

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Prayer beacon lit at Stormont

Image of the day



Prayers for the Assembly as beacon is lit at Stormont

The Great Hall at Parliament Buildings was the venue for a very special cross community Easter Concert on Wednesday 27 March.

Bishop David McCoy of Down & Dromore hosted the event which included bible readings and prayers for the Assembly and the lighting of a Paschal fire.

Major church leaders also took part: Rt Revd Dr Sam Mawhinney, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Revd David Turtle, President of the Methodist



Church in Ireland, Most Revd Alan McGuckian, Bishop of Down and Connor and Mr Paul Reid, Pastor Emeritus, CFC, who represented non–denominational churches.

Other church, para–church and civic leaders were also present including several MLAs and The Rt Hon Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP.

Kergyma cross–community choir and special guest Dana, performed songs of reconciliation and blessing including a powerful rendition of the new song ‘Light the Fire’, written to mark the Paschal (Easter) fire lit by Saint Patrick on the hill of Slane in 433AD.

It was this fire, lit in defiance of the pagan king and a herald of the power of the Christian message, that inspired the event and in particular the lighting of a Paschal fire below



the steps of Parliament.

In his opening remarks, Bishop David said: “Religion can be unhelpful, even destructive, but the gospel that Patrick brought – the message of the cross and the empty tomb – gives life, gives healing, gives

blessing. It tears down dividing walls and unites men and women in the cause of ushering in a new heaven and a new earth where peace, grace, truth, and mercy reign.

“At the end of this concert, my fellow church leaders and I will light a beacon and pray for the fire of the gospel to spread again. We will pray for all who meet and work and make decisions on behalf of all of us in this place, and ask that from it grace, truth, mercy, healing, and blessing would flow.”

News

Presbyterian Easter dawn services

On Sunday (March 31), thousands of Presbyterians will come together at daybreak, across various outdoor locations in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, to celebrate and worship the risen Lord Jesus.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has compiled a list of upwards of 40 venues where services are taking place that have been organised by local congregations, or gatherings involving Presbyterian churches, and others in the local community.

They are taking place on beaches and slipways, in forest parks, atop hills and at some iconic settings, such as the

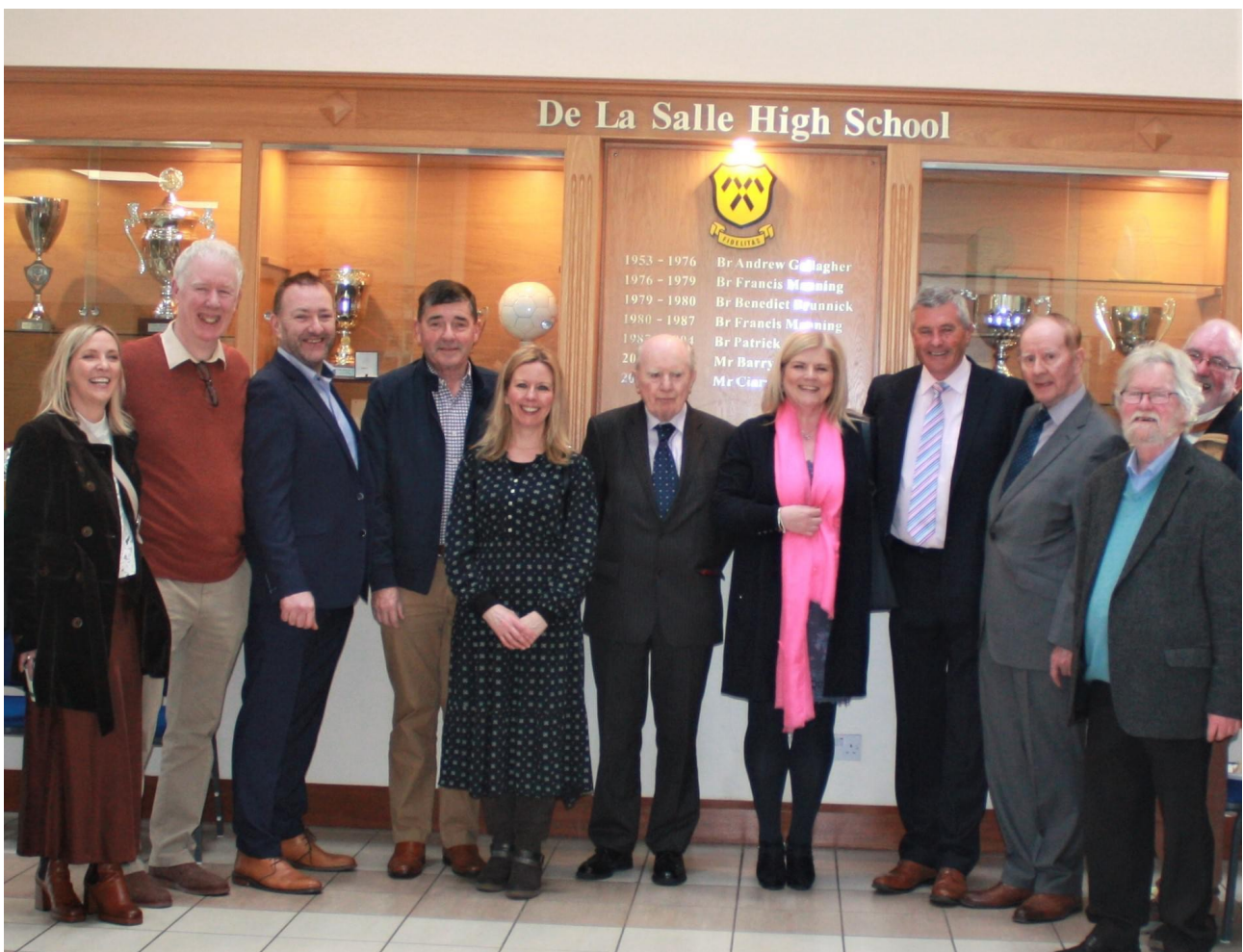


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Giant's Causeway, the Cloughmore Stone, Carrickfergus Castle and the Spelga Dam in the Mountains of Mourne.

The full list of Presbyterian Church in Ireland dawn services on Easter Sunday morning has been published by The News Letter at -

[\[https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/national/presbyterian-easter-dawn-services-full-list-of-times-and-locations-across-northern-ireland-and-the-irish-republic-4568270\]](https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/national/presbyterian-easter-dawn-services-full-list-of-times-and-locations-across-northern-ireland-and-the-irish-republic-4568270)



Thanksgiving for De La Salle High School, Downpatrick

On Sunday 24th March, students and staff, past & present came together to give thanks for the many



years of service that De La Salle High School gave the community of Downpatrick.

As the new educational era of Lecale Trinity Grammar approaches, it was a time to remember with gratitude the many years of service to education given by the Lasallian Brothers and Lay Staff who worked in the school.

At the Thanksgiving Mass, which was led by students from the school, Canon Murray reflected on the many who had come through the doors and walked the corridors of the school, gaining an education and experience that served them in their adult lives.

Mr. Ciaran Maguire also paid tribute to the many members of the school community. In wishing the new school the very

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best for the future, it was important, he said, not to lose sight nor a sense of gratitude for all that had been done in De La Salle.

There was a reception and refreshments in the school, where many past students and teachers came together to re-connect and share memories of De La Salle High School. A recurrent theme this year in the school has been focused on “Journeys ended; journeys begun”.

As a new era approaches, the celebration took time to remember with gratitude all that had gone on in the school since its’ establishment in 1953.

Church of Scotland submission supports conversion therapy ban

The Church of Scotland has set out its position in favour of ending conversion practices in the country, urging the Scottish Government to ban conversion therapy.

It comes after a consultation to end to the practise was published in January.

The legislation seeks to “protect against the change or suppression of a person’s sexual orientation and gender identity” and ensure religious freedom and the right to family and private life, are upheld.

In 2022, the Church’s General Assembly endorsed a definition of conversion therapy as “unethical, potentially

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harmful and not supported by evidence” as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK.

The Church of Scotland has also agreed to instruct the Church to make representations to the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament.

Emma Jackson, of the Church's Public Life and Social Justice Programme said the Church's response “is deepened by hearing the experiences of survivors of conversion practices.”

"We have been very mindful of the diversity of views within the Church and have sought to reflect in our response that we are a community that often live with contradictory convictions.

"We are all created in God's image, and we all have inherent dignity. We must do all we can in our public witness to respect and affirm this high principle.

"These discussions and ideas have informed our position and I would urge Church members to read our consultation response and consider the issues raised."

Similar legislation to ban conversion practices is set to be brought forward by the UK and Irish Government.

The consultation on the proposed legislation closes in April.

Welsh Bishop appoints school children as chaplains

The Church in Wales, which is composed of six dioceses, has selected seven pupils from a Haverfordwest school to serve as chaplains, marking a first for the diocese of St Davids.

The students, from Years 5 and 6 at St Aidan's Church in Wales VA School, were officially commissioned during a ceremony at St Mary's Church.

Rt Rev Dorrien Davies expressed his pride in the initiative, presenting the new chaplains with school chaplain hoodies and encouraging them to emulate Jesus' example.

The selection process involved applications from the pupils, reviewed by the school vicar, Rev Sophie Whitmarsh. She aims for the Pupil Chaplaincy team to enhance pastoral care and engage with community and social justice issues.

Rev Whitmarsh told The Western Telegraph: "It is my hope that by establishing a Pupil Chaplaincy team, the school will be able to continue and deepen its already excellent pastoral care and open up opportunities for the children to engage with the wider community and social justice issues."

Following the service, Bishop Dorrien visited classrooms to interact with students and participate in lessons.

The appointed chaplains will lead worship sessions, promote a prayer culture, establish prayer stations, offer

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peer support, and strengthen connections with local parish churches.

Cathedral call

Canterbury Cathedral Easter Sunday Eucharist to be live streamed

The 10am Easter Sunday Eucharist with the Archbishop of Canterbury will be live streamed on our YouTube channel: <https://ow.ly/QHKI50R311L>

Find out more, including details of our other Easter Day services at

<https://ow.ly/f8Zq50R3110>

Churchgoers set out on quest to visit 42 cathedrals

Walkers are on a mission to take ten million steps for a good cause. They want to connect their village church with all 42 Anglican cathedrals in England through a fundraising challenge.

The walkers, calling themselves the Pommie Pilgrims, are raising money to update the All Saints Church in Youlgrave, Derbyshire, which is a Grade I listed building. Their fundraising target is £42,000.

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So far 52 people have signed up to do the first tram of the walk.

Rev Adele Barker, from the White Peak and Youlgrave Benefice, has described the challenge as “huge”. The church, founded in 1155, needs essential upgrades to ensure its long-term survival and to make it more inviting.

"Our hope to connect Youlgrave with each cathedral in the country via pilgrimage is a huge challenge," Rev Barker said.

"It will be interesting to hear all the stories that will flow from each journey.

"We have a beautiful church building, and all that is raised will be used to ensure that we can provide a warm welcome and hospitality in All Saints for

The funds raised will go towards maintaining the historic church and ensuring it remains a welcoming place for years.

The Pommie Pilgrims have set up a Instagram and Facebook page to document their journey.

The pilgrimage kicks off from Youlgrave on Sunday, with the first stop planned at Derby Cathedral on Tuesday. Future walks will connect cathedrals across the country, including routes from Carlisle to Newcastle, Lincoln to Norwich, Liverpool to Chester, and Canterbury to Exeter and Truro.

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Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books



Festival of Faith and Music 2024

**Sponsored by The Church Times and RSCM who state -
“We are thrilled to announce the launch of a new
Festival of Faith and Music.. The event will be held in
York from 26 to 28 April, 2024.**

“There will be an exciting and engaging range of speakers, discussions and workshops, including a keynote speech by the Archbishop of York, and special services held in York Minster. This event is for clergy, music leaders, people involved in church music, and those with a general interest in sacred music. It will be a source of celebration, inspiration, encouragement, support and resource. Discounts will be available to RSCM members and Church Times subscribers.

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“We are pleased to announce that If you are unable to attend the full weekend at the Festival of Faith and Music, you can purchase a day ticket for Saturday 27th April only - see our ‘buy tickets’ section.

Sarah Meyrick (Church Times) and Hugh Morris (RSCM),
Festival Directors

[<https://faithandmusic.hymnsam.co.uk/>]



BBNI Podcasts - Season 2 coming soon

Ben and Daniel Nelson from 1st Lisburn Boys Brigade were in the podcast studio last week where they talked about all things BB, hockey and competitive families.

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Catch up on series 1 while you wait - available on Spotify, Apple and Youtube. Sky presenter David Blevins is speaking as BBNI President Make sure you subscribe so you don't miss a single episode of this exciting new series.

[<https://boysbrigadeni.org/news-category/podcasts/>]

Perspective



‘The Donkey’ by GK Chesterton: ‘Fools! For I also had my hour’

When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born.

With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.

GK Chesterton wrote hundreds of poems such as “The Donkey”, his reflection on the unsung hero of Palm Sunday.

He also wrote thousands of articles – including writing for the Catholic Herald – a few plays and over one hundred books, notes the Catholic G.K. Chesterton Society.

His extensive knowledge of the Bible is made abundantly clear by reading much of his literary output where he is dealing directly with a religious subject.

In his book A Golden Key Chain, Peter J. Floriani has collected over 300 Biblical verses used by Chesterton, alongside his connected writings. About Palm Sunday, Chesterton chose this Biblical passage to parse:

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“And the multitudes that went before and that followed cried, saying: Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest” (Mt 21:9) – and about which Chesterton had this to say:

“There has never been a case in which the democracy was wrong when the aristocracy was not wrong too. There was a somewhat famous occasion when the democracy was very wrong indeed; when the mob cried first ‘Hoasanna!’ and then cried ‘Crucify!’ [Mt 27:22-23].

“But in that instance, again, there was not a shade of difference between the mob and the great rulers and scholars, the learned scribes and the world-travelled warriors, the sublime priest of Jehovah and the master of the eagles of Rome.

“Or, rather, there was a difference. The difference is that the princes and priests had never cried ‘Hosanna!’ at all.”

How so little changes across the aeons.

Photo: ‘Jesus’s final entry into Jerusalem’, by Jean-Léon Gérôme (1897).

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In the media

Catholic Herald - Catholic group says UK's Covid-19 Inquiry must consider detrimental impact of forcibly closing churches

A leading Catholic group in the UK is urging the ongoing Covid-19 Inquiry to look at the impact of the pandemic on people of faith across the British Isles, Charles Collins writes.

Founded in 1870 as an organisation dedicated to the defence of Catholic values in the UK Parliament and in public life, and to the promotion of the common good in Great Britain, the Catholic Union especially wants the inquiry to look at the effect of the closure of places of worship.

Catholic Union President, Baroness Sheila Hollins, described the survey results as “shocking” and said that “it’s clear from these results that places of worship should never be forced to close again.”

“It is vital that the COVID Inquiry properly considers the decisions to close and reopen churches during the pandemic,” she said.

“There is a very strong sense that faith and faith communities were pushed to one side when decisions were made, and this needs to be addressed in the learning from the Inquiry. It’s clear from the results of the Catholic Union’s survey that places of worship should never be forced to close again,” Hollins added.

The Inquiry began on 28 June 2022 under the auspices of conducting a full and focused examination of all of the different aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic that began in 2020.

A lockdown was ordered by the UK government on 23 March 2020, which included banning all non-essential travel and contact with other people, and shut schools, businesses, venues and gathering places, including churches. Although later lifted in the summer, a new lockdown was implemented that November.

All restrictions were lifted in most of the UK in February 2022. Over 230,000 people are reported to have died from the virus.

A Catholic Union survey last year found that 91 per cent of responders thought that places of worship should be classed as “essential services” in any future pandemic and never again should be forced to close.

Additionally, 61 per cent of people said that their physical or mental health had suffered as a result of churches being closed during Covid.

The Catholic Union has shared the results of the survey in full to the head of the Inquiry and has offered to brief the Inquiry team and give evidence as part of the ongoing public hearings.

In the letter to the Inquiry, Catholic Union states: “While many people endured hardships during the pandemic, there was a deep sense that decision makers did not fully understand the importance of churches to people of faith and were too slow in allowing them to reopen.”

Catholic Union Director, Nigel Parker, said many Catholics remember Easter 2020 when they had to watch services on laptops and phones.

“Thankfully those days seem like a distant memory, and we will gather in churches again this year to celebrate this great feast. But our response to the pandemic is something that needs careful scrutiny, especially to learn lessons from the future,” he said.

“With so many groups and individuals having their say as part of the Covid Inquiry, it is only right that the voices of Catholics are also heard,” he added.

“Our members and supporters sent a clear message in our survey last year about the importance of churches and the impact of their closure on people’s lives. We are working hard to make sure these views are heard by policy makers and politicians, so that places of worship are never again forced to close,” Barker said.

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Public hearings at the Inquiry are expected to last into 2026 with the Inquiry making a report and recommendations to the Government after it ends.



Tail piece - Bishop Paul Colton on social media - Just home after a lovely Palm Sunday visiting in the Cloyne Union of parishes. With the help of some of the congregation at St Colman's Cathedral, Cloyne in the Church of Ireland in Cork, Cloyne and Ross I planted yet another Irish oak tree

Response - You must now be competing with President Michael D. Higgins for the number of trees you have planted ! Congratulations young man .

Speaking to the soul

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Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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