

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Uniting Ireland

Image of the day



Uniting Ireland

There are few events which bring the whole of Ireland together in unity.

One such was that when Joe McCarthy gave his Man of the match medal to his brother Andrew, after Ireland's Six Nations 38-17 win over France last Friday. What a guy. What a photo. What a message.

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It was the First Six Nations game of this season's competition ... and it was Ireland's biggest win in France. But this image of Joe, Andrew and their parents most deservedly will be remembered. Well done TNT Sports.

People and places

Fire at Cork Unitarian Church

At shortly after 8 am on January 29 the Cork City Fire Brigade were called to a fire at the Cork Unitarian Church on Prince's Street.

The minister was onsite within a short time. The outbreak of fire was dealt with by the Brigade. The building was saved. The roof remains intact.

The interior damage is extensive. The historic building is saved but the usability of the interior for church services and all other activities has been severely compromised.

Minister Reverend Mike O'Sullivan and the Church Committee were devastated and are assessing how to proceed going forward.

The Minister wished to express, on behalf of the Church Community, his deepest thanks and appreciation to the Cork City Fire Brigade and the Gardai Siochana.

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Reverend O'Sullivan stated, "The work of the church is larger than the building. We will inform the public at a later date where the Church will meet to continue its work."

Bishop Paul Colton commented, "I'm shocked and very sorry to hear and see this news. You are all in my thoughts and prayers at this very distressing time".

NS churches in Northern Ireland, Brixton and Aberdeen were amongst those who expressed sympathy and concern.

Service on Zoom to mark Mothers Union Annabella Hayes Day - 7th February

Annabella Hayes was responsible for the establishment and initial growth of the Mothers Union in Ireland. A celebration of Annabella Hayes Day will be held on Zoom from 7.45 pm on Wednesday 7th February.

Taking part will be the All Ireland Mothers' Union Chaplain, Archdeacon Stephen McBride. The guest speaker will be Baroness Ritchie.

Rev Claire Thompson of All Saints' Parish, Antrim, will take part with music provided by the parish choir and organist.

This is an opportunity for branches to meet and view it live and here is the Zoom link for the service of celebration:

Mothers' Union All Ireland is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Annabella Hayes Service

February 5, 2024



Time: Feb 7, 2024 7:45 PM

To join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84388450903...>

Meeting ID: 843 8845 0903

Passcode: 578265

Short bio of Annabella Hayes at -

[\[https://www.connormothersunion.org/our-founder/\]](https://www.connormothersunion.org/our-founder/)



Brigid 1500 celebration in Downpatrick

There was a celebration of St Brigid in St Margaret's on the 1500th Anniversary of her death.

People came from across the community.

“It was a special pleasure to welcome Canon John Murray from Downpatrick Parish and Francesca Braniff from Catholic Guiding Ireland.

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“Special thanks to Canon Dr Helene Steed who preached, Rev’d Sabrina Cooke who officiated, Michael McCracken and Down Cathedral Choir, Elaine Kelly and Martina Purdy, Lisa Dawson and Ami Ogilby (La Petite Duetto), Lucy Cullen and representatives from Blackwater Integrated College and St Mary’s High School. Canon John Auchmuty, acting chair of the Down Cathedral Board, gave the blessing”.

C of I Bishop of Derry & Raphoe will greatly miss Bishop Alan McGuckian



Bishop Andrew Forster (left) has congratulated the Bishop of Raphoe, Most Reverend Alan McGuckian (right), on his appointment as Bishop of Down and Connor, saying that he would miss their friendship greatly.

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Bishop McGuckian has served in Raphoe since his consecration in 2017. Bishop Andrew said his "friend" and "brother Bishop" would be greatly missed here.

Bishop Forster - "I congratulate Bishop Alan on his appointment as Bishop of Down and Connor and pray that God will continue to bless and guide him as he steps out in a new direction in his ministry to God's people.

"As a brother Bishop, Alan has been an immense support to me, during good times and bad, witnessing faithfully to God's calling. He is a man of profound spirituality and integrity, of great wisdom and discernment, of deep compassion and humility, with a keen pastoral heart. He has worked unstintingly to develop and improve relations between the different churches – both at home and abroad – and on a personal level, I will miss his friendship greatly.

"Alan will bring considerable gifts to those he will serve in his new role. Raphoe's loss is Down and Connor's considerable gain."

News

Youth cancel culture carries cost of shame forever - Archbishop of Canterbury

The Archbishop of Canterbury has criticised cancel culture, warning that if people post "something stupid" online as a teenager, they "pay for it forever".

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The Most Rev Justin Welby also criticised society's "absolutely appalling" attitude towards forgiveness and referenced his own experiences of being "trolled" online.

He made the comments in a keynote address last week at the Church of England's National Education Conference at St John at Hackney church in east London.

'The absence of forgiveness in our world and our country is absolutely appalling'

The Archbishop told delegates: "The absence of forgiveness in our world and our country is absolutely appalling. You post something stupid when you're 19 and you pay for it when you're 35, and you pay for it forever."

He also spoke about his personal experiences in being trolled online in an apparent reference to his speaking out over the Government's Rwanda asylum Bill.

He said: "Our societies are evermore complex, evermore intertwined through social media, and evermore struggling to grapple the differences and division in such a way that everyone can flourish.

"Social media connects us in a way that we've never imagined possible but also works to drive us ever further apart. All of us know – and I know especially at the moment, I'm not going to go into that.

"I'm not going to go into debates in Parliament – but we know at the moment what it is to be trolled. It happens in

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school communities, it happens in local communities, it happens on a national and a global level.”

The Archbishop, who is a member of the House of Lords, gave a speech earlier that week on the Rwanda Bill, which he warned was “leading the nation down a damaging path”.

In a rebuke to the scheme to send asylum seekers who cross the Channel in small boats on a one-way flight to the country’s capital Kigali, he accused the Government of outsourcing the UK’s “legal and moral responsibilities”.

The Archbishop has made repeated interventions regarding the Bill.

In 2022 he used his Easter sermon to criticise Downing Street over the policy, saying it raises “serious ethical questions” and cannot “stand the judgment of God” or “carry the weight of our national responsibility as a country formed by Christian values”.

In the media

Down and Connor can expect Bishop Alan McGuckian to lead a journey of reform - Irish News

A heaving inbox awaits Bishop Alan McGuckian as he moves to Down and Connor, says Michael Kelly

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In just three weeks, Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ will turn 71. His appointment as the new Bishop of Down and Connor comes at a time when most men his age are dividing their time between the garden and the golf course.

Bishop McGuckian will have no such luxury. He takes over a diocese with almost a million inhabitants, four out of 10 of whom describe themselves as Catholic – up from just 30% at the turn of the Millennium.

But, while the number of Catholics has grown on paper, Mass attendance has declined and crucially, the number of active priests has fallen dramatically. Many of the priests are elderly, and while Down and Connor has done better in terms of attracting vocations than many Irish dioceses, it is rapidly running out of priests.

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Priest shortage will mean not every family can have Requiem Mass, bishop warns

Homecoming for new Bishop of Down and Connor who hopes Stormont's return will help vulnerable

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With 86 parishes and 146 churches the diocese now has only 84 priests in active ministry, down from around 200 in the year 2000. Only seven priests in the diocese are aged under 40, and so, in just over 10 years the number of priests in active ministry will be almost half what it is today.

So, if Stormont's new ministers are facing a busy inbox, across the city at diocesan headquarters on the Somerton

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Road Dr McGuckian has no shortage of challenges of his own.

Though not a priest of Down and Connor, the Cloughmills native does have a home advantage having worked in Belfast for many years. He also knows the dynamics among the clergy, often the most challenging thing for a new bishop to work out.

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Despite the challenges, there are plenty of green shoots in Down and Connor. Many parishes are supported by very active and engaged lay communities

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Known as personable and hard-working, Bishop McGuckian was a close adviser to the somewhat more distant Bishop Noel Treanor, who never gave any strong indication that he enjoyed being in Down and Connor as bishop from 2008 until his 2022 appointment as the Pope's ambassador to Brussels.

A Jesuit like Pope Francis, Dr McGuckian is more conservative than the Argentine Pontiff. He has been an enthusiastic promoter of the Pope's vision of a reformed Church where laypeople, priests and bishops share responsibility for the parish and make decisions collectively. However, he has also staunchly defended the Church's traditional teaching on controversial topics, insisting that not everything is on the table when it comes to reform.

Despite the challenges, there are plenty of green shoots in Down and Connor. Many parishes are supported by very active and engaged lay communities. In contrast to parishes south of the border, many in the north have retained

younger families and newcomers have energised some ailing parishes

In his current role as Bishop of Raphoe, Dr McGuckian has prioritised youth ministry and recently led a delegation to a huge Catholic youth event in the United States. A former university chaplain, Dr McGuckian has correctly discerned that without young people the Church has no credible future.

He was the lead facilitator in a diocesan-wide listening process in Down and Connor in 2011, and wrote the final report that emerged from that listening. None of the challenges will be new to him, but with the passage of time they will have taken on a new urgency.

His previous experience both as a bishop and familiarity with the situation in Down and Connor means he can hit the ground running. He will have to - he is only four years away from the mandatory retirement age of 75 for prelates in the Catholic Church.

Expect movement quickly, and not all of the changes will be popular: some parishes will have to close, others will be without a priest and the Church will no longer be able to be as present to people as it is now. But, if he can convince people to come with him on the journey of reform, the new bishop can help birth a partnership model of the Church that will sustain faith for generations to come.

Michael Kelly is a commentator on religious affairs, and a former editor of The Irish Catholic

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Church of Ireland Archbishop urges clergy to model unity in new era for Northern Ireland governance - Premier Christian News



One of the Church of Ireland's most senior leaders has told Premier Christian News that the church must model unity in Northern Ireland as a devolved government returns to function, and that its leaders must resist becoming political figures instead of disciples of Christ.

Church leaders from all major denominations in Ireland revealed this week that they had met separately with each of the main Northern Ireland political parties, reporting that

all figures had "expressed a desire and willingness to step up to the mark and play their part in restored institutions."

Archbishop John McDowell, the Church of Ireland's Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, told Premier that against the backdrop of sectarianism and decades of troubles that heavily featured religion, the church had a special responsibility to the people of Northern Ireland, in the wake of newfound national hope.

"There's no doubt that we [the church] played a part in not always speaking a word of peace into divided society, and being captive to some ideas which aren't really part of the gospel at all.

"I think there's that part which the church leaders in Ireland have to, in our own very small way, model working and living together and trying to do things together, even though we come from different perspectives.

The Archbishop warned that church leaders must resist the historical tendency to become political figures, regardless of who's in their congregation.

"Church leaders need to remember, we need to remember that while, for instance, the vast majority of the people who would worship in the Church of Ireland, in the north of Ireland would be unionist.

"There's no doubt about that. But that's not I am their leader, I'm not their leader, in the sense of being their political leader. I am a leader, only in the sense as a disciple of Jesus Christ, and everything that we do or say or think

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needs to be seen in relationship to that primary allegiance, our primary identity, which is in Christ."

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Ever wondered how stories shape our lives?

Join the 4 Corners Festival on 10th February and discover how tales have impacted five public figures.

Enjoy selected readings that reveal pivotal moments in their journeys.

Book now for an inspiring night or watch livestream from home!

<https://www.4cornersfestival.com/festival-years/2024-festival/>

Events at First Church Belfast

Just a quick reminder of some events that they have coming up this week.

The monthly Film Club

On Tuesday 6 February we'll be showing 'The Night of the Hunter'. This cinematic masterpiece, an American film noir, was directed by Charles Laughton, starring Robert Mitchum and Shelley Winters.

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Don't miss it. Monday 5 February at 7.30pm, Playfair Library.

Musical recital 'A Classical Connection' with Fr Emmanuel Gribben, Eva Richards and Salwan Cartwright-Shamoon.

Please join us for an evening celebrating musical highlights of the classical repertoire, with piano music by Chopin and Debussy, Vaughan Williams' Songs of Travel and selections from Bach's Cello Suites.

Here are the details:

Concert start time: 7:30 p.m. (doors open from 7 p.m.)

Venue: First Church Belfast, 41 Rosemary St, BT1 1QB

<https://www.facebook.com/events/744988950413080>

Royal Irish Regiment concert to celebrate the 80th anniversary of The Army Benevolent Fund

The Band, Bugles, Pipes and Drums of The Royal Irish Regiment will be performing in an exciting concert in The Waterfront Hall, Belfast on 6th April to celebrate the 80th anniversary of The Army Benevolent Fund.

The concert will be compered by Paul Clarke MBE and will feature the following talented artists: Matt Forsythe, Clara Wilson, Sophie Giraudeau, the East Belfast Rock Choir and Gary Wilson.

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Tickets can be purchased through The Waterfront Hall Box Office by clicking on the link below.

<https://www.waterfront.co.uk/what-s-on/>

Perspective

Baptism at the site of the Baptism of Christ at Jordan river

Rev Don Binder is an Anglican priest in Jordan. He shares this insight on the recent Blessing of the Waters and Baptism Service at the River Jordan -

Processing near the gathered congregation



Because we live in such an arid region, throughout the wet winter months, natives of the Holy Land are often fond of saying, "Rain is a blessing."

If that's the case, we were richly blessed this morning as Archbishop Hosam led our gathered Jordanian



congregations amid a virtual monsoon in a Baptism and Blessing of the Waters service at the Jordan River.

Blessing the waters.

Throngs of worshipers assembled in a massive tent erected

near Christ's Baptismal Site on the Jordan side of the river. After the opening prayers, scripture readings and homily, the clergy and acolytes processed to the banks of the Jordan, where Archbishop Hosam blessed the waters poured into a riverside fount.

He later baptized two young aspirants in these same waters and sprinkled the remainder upon members of the congregation.

Following the celebration of Holy Communion, the Archbishop blessed the multitudes as the rain suddenly stopped and the sun began to peek through the dark clouds. We all pray that this is a heavenly sign for better and brighter days to come after a very dark time for us here in the land where our Lord himself was baptized at the start of his earthly ministry.

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With the new baptized and their family.



Don Binder was with Archbishop Hosam Naoum and four other clergy at the site of the Baptism of Christ at Jordan river in Jordan.

Church News Ireland

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