

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – North coast free diving

Image of the day



North coast free diving

Freedive Northern Ireland is Northern Ireland's Award-Winning Freediving and Water Activity Centre located in Portrush

Offering exciting water-based experiences, you can connect with nature in the stunning and hidden locations along the Causeway Coast. From family-friendly snorkelling tours to cave exploration and paddleboard trips, Freedive NI caters to all.



Embark on freediving courses tailored for both beginner and advanced explorers, and immerse yourself in the wonders of the island's aquatic beauty.

More info www.freedivenorthernireland.com

People and places

Muckamore and Naas Presbyterian relationship and mission link

From Muckamore's Prayer Diary post - Naas Presbyterian Church is a congregation in County Kildare and our church family have recently formed a relationship and mission link. We aim to support the Minister, Mark Proctor and the leadership of Naas as they seek to be a witness for Jesus in that locality. Please pray for this church and those who have shown an interest in joining an outreach team from Muckamore to help in this work.

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Dublin to Dun Laoghaire move



Congratulations to the Revd Steven Brunn who has been appointed Priest

in Charge of the parish of Dun Laoghaire in the Diocese of Dublin. Steve is currently Dean of Residence at Trinity College Dublin.

Steve grew up in the North East of England and trained as a mechanical engineer before moving into the photography industry.

Before joining the Anglican Church Steve was minister of a large inner city church in Aberdeen serving young families and many students. Alongside this he was a teaching assistant at Aberdeen University. He has also taught at the 'Centre for Youth Ministry' at Cambridge focusing on subjects such as theology, art, film and identity and the church in postmodern west. He worked at Royal Holloway University of London as a counsellor whilst serving his curacy.

He studied theology in Dallas, Texas and in Aberdeen. He trained for the ordained ministry in the Church of England in Ridley Hall, Cambridge, and has already covered a range of

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interesting areas, including curacy in St Peter's Chertsey, counsellor at Royal Holloway University and incumbent of St Mary's Oatlands in the Diocese of Guildford. Steve has been Dean of Residence at Trinity College Dublin for the past eight years.

Commenting on his appointment, Steve said: "My last eight years have been a privilege and a joy to serve at this historical university, and I have gained so much in my ministry there. Moving forward, I am delighted and exited to be able to serve the community at Christ Church and the wider Dun Laoghaire community".

Steve is married to Sharon and they have three children, Joel, Emily and Zoe.

Methody School Aid Romania team fundraising

On Saturday 23rd December the Chapel Choir of Methodist College, Belfast were carol singing for School Aid Romania in Belfast City Centre.

Great fun was had by the choir and pupils from the School Aid Romania team. The festive shoppers were entertained and they donated a total of £800.

The School Aid Romania team are travelling to Romania on Friday 26th January after a very busy few months fundraising.



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Methody School Aid Romania team fundraising

If you would like to make a donation, please do so via the School Gateway app

or JustGiving:

<https://ow.ly/Wjcl50QsxNR>.

Clogher diocesan Mothers' Union Big Hymn Sing

Clogher Diocesan Mothers' Union Big Hymn sing is in February.

What? Hymn singing, musical and Choir pieces

When? 25th February 2024 at 7.00pm

Where? St Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen

A warm invitation is extended to: all Mothers' Union members, parishioners and the wider Diocesan community.

In the media

Row back in time with NVTv

Uncover Bangor Bay's Cherished Rowing Boat Memories on NVTv!

Our local TV station, NVTv, available on Freeview channel 7 and Virgin channel 159, has devoted considerable time and



effort to interviewing local residents about their memories of a cherished Bangor tradition: the rowing boats of Bangor Bay. If you had the opportunity to hire one of these boats long ago, it's likely you had a memorable and enjoyable experience.

This exclusive programme is packed with heartwarming memories from locals, and it's an absolute must-watch!

As such, this upcoming program is one you won't want to miss. The broadcast schedule will be announced soon.

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4 Corners Festival on air

4 Corners
Festival
committee
members,

Shannon and Mylie, were delighted to speak with Audrey Carville on Sunday Sequence about the festival.

Listen here (49 minutes in): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001vkxy>

People who lived during the Troubles 'are scarred'- Belfast Telegraph

Anyone who lived through the Troubles in Northern Ireland now lives “with a permanent mark”, according to the most senior judge in the Irish Republic, Eavan Murray writes

At a wide-ranging discussion organised by the University of Galway Law Review and the School of Law, Chief Justice Donal O'Donnell said a lot of people in Northern Ireland “have traumatic stories and a traumatic past”.

The Chief Justice (66) also told Tom O'Connor, the co-editor-in-chief of the University of Galway Law Review, of the impact of growing up in Belfast during the Troubles — and his lifelong love of Celtic Football Club.

Mr O'Connor admitted he found it difficult to research the Chief Justice, but an interesting point he discovered was his love of Celtic.

The Chief Justice replied: “[I've been a fan] since I was a boy. It is something in my family you were born into.

“When you grow up in west Belfast, there is a good chance you will become a Celtic supporter.”

Chief Justice O'Donnell's formative years were at a time of great tragedy in Northern Ireland.

His father, Turlough, who had been active in the civil rights movement, became a UK High Court judge and later Lord Justice of Appeal in Northern Ireland.

Asked specifically about his father and the threats posed to his life, he said: “People didn't live through that time. For the people who lived through it, it leaves a permanent mark.”

He said he was reading a book by Martin Doyle about The Troubles called *Dirty Linen: The Troubles In My Home Place*.

“It brings back a lot of the horror, of particularly the early 1970s to the early 80s when the Troubles were extremely difficult,” he said.

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“One of the things you recognise is if you read a book like Dirty Linen is that a lot of people in Northern Ireland have traumatic stories and a traumatic past.

“Nobody who went through that period doesn't bear some scars.”



**HEALTH & WELLBEING
CONNECT EVENT**

 **Tuesday 30th January**  **6pm - 8pm**

 **McDonald Centre, Seaview Stadium,
St Vincent Street, Belfast, BT15 3QG**

**Meet charities, support groups and
statutory agencies that can help you
and your family maintain good health
and wellbeing.**

**Information Stands
Freebies
Refreshments**

THIS IS A FREE EVENT

**For further information please contact us at:
northernireland@roc.uk.com**



**Belfast
City Council**

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Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

New series looking at issues we face today

Bishop David McClay of Down & Dromore has recorded a new series of short talks addressing some of the issues facing society today.

The films have been made as a response to some of the many questions the bishop and other leaders are asked in the course of their ministries.

As well as an introduction and a conclusion the series will address 15 topics:

Assisted suicide - Abortion - Gender Identity - Same–Sex Marriage - Divorce
- Unity - Slavery - Prostitution - Pornography - Ageism - Racism - Gambling
- Greed - Secret Societies - Fake News

Bishop David says “I am aware that not everyone will agree with my conclusions, but these are the conclusions at which I have arrived having looked at the Scriptures and having thought through these issues over a lifetime of ministry.

“I don’t pretend that what I’ll have to say on these topics will cover everything that needs to be said – far from it – but I do

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hope that what I do say will strengthen faith and strengthen our commitment to be faithful to the Lordship of Christ; to live under the authority of his Word and to be part of a church – and part of Christian communities – that serve society well in these days.”

We will air the series introduction on Monday 22 January and conclude on Wednesday 7 February. The films will be available daily on the diocesan website, YouTube channel and Facebook page. [<https://www.downanddromore.org/news/2024/01/issues-we-face-today-introduction>]

Easter Triduum Retreat

Journey to Freedom in Christ - Christ freed us to make us really free!

Thursday, 28 - Sunday, 31 March 2024

An Easter Triduum retreat will be hosted in Drumalis, Larne, and facilitated by the Drumalis team in partnership with the Belfast Jesuit team. It will commence with registration at 5:00 pm on Holy Thursday and end with breakfast, which will be served after Mass on Easter Sunday morning.

The cost is £310 for a residential, which includes meals and accommodation.

A non-residential option is available for £190

A deposit of £50 is payable upon booking.

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For more information or to book, contact Drumalis by telephone 02828272196 / 02828276455 or email drumalis@btconnect.com



NICVA's Funding Fayre

Finding funding is something we get asked about all the time - so here's a fantastic opportunity to meet funders and learn more about where you can find support for your ministry or community engagement...

NICVA's Funding Fayre: 28 February 2024 - 10:00am to 3:00pm

<https://www.nicva.org/event/nicva-s-funding-fayre-2024-connecting-funders-with-organisations-and-communities>



BMS International Festival of Chamber Music
23-25 February 2024
The Harty Room, QUB

23rd February
The Pavel Haas Quartet

24th February
Simon Höfele & Elisabeth Brauß

25th February
Ailish Tynan & James Baillieu

World-class concerts in Belfast, with superb artists and sublime music.

www.belfastmusicsociety.org/events/

arts council

Belfast Music Society International Festival of Chamber Music

“Join us for our International Festival of Chamber Music running from 23-25 February in the Harty Room at Queen's University Belfast. “

23rd Feb: The Pavel Haas Quartet

24th Feb: Simon Höfele & Elisabeth Brauß

25th Feb: Ailish Tynan & James Baillieu

Full programmes and booking info available via:
www.belfastmusicsociety.org/events/

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Perspective

Accusing Israel of genocide is a perverse moral inversion - Sir Ephraim Mirvis

If there is a genocidal force in this war, it must be Hamas. Incorrect use of the term will harm the cause of peace - Sir Ephraim Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

Of all the deplorable crimes ever conceived by the human mind, one stands alone in its utter depravity, as the very epitome of evil.

The English word for it, “genocide”, was first coined by the Polish Jewish lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, who had narrowly avoided becoming a victim of genocide himself, having been forced to flee Europe when the Nazis invaded Poland. As we approach Holocaust Memorial Day, I shudder to think what he would have made of the increasingly frequent, disingenuous misappropriation of the term, not least the recent representations made by the South African government at the International Court of Justice.

Lemkin wrote that genocide is, “...the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves”. After a lifetime of campaigning, his definition was later enshrined in international law as, the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”.

What is clear from this wording is that the difference between the tragic loss of civilian life in a just war and the crime of genocide, lies in the purposeful annihilation of a people as an objective in and of itself. It is a crime in which no distinction is made between the combatant and the non-combatant, because both are “other”. It is a crime fuelled by hatred and dehumanisation, rather than any desire for peace or security. It is a crime characterised by the absence of any objective at all, beyond the erasure of the victims.

This context makes abundantly clear the spurious nature of the claims of “genocide”, made by a number of agenda-led, opinion journalists, politicians and campaigners. It should be obvious that if Israel’s objectives were genocidal, it could have used its military strength to level Gaza in a matter of days. Instead, it is placing the lives of its own soldiers at risk in its ground operations, securing humanitarian corridors and providing civilians with advance notice of its operations, even to the detriment of its military objectives.

Indeed, to make the case that genocide is taking place, one would have to ignore the scores of military lawyers, engineers and humanitarian aid coordinators working within the Israel Defence Forces, who spend hours every day planning how they might strike targets in a way that minimises collateral harm, facilitating the entry of aid into Gaza, collecting intelligence about civilian presence around targets and aborting attacks accordingly. One would also have to ignore the fact that Israel has begun formulating proposals for how Palestinian civilians in Gaza might yet govern themselves, freed from the tyranny of Hamas, when this conflict is over.

These are not the actions of a state motivated by murderous intent, waging a war without limits. They are the actions of a state fighting a defensive war it did not seek, in what must surely be the most challenging urban context ever faced by a modern democratic state. The simple enduring fact is that this war would end tomorrow if Hamas released Israel's hostages and laid down its weapons. That alone should preclude any allegation of genocide.

Nevertheless, we have watched in horror as people have rushed to invoke the crime of genocide – some within days of October 7. Fringe academics and their partisan cheerleaders have selectively quoted Israeli politicians to paint a picture of a country bent on annihilation, while ignoring the fact that Israel's most significant political and military leaders have repeatedly made it abundantly clear that this is a war against Hamas and not against innocent civilians.

No decent person could be unmoved by the tragic suffering of innocent Palestinians. The ongoing debate about how this war can be prosecuted in a way which minimises that suffering is more than legitimate. It is vital. Yet, the enthusiastic clamour by some to declare it as something which belongs in a different moral category to the many other just wars with horrific humanitarian consequences, represents a moral failure built upon a foundation of hatred and disinformation.

That failure is compounded by the inescapable truth that if there is indeed a genocidal force in this conflict, it must surely be Hamas, whose rape, sexual mutilation and cold-

blooded murder of innocent civilians, which it proudly broadcast to the world, is clear evidence of its dehumanisation of Jews. It is the leaders of Hamas who have made it clear that they will repeat their atrocities “again and again” and whose founding charter makes it clear that killing Jews is among its very reasons for existing.

The Biblical prophet Zechariah declared, “Love truth and peace!” Sadly, truth is often the first casualty of conflict. When facts are presented selectively and truth becomes inverted, peace drifts yet further away.

Next week, on Holocaust Memorial Day, we remember the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis simply because they were Jews, alongside millions of other victims. It is also a day when we recall more recent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. The misappropriation of the word “genocide” is an affront both to the victims and the survivors of these unspeakable crimes.

Its use in the context of this conflict is the ultimate demonisation of the Jewish state. It is a term deployed not only to eradicate any notion that Israel has a responsibility to protect its citizens, but also to tear open the still gaping wound of the Holocaust, knowing that it will inflict more pain than any other accusation. It is a moral inversion, which undermines the memory of the worst crimes in human history.

Israel finds itself caught between the anvil of Jihadism on its border and the hammers of a global hatred whose proponents seem to care more about demonising the world’s only Jewish state and lionising terrorists than about

peace. Those are conditions which have already inspired a widespread view within Israel, that whatever it does, it can never win. If we are to yet make any meaningful contribution towards forging a peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians, the world must ensure that its discourse around the conflict is far more sober and honest. The destructive and manufactured hyperbole, which reaches its nadir with the accusation of genocide, can only harm the cause of peace.

Sir Ephraim Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

Poem for today

January

by Dante Gabriel Rossetti

*For January I give you vests of skins,
And mighty fires in hall, and torches lit;
Chambers and happy beds with all things fit;
Smooth silken sheets, rough furry counterpanes;
And sweetmeats baked; and one that deftly spins
Warm arras; and Douay cloth, and store of it;
And on this merry manner still to twit
The wind, when most his mastery the wind wins.
Or issuing forth at seasons in the day,
Ye'll fling soft handfuls of the fair white snow
Among the damsels standing round, in play:
And when you all are tired and all aglow,
Indoors again the court shall hold its sway,
And the free Fellowship continue so.*

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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