

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – Cobh celebration**

# Image of the day

## Cobh celebration



The Reverend Elise Hanley was welcomed as rector of Cobh & Glanmire Union of Parishes on Sunday. “She and her husband Chris Ashley are hugely welcome to Cork and especially to our family in the Church of Ireland in Cork, Cloyne and Ross”

Christ Church was full for the occasion with parishioners, clergy and readers from the Diocese of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, as well as ecumenical guests, including the Roman Catholic Bishop of Cloyne, the Most Rev. William Crean, as



well as community representatives, including the principal from the local National School, Valerie Ford, and public representatives, including the Mayor of County Cork, Cllr. Frank O'Flynn.

The Clerks Choral sang at the service under the direction of Colin Nicholls, with Ian Sexton playing the organ. The service was live-streamed to allow Elise's friends and family to join in the celebrations from America.

The Rev. Elise Hanley was presented to the Bishop by the Archdeacon, the Venerable Andrew Orr and the preacher at the service was the Rev. Meghan Farr, Priest-in-charge of St Anne's Church, Shandon. After the service, speeches were given by the Bishop, as well as by Neil Walker on behalf of

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the parishioners of Cobh and Glanmire Union. Following the speeches, the new rector spoke to the congregation, reflected on her Irish roots, and thanked everyone for their warm welcome. Afterwards everyone enjoyed the hospitality of the parish. (Photos courtesy Eoin Murphy)

## People and places



## 50th Anniversary at St Mark's, Ballymacash, Lisburn

On Sunday afternoon, a traditional service of Choral Evensong in St Mark's was led by The Lowry Singers. Gratitude was expressed to all those who helped with both

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special services marking 50 years since the foundation stone was laid for the church building on the current site.

## Curate assistant begins at St. Macartin's Cathedral



**The Revd Dr Edwin Aiken (right) took part in his first Sunday this week as Curate-assistant of St Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen.**

He shared in the morning service along with the Dean, The Very Revd Kenny Hall, The Revd Colin Brownsmith and Mrs Adele Moore (Parish Reader).

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Revd Aiken, who has a PhD in geography from Queen's University, Belfast and a postgraduate certificate in Theology, Mission and Ministry and a Master of Theology from Trinity College, Dublin, has arrived in Enniskillen with his wife, Alex and young son Orion.



**On the job training**

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## **Former Taoiseach John Bruton – Tribute from Archbishop of Dublin**

**Most Rev Dr Michael Jackson said yesterday, “Personally, I should like to express my gratitude for the generosity in public life that John Bruton showed.**

“Over four decades he connected local, national and international concerns and interests.

“ In this way he made a unique contribution to the common good and to the place of Ireland in the world.

“To his wife Finola, son Matthew and daughters Juliana, Emily and Mary–Elizabeth and his family members, I extend my sympathy on their loss.”

## **Presbyterian insight on challenges and opportunities faced by Christians in Egypt and the Middle East**

**Over 100 people welcomed a leading Egyptian Christian scholar to Belfast, as the Presbyterian Church in Ireland continued to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by Christians in Egypt and the Middle East in general.**

The conference was the fifth in series of events over the last nine years, where PCI has heard from Christians living out their faith as disciples of Jesus Christ in the Middle East,



Professor Zaki and the Moderator are pictured with one of the conference attendees, Father Angelos of St Stephen's Coptic Orthodox Church in Belfast

hearing first-hand what God is doing through the Church there and the challenges that it faces.

Organised by PCI's Council for Global Mission, the keynote speaker at 'God's Church in Egypt: Challenges, Calling and Creativity', was Dr Anne Zaki, Professor of Preaching and Practical Theology at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, which celebrates its 160th anniversary this year.

Born in Cairo, the daughter and granddaughter of pastors, this was Professor Zaki's first visit to the island of Ireland. She explained that Christianity was brought to Egypt by John Mark, also known as Mark the Evangelist, the writer of the second of the New Testament's four Gospels, "Since the day of Pentecost, by God's Grace, the Church has had an unbroken presence in Egypt, and it is little known outside of my country that from the first to the seventh century, prior to the Islamic conquests, Egypt was a Christian country," she said.



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In the Middle East, Professor Zaki said that there are between 15 and 20 million Christians, and of that, 10 to 15 million live in Egypt. Of the Christian community itself, the largest group in Egypt is the orthodox church, the Coptic Christians, while the second largest group are the Protestant/evangelical Christians with 18 denominations of 1.5 million people worshipping in 1,600 churches.

Presbyterians number 500,000 in 450 churches with the third largest group being the Coptic Catholic Church.

Professor Zaki, who is a member of the Presbyterian Church in Egypt, also known as the Synod of the Nile, told the conference that as a nation, Egypt finds itself in what she called 'a circle of fire'. "To the south there is war in Sudan, to the east of us we have Gaza and the Palestinian/Israeli conflict there, with Iran and Syria further east still, to the west there is Libya and to the north, the Russia Ukraine war.

"However, God not only entrusted His Son to us, when Mary and Joseph escaped the clutches of King Herod, God has preserved our nation and Church. He has been gracious to use Egypt, and it is a beautiful testimony that He continues to bless and preserve a faithful few, as we are an unbroken, but dwindling presence in our nation.

"Having said that, Egyptian society today recognises that we were once an all-Christian country and appreciates its national Christian heritage and the impact that our faith has had on the shaping of our country. We are very much a part of Egyptian society and it is well known that the best hospitals and schools are Christian run, with 50 to 60 per cent of students in our schools coming from Muslim homes.



Some of those who organised and participated in the conference (left to right) Rev Richard Kerr, convener of the Council for Global Mission's Global Concerns Committee, Rev Susan Moore who conducted the Q&A session, Rev Dr Donald Watts, PCI's International Relations Agent, Professor Zaki and the Moderator with Rev Uel Marrs, Secretary to the Council for Global Mission.

At the same time, the Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services, is the biggest NGO in the Middle East and is a tremendous witness," she said.

Professor Zaki also explained that while Christians were respected, it was very difficult for Muslims who convert, and those that do often go 'underground'. "As many churches suffer around the world, we too are a suffering Church, we just suffer from different things. A developing economy that is flatlining, our geography places us in a region of considerable ongoing unrest, and we are a small minority community in a majority Muslim country. All of these things are challenging for us," she said.

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“Another challenge is that as long as you are born into our community, Egypt is a very tolerant country towards Christians. For our brothers and sisters in Christ who were once part of the majority Muslim community, it is difficult. Their identity cards may say ‘Muslim’, just as mine says ‘Christian’, but theirs can’t be changed. This means that many Christians remain ‘official Muslims’ and are ‘unseen’ and are unable to practice their faith as openly as I can. It makes evangelism hard, but we are reaching out in mission, regardless of the challenges, and have done so for nearly 2000 years.”

Opening the conference in prayer, and a reading from the Book of Acts, Chapter one, PCI’s Moderator, Right Reverend Dr Sam Mawhinney, welcomed Professor Zaki warmly, saying that it was a privilege to be able to share fellowship with the Church in Egypt. “Seven years ago, my predecessor Dr Noble McNeely, attended one of the largest Christian events to have taken place in the Middle East in recent years. It was a celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and came at a time when Christians in the country were facing a severe terrorist threat.”

Dr Mawhinney continued, “While celebrating the anniversary of that liberating event, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland wanted to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ at that time. Today, we continue to stand in prayerful solidarity with them, and welcomed this wonderful opportunity to hear from, and learn from, Professor Zaki of the ongoing work of Jesus in Egypt, and more broadly in the Middle East and North Africa, as a minority ourselves in this land. We have certainly learnt much today that we need to reflect on and pray about.”

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While the conference was primarily on Egypt and the Church there, PCI has focused on the region in previous years. In 2015 the Council for Global mission hosted the conference 'Faith in the Furnace – Challenges facing the Church in the Middle East', where the keynote speaker was Rev Farouk Hammo, Senior Pastor of Baghdad Presbyterian Church in Iraq. In 2017 Dr Mike Bassous, General Secretary of the Bible Society Lebanon, spoke at PCI's conference 'Hope Unexpected – Lessons from the life of the church in the Middle East', while in 2018 the academic dean of Nazareth Evangelical College Rev Dr Yohanna Katanacho spoke at 'Hard pressed, not crushed, a window on the Christian experience in the Middle East.'

Over the years senior Presbyterians have also visited the Middle East. Also in 2018 the President of Presbyterian Women was in Lebanon, that same year the Moderator, Dr Charles McMullen, visited Jordan. Last year Dr John Kirkpatrick, spent five days in Lebanon, which was the focus of PCI's 2022 World Development Appeal.

That interest continues as Rev Dr Donald Watts, PCI's International Relations Agent, said that today's conference had been a great opportunity to hear from such a renowned speaker. "The Christian Church has a long history in the Middle East, and we have heard from Christians from various parts of the region over the years, yet in PCI we don't know much about the Church in Egypt, and its undoubted influence. The insight that Professor Zaki brought to us today has been important in our ongoing understanding of the region," he said.

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Dr Watts also explained that he is leading the International Relations Task Group of PCI's Global Development Committee, which is looking at how the Church can show solidarity with, provide support for, and learn from Christian communities in the Middle East. The Task Group will bring its report to the General Assembly in June.

“Christian communities in many parts of the world endure isolation, discrimination and persecution. This includes the complex context of the Middle East, made very real in recent months by the current conflict, so it is important for us to hear from those who live there and live out their faith in the region. Today's conference, and what Professor Zaki had to say, was not only prescient to our work as a Task Group, it was an important opportunity for those within our denomination who have an interest in the Middle East, to hear from a very well respected academic and theologian,” Dr Watts said.

Shortly after the attack by Hamas on Israel in October last year, and the outbreak of renewed conflict in the Palestinian Territories, Dr Mawhinney wrote to all ministers in PCI's 500-plus congregations asking them to encourage their members 'to pray earnestly for this unfolding crisis.'



## In the media

### **Northern Ireland has a Catholic prime minister for the first time in history - America**

**Ireland's most-senior churchman hailed an agreement that sees a Catholic take the top political job in Northern Ireland for the first time in its history as an "opportunity for a fresh start and a new beginning" Michael Kelly writes.**

Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh, president of the Irish bishops' conference, made the comments as a power-sharing government was restored Feb. 3, after two years of deadlock. The executive branch is a key plank of a 1998 peace agreement that ended 30 years of bloody sectarian violence, but has struggled to take root with sporadic boycotts from political parties.

Michelle O'Neill of the Sinn Féin party is the first Catholic to head the region's government. Addressing the region's legislative assembly upon her election Feb. 3, O'Neill, 47, said, "The days of second-class citizenship are long gone, and today confirms that they will never come back."

It comes 103 years after Northern Ireland was formed from the six northeastern counties on the island of Ireland,

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remaining part of Britain when the 26 southern counties won independence from British rule.

**Michelle O’Neill: “The days of second-class citizenship are long gone, and today confirms that they will never come back.”**

The founders of Northern Ireland drew the boundaries of the state along lines that they hoped would guarantee a permanent Protestant majority. Traditionally, Protestants have supported being part of Britain, whereas the Catholic community has traditionally supported unity with the rest of the island to form a single independent Ireland.

The first prime minister of Northern Ireland, James Craig, famously addressed the legislature describing it as a “Protestant parliament for a Protestant people,” and the Catholic minority complained of widespread discrimination in terms of jobs, housing and voting rights.

“This is an assembly for all: Catholic, Protestant and dissenter,” O’Neill told the legislature upon her election, adding that “despite our different outlooks and different views on the future constitutional position, the public rightly demand that we work and deliver together, and also that we build trust and confidence in our ability to collectively do that.”

Archbishop Martin told The Irish Catholic newspaper that he felt there was a “sense of relief” from citizens “who are so anxious that we can have appropriate representation to deal with the very pressing problems that we have in the North at this time.”

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He referenced a recent general strike that saw tens of thousands of public sector workers, disgruntled by the lack of pay raises, withdraw their labor.

“Clearly the recent strikes brought to our attention the urgent need to deal with issues to do with pay within the civil service, within the health service, the huge waiting lists for people in our health services, the pressing issues within education, the massive problem we have at the moment within homelessness and housing in Northern Ireland, which often goes unmentioned,” the archbishop said.

The restoration also was welcomed by the representative body for the main Christian denominations in Ireland, the Church Leaders Group.

In a joint statement, the leaders of the Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist tradition, and the Irish Council of Churches said: “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 prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized of our fellow citizens. And it will mean at times taking the long overdue hard decisions necessary to transform our public services, many of which are close to breaking point,” the ecumenical group said.

Under the terms of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which brought an end to conflict that killed more than 3,500 people, the constitutional status of Northern Ireland can be



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changed only with the consent of the majority of its population.

For the first time in 2021, the census showed that more people in Northern Ireland identified as Catholic than Protestant intensifying calls for a referendum on reunification with the rest of Ireland.

OSV News in America - The Jesuit Review

## **Tributes paid to broadcaster Walter Love who 'made friends everywhere' - Belfast Telegraph**

**Mourners were told of the “warm, inclusive and charming” personality which was adored by many during the funeral service of Walter Love, Amy Cochrane writes**

The much-loved broadcaster and journalist passed away at the age of 88 in a nursing home following a short illness.

With a broadcasting career spanning 77 years, Jazz Club with Walter Love aired its final show in 2023.

He also hosted Radio Ulster's Day By Day and Love in the Afternoon, and presented Sunday programme Love Forty.

He was the “dearly beloved” husband of the late Mary and “much loved” brother of Daphne, Dick and the late Hugh and Brian Love.

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The funeral service at St Columba's Parish Church, King's Road, Belfast was conducted by the Reverend Chancellor John R. Auchmuty and the organ was played by Walter's good friend Dr Joe McKee.

His brother Dick paid tribute to him during the service and remembered fondly of the time when he first became aware of Walter's love of radio, when the presence of wires, crystal sets and tape recorders took over their front room.

“He would sometimes record our siblings,” he said.

“And I enjoyed Walter's wide range of jazz.”

Walter had a passion for travel and for many years would spend Christmas with his sister Daphne on Vancouver Island in Canada and spend New Year in Sydney, Australia.

“Everywhere he went Walter made friends and loved the warm weather and developing his passion for painting,” said Dick, adding that one of his most “treasured possessions” is a watercolour that was painted by Walter of the Mourne Mountains in Co Down.

“It was of the southern end of the mountains near Hilltown; it really illustrated Walter's love of painting and his love of the Mournes.”

In his later years, Walter lived in County Down and became President of the Lecale and Downe Historical Society and was a keen member of Inch Art Group and worshipped at Inch Parish Church just outside Downpatrick.

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Dick said: “He loved where he lived and loved the people of that area.”

“Walter was a warm, inclusive and charming big brother,” he added.

“He always presented a calm and serene image.”

Mr Love was inducted into the Phonographic Performance Ireland Radio Awards Hall of Fame in 2014 for recognition of his skill and passion. He started out as a freelance contributor to BBC radio in the 1950s, before landing a job as a studio manager in London. He then spent a decade as a TV newsreader in Belfast before joining Radio Ulster in 1978.

In 1997, he was awarded an MBE for his services to broadcasting.

Long-term friend and former colleague, Don Anderson, also paid tribute to the veteran broadcaster during the funeral service.

“How do you begin to expose the life of Walter, who lived such a long life, and lived it so well?” he said.

“One of the ways I can start is to mention this year — 2024 — which marks a century of broadcasting for Northern Ireland.

“It all began 1924 from a studio in Linenhall not far from where the BBC stands today,” he added.

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“Of those 100 years, Walter was around professionally for over 70 years and that is quite remarkable.”

Don told mourners that when he joined the BBC in 1968 Walter had already made a “big name for himself” and that “much of his on-air exposure was intimately linked with the Troubles in Northern Ireland.”

“His programme was important to Northern Ireland as it was going through this bad period,” he said.

“Broadcasting had to reflect somewhat 'normal life' at the time and Walter was able to do that, and he did it so superbly well.”

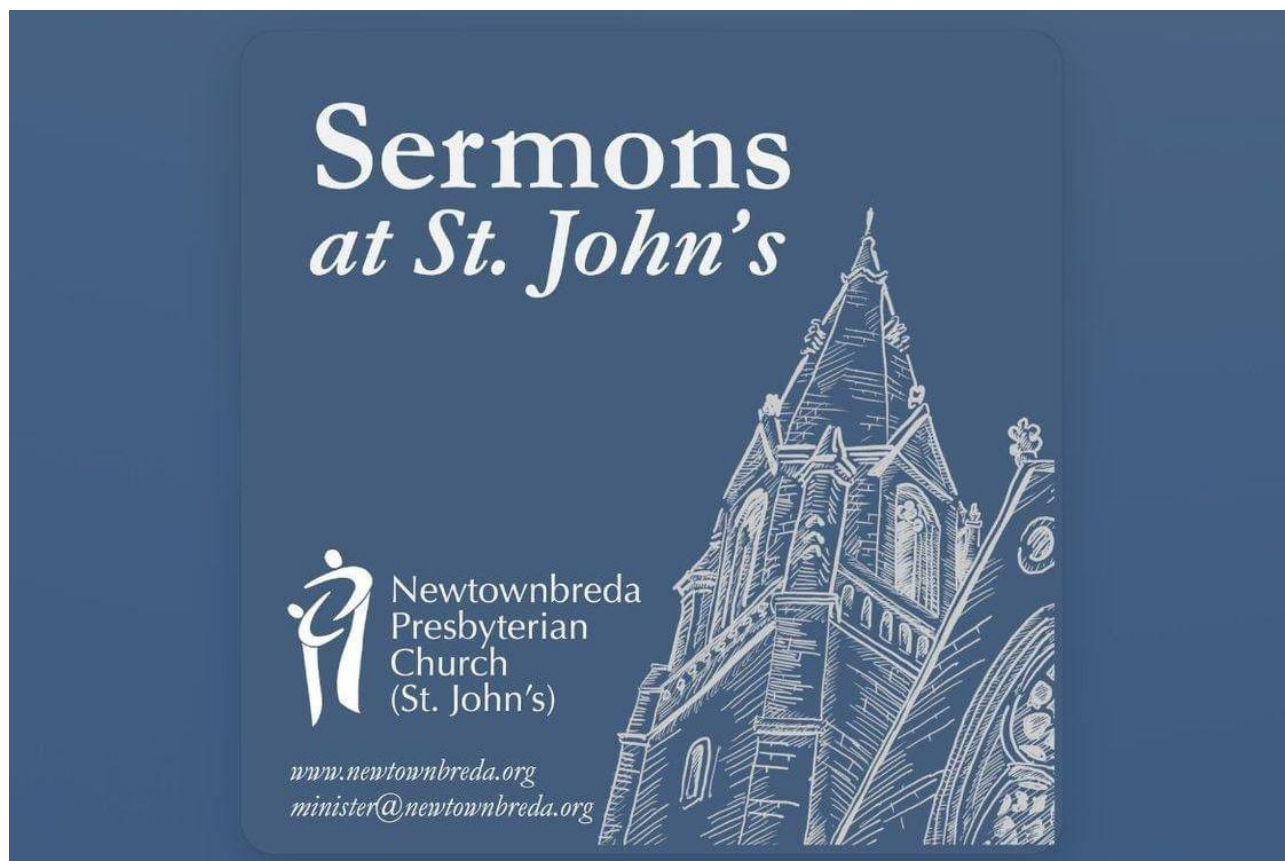
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## Poem for today

### Mirror in February

By Thomas Kinsella

The day dawns, with scent of must and rain,  
Of opened soil, dark trees, dry bedroom air.

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Under the fading lamp, half dressed -- my brain  
Idling on some compulsive fantasy --  
I towel my shaven jaw and stop, and stare,  
Riveted by a dark exhausted eye,  
A dry downturning mouth.  
It seems again that it is time to learn,  
In this untiring, crumbling place of growth  
To which, for the time being, I return.  
Now plainly in the mirror of my soul  
I read that I have looked my last on youth  
And little more; for they are not made whole  
That reach the age of Christ.

Below my window the wakening trees,  
Hacked clean for better bearing, stand defaced  
Suffering their brute necessities;  
And how should the flesh not quail, that span for span  
Is mutilated more? In slow distaste  
I fold my towel with what grace I can,  
Not young, and not renewable, but man.

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## Church News Ireland

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