

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – Mothers Union Solomons centenary**

March 13, 2024

## Image of the day

### Mothers Union Solomon Islands centenary

**Join in celebrating 100 Years of Mothers' Union in the Solomon Islands this week.**

In 1924, Mrs. Gwendolyn Mason laid the foundation for what would become a cornerstone of community support and empowerment in the Solomon Islands. With dedication and compassion, she initiated the Mothers Union in FIU village, Malaita, despite challenges like illiteracy.

Despite facing obstacles, Mrs. Mason's commitment never wavered. Her teachings, often held after Sunday Mass, inspired the first ten members in Tantalau village. Through her efforts, she not only educated but also nurtured the health of families.

This has led to a century of women working together in community, empowerment and solidarity.

## News

### Lent starts with Eco Candle at Hillsborough Presbyterian Church

March 13, 2024

## Members at Hillsborough Presbyterian Church began the Lenten season by considering it from an ecological perspective.



This included a visit from the Climate Justice Candle at their service which focussed minds on God's wonderful creation. Pictured with Rev Dr Sleith - ECI Presbyterian rep - and members of the eco sub committee



## Christian Aid Ireland uplifts women in leadership roles



**Christian Aid Ireland writes - To mark International Womens Day 2024, we gathered at Windsor Baptist Church in Belfast to hear from three remarkable women in leadership roles:**

“Our CEO, Rosamond Bennett; Our Director of Policy and Campaigns, and Osai Ojigho Pastor of CFC South, Laura Bell

“We shared the stories of courageous women like 35-year-old Aline, a mother of six from Burundi. Aline became homeless after fleeing from her abusive husband.

But thanks to some training and a loan from our partner, Aline is now running her own business selling avocados and peanuts.

March 13, 2024

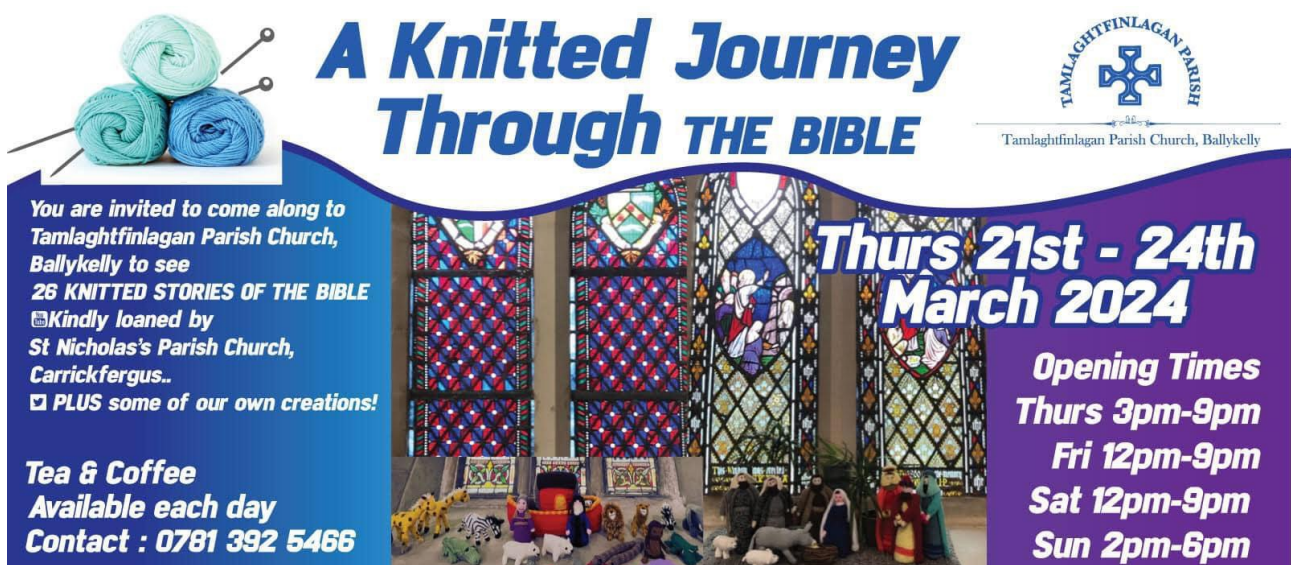
Aline has earned enough money to build a house for herself and her family. She has overcome huge challenges to create a new, more hopeful future”.

## Youth Coordinator for Cashel, Ferns and Ossory

**Bishop Wilkinson of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory, writes ‘The appointment of the Reverend Ger James as our Diocesan Youth Coordinator is announced following an interview process chaired by Archdeacon Mark Hayden.**

“This appointment was made with the support of the Diocesan Council. He will be involved in the administration of youth work in the Diocese, and continue to work alongside Canon Nicola Halford and others already engaged in this ministry.’

The Reverend Ger James writes “I am delighted that I am being entrusted with the post of Diocesan Youth Coordinator



**A Knitted Journey Through THE BIBLE**

**Thurs 21st - 24th March 2024**

**Opening Times**  
Thurs 3pm-9pm  
Fri 12pm-9pm  
Sat 12pm-9pm  
Sun 2pm-6pm

**You are invited to come along to Tamlaghtfinlagan Parish Church, Ballykelly to see 26 KNITTED STORIES OF THE BIBLE**  
Kindly loaned by St Nicholas's Parish Church, Carrickfergus..  
PLUS some of our own creations!

**Tea & Coffee Available each day**  
Contact : 0781 392 5466

TAMLAGHTFINLAGAN PARISH  
Tamlaghtfinlagan Parish Church, Ballykelly

**Donations gratefully received for Tamlaghtfinlagan Church Repair Fund**

March 13, 2024

– working with the young people in Cashel, Ferns and Ossory is going to be fun and very much a learning curve. While I already work with young people in my daily job this gives me the excitement of Youth Ministry and an opportunity to support and encourage those who already work with the young people of CFO. They are big shoes to fill and I hope with your support and prayers I will be able to at least half fill them.”

## Cathedral call

### Ecumenical Canon at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin

**Speaking of his new position on the Cathedral Chapter, Metropolitan Archbishop Joseph said he was honoured to be invited to become an Ecumenical Canon.**

“It is an honour to be an Ecumenical Canon in Christ Church Cathedral. I am glad to know the Anglican tradition and hope to reenforce our relationship between our two Churches.

“The Orthodox community is received in Anglican churches Dublin and we hope to honour that presence and to open our tradition to Dublin,” he commented adding that the Romanian Orthodox community is the largest Orthodox community in Ireland.

Metropolitan Archbishop Joseph was born in Romania. He was ordained in 1994 at the monastery of the Cathedral of Alba Iulia. He went to France in the summer of 1994 to

March 13, 2024

study at the Saint–Sergius Institute of Orthodox Theology in Paris. Since arriving in France he provided the liturgical and spiritual service of the monastery of monastics Notre–Dame–de–Toute–Protection in Bussy–en–Othe, in Yonne. He was elected Archbishop in November 1997 by the Assembly of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of Western and Central Europe.

## Travelling Ringers

**On Saturday 9th March the St Patrick’s Cathedral team of bell ringers travelled to St Mary’s Church in**



SAINT PATRICK’S CATHEDRAL, DUBLIN

# Be a Chorister for an afternoon

If you’ve a child currently in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> class that enjoys singing, they could become a Chorister and enjoy the benefits of a first class musical education in Ireland’s only Choir School.

*We’ve been doing this for 600 years!  
Why not come and join us for an afternoon?*

WEDNESDAY 20 MARCH 2.45-5.00pm

[www.stpatrickscathedral.ie/sing](http://www.stpatrickscathedral.ie/sing)



March 13, 2024

**Blessington to compete in the Lindoff Cup, an annual event which tests the ringing skills of teams throughout the Leinster area.**

The Lindoff Cup is in honour of Gabriel Lindoff who was an instructor at St Patrick's Cathedral, was one of the founder members of the Irish Association of Change Ringers and a composer of a great many methods.

The competition was tough, the standard high, the Cup eventually taken home by Christchurch, Taney

## **Corrymeela at Coventry on Sunday**

**This Sunday, St. Patrick's Day, the Leader of the Corrymeela Community will be preaching at Coventry Cathedral at the 10.30 service...**

...and later speaking at Birmingham University's Multi-faith chaplaincy (7.30pm).

The Rev. Dr. Alex Wimberly will be talking about 'What We Mean by Reconciliation' and discussing Corrymeela's role in a changing Ireland. All are welcome.

## **Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books**

## **Webinars with Anglican delegation at UN Commission on the Status of Women**



March 13, 2024



**An Anglican delegation are attending the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), to contribute to discussions on gender equality, empowerment and poverty.**

To coincide with this important commission, don't miss their webinars this week: “What Works? Anglican Churches and Organisations Alleviating Poverty and Reducing Gender-based Violence”. Speakers include Mathidle Nkwirikiye, former Provincial President of the Mothers’ Union in Burundi, and Alice Garrick, Director of the Women’s Desk, Anglican Church of Pakistan. Wednesday 13 March: 13.30 EDT (17.30 GMT) Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/3wWeEBn>

**“The Africa Six: Pioneering Anglican Episcopal Women Leaders Transforming Poverty in Africa”**

March 13, 2024

Speakers include Bishops Rose Okeno of Kenya, Filomena Tete Estevão of Angola and Mozambique, Vicentia Kgabe of Lesotho, Dalcy Dlamini of Eswatini, Emily Onyango of Kenya, and Elizabeth Awut Ngor of South Sudan Friday 15 March: 11.00 EDT (15.00 GMT) Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/3lxl7e>

## March 2024 issue of C of I Gazette

...Is out now and full of great news and features from across the island.

Inside, **Maurice Dockrell** shares the story of his family's long involvement in Irish politics, beginning with his ancestor Margaret Sarah Dockrell, a trailblazer in tumultuous times in Irish history.

Are you a churchwarden, select vestry member, or indeed a member of the clergy, and have questions about how to manage the parish records? **Margaret Hawkins** spoke with Dr Susan Hood to provide a comprehensive guide to all your frequently asked questions in part one of a two part series.

**Diocesan Review** comes from Derry and Raphoe and looks back on an historic year which saw Raphoe Cathedral install



March 13, 2024

its first female dean and the Diocese's first OLM deacons were ordained.

**Christopher West** reintroduces us to the magic of reading and Stephen Farrell provides Lenten reflections.

“We also have all the usual features like Mother’s Union, Liturgical Notes, Clergy News and our Food and Gardening Pages”.

[https://gazette.ireland.anglican.org/2024/03/11/march-2024-gazette/?utm\\_source=dlvr.it&utm\\_medium=twitter](https://gazette.ireland.anglican.org/2024/03/11/march-2024-gazette/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter)

## Heritage



## St Patrick's Church of Ireland, Ballymacarrett

March 13, 2024

**St Patrick's Church of Ireland (Grade B1) is a six-bay Gothic Revival-style church, orientated east/west, dating from 1893 to designs by S P Close, architect.**

It is located at the lower end of the Newtownards Road, at Ballymacarrett. Well-proportioned and detailed, the church is cruciform in plan with a four stage bell tower at the south-west corner.

It is constructed in rock-faced Scrabo sandstone with stepped buttresses, natural slate roof and perpendicular style window tracery. Although the church was mainly rebuilt after the Blitz of 1941, stained glass panels from both the east and west side of the original structure were removed and reinstated after this date.

St Patrick's remains an imposing focal point within the area of Ballymacarrett, due to its impressive scale, well-articulated form, and distinctive stonework.

Post code for GPS - BT4 1GW

## Perspective

### **Mamie Johnston: A brave Irish Presbyterian missionary in Manchuria**

**Bandits, Japanese invaders, and Communists all threatened her life. Her dedication never wavered, writes Su La Mi in Christianity Today.**

March 13, 2024

In 1923, 26-year-old Mamie Johnston (韩悦恩, Han Yue-en) was sent by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, under the sponsorship of its Women's Missionary Association, to Faku County in northeast China's Liaoning Province, part of the region then known as Manchuria. Johnston's adventures in China would span 28 years. She lived through bandit attacks, the Japanese invasion of China, and the rise of the Communist regime.

Thanks to the short memoir Johnston composed 30 years after leaving China, the compelling tales of her missionary experience, including her rustic life in Manchuria and her legendary wit and bravery when dealing with the Japanese, have been preserved.

## **Fulfilling an early invitation**

Johnston's fascination with China began when she was just eight years old. Isabel "Ida" Deane Mitchell, a female medical missionary from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, was preparing to travel to Manchuria. She invited the young Johnston to come and join her in China when she was old enough. This invitation remained in Johnston's heart and would guide her own mission plans nearly 20 years later.

Mitchell settled in Faku, Manchuria, in 1905. The first Western medical doctor ever seen in Faku County, she adopted the elegant Chinese name Qi Youlan (齐幽兰, "serene orchid in the valley"). Tragically, in 1917 she succumbed to an infection she contracted while treating a diphtheria patient, dying at age 38.

Johnston's dream of joining Isabel in China was shattered. Nevertheless, she applied to become an overseas missionary, setting her sights on either India or China. Ultimately, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland dispatched her to northeast China as a missionary educator.

After arriving in Shanghai by boat in 1923, Johnston proceeded to Beijing to study Chinese at a language school. She then took a position at a teacher training school in Shenyang, the nearest city to Faku.

The following year, she traveled to Faku (known at that time as "Fakumen") by mule cart. Along the way, she spent a night at a large inn. The compassionate landlady, noticing that Johnston had brought no bedding for herself (local people brought their own quilts and pillows when they stayed at an inn), arranged for her to sleep in the master bedroom.

As Johnston drifted off to sleep amid the scent of opium, which was widely used in China at the time, she heard the landlady say, "This poor girl doesn't even have a quilt. Although she's a foreigner, she's just like us—she knows hardship and has the grits to endure it." The landlady then covered Johnston with her own quilt, tucking her in like a child. Johnston later wrote, "At that moment, my heart was deeply warmed. This is my country, my people."

Upon her arrival in Faku, Johnston discovered that the dormitory assigned to her was the very house where Isabel Mitchell had lived. It seemed that the Lord, the master of time, had not forgotten Mitchell's initial invitation.

## Encounters with bandits

A remote area, Faku was often plagued by bandits who broke into homes to kidnap and extort residents. One evening, Johnston and her roommate heard noises on the other side of the wall. Quickly, they rallied the teachers at the girls' school. Following Johnston's direction, the teachers rang bells, played the piano, or blew whistles while she and her roommate each grabbed a long stick and charged out of the room, waving their "weapons" in the darkness and playing the part of ferocious foreign devils. Fortunately, the bandits were frightened and retreated, saving the school from calamity.

Before coming to China, Johnston and other missionaries were taught that the church would never pay a ransom to kidnapers, as doing so would only encourage more kidnappings. This understanding prepared her for the possibility of being kidnapped and killed in Manchuria.

In the late 1930s, she and a Chinese female assistant traveled to the China-Mongolia border to visit an established church. One night, while they were resting at an inn, a group of bandits also staying there broke into the room. Confronted by the rough Manchurian brutes, the two female Christians won their respect and trust through their humble and generous attitudes and engaging explanations of the Bible.

The leader of these bandits, known as Da Jia Hao (大家好, "good big family"), even ordered the bandits in the areas the two ladies were passing through to secretly protect them, ensuring their safe arrival at their destination. The only

literate steward among the bandits also taught Johnston and her assistant a set of indispensable code words to help her travel safely.

## **Navigating the Japanese occupation**

Following the Mukden incident in 1931, Japan invaded northeast China and established the puppet state of Manchukuo in northeastern China. Japanese soldiers perceived missionaries as rivals, insisting that Christians must venerate the Japanese emperor as a god. Non-compliance resulted in persecution, even death, for both Chinese believers and Western missionaries. Missionaries' sermons had to be submitted to the police in advance. All correspondence was scrutinized, and a pass, complete with a detailed explanation of the purpose of the trip, was required for travel.

In 1923, 26-year-old Mamie Johnston (韩悦恩, Han Yue-en) was sent by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, under the sponsorship of its Women's Missionary Association, to Faku County in northeast China's Liaoning Province, part of the region then known as Manchuria. Johnston's adventures in China would span 28 years. She lived through bandit attacks, the Japanese invasion of China, and the rise of the Communist regime.

Thanks to the short memoir Johnston composed 30 years after leaving China, the compelling tales of her missionary experience, including her rustic life in Manchuria and her legendary wit and bravery when dealing with the Japanese, have been preserved.



## Fulfilling an early invitation

Johnston's fascination with China began when she was just eight years old. Isabel "Ida" Deane Mitchell, a female medical missionary from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, was preparing to travel to Manchuria. She invited the young Johnston to come and join her in China when she was old enough. This invitation remained in Johnston's heart and would guide her own mission plans nearly 20 years later.

Mitchell settled in Faku, Manchuria, in 1905. The first Western medical doctor ever seen in Faku County, she adopted the elegant Chinese name Qi Youlan (齐幽兰, "serene orchid in the valley"). Tragically, in 1917 she succumbed to an infection she contracted while treating a diphtheria patient, dying at age 38.

Johnston's dream of joining Isabel in China was shattered. Nevertheless, she applied to become an overseas missionary, setting her sights on either India or China. Ultimately, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland dispatched her to northeast China as a missionary educator.

After arriving in Shanghai by boat in 1923, Johnston proceeded to Beijing to study Chinese at a language school. She then took a position at a teacher training school in Shenyang, the nearest city to Faku.

The following year, she traveled to Faku (known at that time as "Fakumen") by mule cart. Along the way, she spent a night at a large inn. The compassionate landlady, noticing that Johnston had brought no bedding for herself (local people brought their own quilts and pillows when they

stayed at an inn), arranged for her to sleep in the master bedroom.

As Johnston drifted off to sleep amid the scent of opium, which was widely used in China at the time, she heard the landlady say, “This poor girl doesn’t even have a quilt. Although she’s a foreigner, she’s just like us—she knows hardship and has the grits to endure it.” The landlady then covered Johnston with her own quilt, tucking her in like a child. Johnston later wrote, “At that moment, my heart was deeply warmed. This is my country, my people.”

Upon her arrival in Faku, Johnston discovered that the dormitory assigned to her was the very house where Isabel Mitchell had lived. It seemed that the Lord, the master of time, had not forgotten Mitchell’s initial invitation.

#### Encounters with bandits

A remote area, Faku was often plagued by bandits who broke into homes to kidnap and extort residents. One evening, Johnston and her roommate heard noises on the other side of the wall. Quickly, they rallied the teachers at the girls’ school. Following Johnston’s direction, the teachers rang bells, played the piano, or blew whistles while she and her roommate each grabbed a long stick and charged out of the room, waving their “weapons” in the darkness and playing the part of ferocious foreign devils. Fortunately, the bandits were frightened and retreated, saving the school from calamity.

Before coming to China, Johnston and other missionaries were taught that the church would never pay a ransom to kidnappers, as doing so would only encourage more

kidnappings. This understanding prepared her for the possibility of being kidnapped and killed in Manchuria.

In the late 1930s, she and a Chinese female assistant traveled to the China-Mongolia border to visit an established church. One night, while they were resting at an inn, a group of bandits also staying there broke into the room.

Confronted by the rough Manchurian brutes, the two female Christians won their respect and trust through their humble and generous attitudes and engaging explanations of the Bible.

The leader of these bandits, known as Da Jia Hao (大家好, “good big family”), even ordered the bandits in the areas the two ladies were passing through to secretly protect them, ensuring their safe arrival at their destination. The only literate steward among the bandits also taught Johnston and her assistant a set of indispensable code words to help her travel safely.

## **Navigating the Japanese occupation**

Following the Mukden incident in 1931, Japan invaded northeast China and established the puppet state of Manchukuo in northeastern China. Japanese soldiers perceived missionaries as rivals, insisting that Christians must venerate the Japanese emperor as a god. Non-compliance resulted in persecution, even death, for both Chinese believers and Western missionaries. Missionaries’ sermons had to be submitted to the police in advance. All correspondence was scrutinized, and a pass, complete with a detailed explanation of the purpose of the trip, was required for travel.

March 13, 2024

From 1937 to 1944, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland faced financial hardship and could not sustain overseas missionary expenses. Thirty-five missionaries left Manchuria with no replacements, but Johnston stayed. The missionary and educational work in Faku fell squarely on her shoulders.

In addition to compiling teaching materials, she had to be prepared for unannounced inspections by the Japanese army. Any books bearing the word China on the cover or the phrase Published by the Shanghai Commercial Press were destroyed. Johnston and her colleagues clandestinely packed the books and concealed them in a movable space under a window seat in the church. One day, when two Japanese officials conducted a search, they unknowingly sat on that very seat as she reported on the library's cleanup of unapproved books.

Johnston was under constant surveillance, with police frequently appearing in her classroom. Once, on a train, a man posing as a fellow traveler interrogated her for several hours. Upon arrival at the station, she was immediately escorted to the station's police office for further questioning. Fortunately, she remained vigilant and gave no grounds for suspicion. Later, a Chinese friend noticed the words completely harmless written next to her name at the police station.

Embodying wisdom and courage, Johnston once helped a Chinese pastor who had been arrested on fabricated charges and placed in a military prison in Tieling, a small city in Manchuria. Unable to obtain a pass for foreigners, she disguised herself as a Chinese woman, donning a leather hat to conceal her golden hair, an old woman's

March 13, 2024

ragged coat, and a thick brown scarf to hide her face. She quietly took the early-morning bus from Faku to Tieling to deliver a message to Mr. Shang, a Korean translator involved in the pastor's interrogation, encouraging the pastor to persevere.

On her return trip near dusk, knowing that the police would scrutinize the entry pass, Johnston disembarked near Faku. She traversed wintry fields and crawled under electric fences, arriving home at midnight covered in mud. She undertook this perilous journey multiple times until the pastor was released.

## **From northeast to southwest China**

Following the outbreak of World War II's Pacific War, Johnston and other missionaries were expelled by the Japanese and forced to leave northeast China. They first sought refuge in Canada, then returned to Ireland six months later before heading to India and finally returning to China.

By 1945, northeast China was under Communist control, so Johnston was dispatched to Kunming in Yunnan Province, southwest China, to establish Sunday schools for the local churches and to oversee kindergartens and teacher training.

In late 1949, Kunming fell to the Communist government. The church began to propagate the notion that accepting foreign aid was treasonous and that missionaries were potential spies. Pastors were compelled to have congregations chant anti-foreigner slogans during their worship services. As the only foreigner in her church,

Johnston was in a risky situation. After the pastor chanted the slogan, he would console her with a hymn that said, “In Christ there is no east or west.” She recognized that she had become a burden to the church, but she couldn’t simply leave China. The decision to stay or leave was no longer hers to make but was dictated by government policy.

When she was finally permitted to leave Manchuria after numerous obstacles, Johnston was escorted by various military personnel on a journey that took her from relative comfort to abhorrent conditions. She traveled via military planes and ships, staying first at hotels and later, temporary prisons. Her journey took her from Chongqing to Wuhan, Hankou, Guangzhou, and eventually Hong Kong. She transitioned from being neatly dressed to being ragged, from eating freely to dieting on rationed food, and from sharing a room with people to sharing a room with rats. She was forced to witness soldiers shooting a car full of prisoners. This final trip across China was like hell on earth.

When guards stormed into Johnston’s cell in the middle of the night, shining a torch in her face and shouting, “You are now in the hands of us Communists!” she felt unexpected joy and strength. She was no longer fearful but filled with profound peace and certainty that, like all Christians, she was safe in God’s hands. It was a peace she had felt before during her many years in China. The notion that she was worthy of suffering for Jesus imbued her then, as it always had, with genuine love and compassion, equipped her to live joyfully and patiently with those around her, and gave her a sense of calm and freedom that transcended life and death.

March 13, 2024

Johnston was expelled from China by the new Communist government in 1951. Upon returning to her hometown in Ireland, she summed up her adventures in an interview, stating with deep emotion, “China: that is my place of dedication.”

Su La Mi is a Christian writer and editor who taught liberal arts at a university in northeastern China. Courtesy of Christianity Today 12/03/2024

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

---

## Church News Ireland

The publication of Church News Ireland is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD. He may be contacted at [houstonmckelvey@mac.com](mailto:houstonmckelvey@mac.com)

---