the new Bishop of the Diocese of Down and Connor.

Bishop George said: "I'm delighted to hear the news that Bishop Alan McGuckian is to succeed Archbishop Noel Treanor as the Bishop of Down and Connor.

"Bishop Alan has been a diligent overseer to the people of the Diocese of Raphoe in recent years but is a familiar

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figure to many in Co Antrim through his previous service in his native diocese. His collaborative style of ministry, wide experience of the church and deep knowledge of the diocese through his work with the 'Living Church' project will be of great benefit both to him and to the dioceses as he takes up this new role.

"I offer my prayers and good wishes to Alan and a warm 'welcome back' to Connor! I look forward to the opportunities that God will give us to serve His people together."

The appointment was also welcomed by the Rt Rev David McClay, Bishop of Down and Dromore, who said: "I am very familiar with Bishop Alan's ministry in the Diocese of Raphoe and the esteem in which he is held there by many. I am also familiar with how he worked closely with the churches of other denominations in Co Donegal to advance the cause of the gospel and to care for the vulnerable and needy.

"I look forward very much to working with Bishop Alan in the Diocese of Down and assure him of my good wishes and prayers as he prepares for this move."

New chaplain for Dublin & Glendalough Mothers Union

Dublin & Glendalough Mothers Union has welcomed Rev. Colin McConaghie as their new Diocesan Chaplain and wished him well as he takes the mantle from Canon Leonard Ruddock.



The MU thanked Canon Ruddock for his care over the last three years.

Rev. McConaghie was commissioned by Archbishop Michael Jackson at the MU's monthly service in Christ Church Cathedral. Rev McConaghie was presented with the

Mothers' Union Stole by outgoing Chaplain Rev Canon Leonard Ruddock.

New Rural Dean for Antrim

**The Rev Jonny
Campbell- Smyth,
rector of The
United Parish of
Christ Church &
St John's,
Ballyclare, has
been appointed
Antrim Rural
Dean.**



He succeeds the Rev Canon Derek Kerr who has moved to the Parishes of Tynan, Aghavilly and Middletown in the Diocese of Armagh.

Brought up in Lisburn, Jonny worked in IT for many years and was among the first intake on the new MTh course at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute.

He was ordained a Deacon in September 2011 and did his internship in Holy Trinity Parish, Portrush. He served his first curacy in St Patrick's, Coleraine, and his second curacy in St Patrick's, Jordanstown, before his institution as rector in Ballyclare in January 2017.

His appointment as Rural Dean came into effect on February 1.

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Jonny said: “I’d like to first thank Bishop George for trusting me with this position in Antrim Rural Deanery. I consider it a privilege to serve God’s Church in this way within a Deanery that I have already been a part of for the last seven years.”

Jonny paid tribute to Canon Derek. “I think it is important to recognise the incredible contribution that Rev Canon Derek Kerr has made to our Deanery. I’d like to thank him for his friendship and his support. Derek has brought much joy to our Deanery meetings, but more than anything he has been a pastor to the clergy. We will miss him and wish him well.”

The new Rural Dean continued: “As I begin this new role, I pray God’s continued blessing on us as a Deanery, and I’m looking forward to seeing many within the Rural Deanery at our upcoming midweek Lenten Services starting on Ash Wednesday in St Saviour’s, Kells. Do join us.”

Jonny is married to Alison and they have two sons.

In the media

Agreement doesn't put unification in touching distance... it knocks it out of sight - Belfast Telegraph

The Orange Institution may come to a collective decision about the current deal; the DUP and TUV have already made their positions clear. However, every

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individual unionist will have to decide about this deal, the Reverend Mervyn Gibson writes.

A deal negotiated by the DUP, but brought about by unionist pressure — no return to the Stormont Executive until our concerns were addressed and we were no longer a place apart within the United Kingdom.

There will be differences of opinion within unionism as to the extent concerns have been addressed.

However, we all remain unionists, and there will be other major challenges ahead. Name-calling and Lundy finger-pointing will do little to prepare us.

I respect all views and have come to the following conclusion as an individual unionist, something each unionist must do after listening to the arguments.

My judgement is predicated on the basis that I believe devolution is preferable for Northern Ireland and what arrangements best secure our future within the United Kingdom.

The 'Union' deal addresses the concerns I and many others consistently raised and presents the best way forward to protect and promote the Union.

Did I think this would be the outcome? No, the belligerence of the secretary of state and apparent indifference of our prime minister suggested we were heading for a period of hostile direct rule.

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However the Government has U-turned, placing Northern Ireland's position ahead of purist Brexit interests: now that's a result, that's a win achieved by unionist pressure.

We were led to believe that no change to the protocol was possible, that it was written on tablets of stone. Insufficient change arrived in the form of the Windsor Framework, the Government's negotiated effort.

“Not enough,” unionism said again, and this time the DUP negotiated directly with the Government and the Union deal emerged. Measure the changes from the protocol until now, changes achieved by a unionism collectively opposed to the protocol and a majority within supporting a boycott of the Stormont Executive until real change was achieved.

Is the deal perfect? Is everything dealt with? Of course not — no negotiated deal ever delivers perfection.

However, there are key checks and balances included that will see outstanding issues addressed and the rot caused by the protocol halted.

So, why do I support the Union deal? Does it remove the green lane? Does it provide unfettered access for internal UK trade? Does it address European law applying to me as an individual? Does it stop a drift towards an all-Ireland economy? Yes, to all these questions.

There will be no green lane: goods I receive in the post will no longer have a customs declaration attached. The green lane gone is gone and unfettered access fully restored.

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The red lane never concerned me. It's for goods travelling to the EU. Even then there are measures in place to satisfy the business community that will reduce the items travelling through the red lane.

I trust we will see a Government campaign to regain the trade lost to the Republic of Ireland when the protocol was operating as first interpreted.

The deal restores unfettered access within the UK and gives our business community massive opportunities to enhance trade which can only create a prosperous Northern Ireland economy — one of the strongest arguments we have for remaining British.

This deal is a win for unionist determination and unity, and needs to be accepted as such. Let's not turn a significant victory into a defeat. Had unionism not stood its ground there would be no changes.

Are we better off because of the deal? A resounding yes. The commentators and non-unionists will spin it every way. This deal will not only put a united Ireland out of touching distance, it will knock it out of sight.

I support the deal because it achieved the objectives I believed we required against the constant naysayers screaming “You're wasting your time”.

Describe them as operational, structural or whatever, the reality is real change has been achieved. It was regrettable it required a boycott of the Assembly for the Government to

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take seriously the genuine concerns of unionism, but we achieved the desired result.

Considering all things, the Union deal is what is best for Northern Ireland and our future within the UK.

Securing our future by strengthening Northern Ireland economically, minimising European involvement to matters relating to those who trade with them and drafting legislation that future-proofs commitments made in the deal.

One cautionary note: experience suggests we do need to see the product from the Government before returning to Stormont, where we can begin to address the challenges of making education and health services fit for purpose.

One crown, one flag, one border — and it's not in the Irish Sea. We're still British. Let's get behind the Union deal and go forward promoting Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom.

Mervyn Gibson is writing as an individual unionist.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Lisburn's cotton famine

A new exhibition exploring the tragic history of Lisburn's cotton famine (1861-63) has opened at the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum.

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At the heart of the display is a scale model of the Mary Edson, a ship chartered in 1863 by Lisburn-born millionaire, A.T. Stewart.

From his home in New York, Stewart sent the ship with provisions to help the weavers of Lisburn who were left destitute by the U.S. Civil War, which cut off their supply of cotton. The display marks over 160 years since this event, and can be viewed Monday to Saturday 9.30am to 5pm at the museum.



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Pictured at the exhibition launch is Cllr Thomas Beckett, Chair of LCCC's Communities and Wellbeing Committee, holding a signed copy of 'The cotton famine', just one of the many pieces on display at the exhibition. Also pictured is Werner Geyer, who built the scale model of the Mary Edson.

Visit <https://www.lisburnmuseum.com/events/the-mary-edson-from-lisburn-to-new-york-1863/>

Perspective

Morpurgo's horses

Earlier this week, the actors from the Lichfield Garrick adaptation of Michael Morpugo's Farm Boy visited The Cheshire Yeomanry Memorial at the National Arboretum to connect with the history they will portray on stage and to pay their respects to the Regiment.

The play, a sequel to Morpurgo's War Horse, explores the heart-wrenching tale of horses returning to the English countryside after the First World War just as their farming roles were being supplanted by tractors.

Actors Jonathan Houlston and Alan Booty took a break from rehearsals at the Lichfield Garrick theatre to explore the striking memorial, created by artist Joanne Risley, which represents the transition from cavalry to mechanised vehicles, a theme central to both the memorial and the play.

The life-sized sculpture of the rearing war horse is created using the mechanisms, structure and detail found on the



Fox, Ferret and Jackal armoured vehicles. These objects of war are mixed with more familiar domestic objects such as a spade and the beloved 'BV' boiling vessel that provides the crew with hot water for tea and cooking.

The body of the horse is tank-like and incorporates toeholds, wheel arches, rear lights and smoke canisters. The legs and thighs are formed from wheels and tyre treads with the helmet-like head supported by gun parts and a spine and ribs derived from the Jackal anti-roll system.

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The animal appears to be moving forward but looking back in order to represent soldiers of the regiment past and present, a permanent and fitting place to pay respects to past, current and future generations of Cheshire Yeomen.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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