

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – Derry Seeds explore God’s creation at Gortin Forest Park**

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## Image of the day



### **Derry SEEDS Children's Ministry explore God's creation at Gortin Glen**

**The SEEDS Children's Ministry chose a magnificent day for youngsters to see the splendour of God's creation during a visit to Gortin Glen Forest Park in County Tyrone.**

The children were there for a special Family Fun Day for young people with additional needs and they were rewarded with a bright, dry day, with no rain to mar their enjoyment.

The day began with hymns followed by games in the 'Forest Classroom', where the children – and the adults – learned

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how to pot sunflower seeds, which they were invited to take home with them and grow to their full height.

The 'classroom' was then moved outside, into the woods, where the youngsters were led on a sun-dappled walk along leafy, tree-lined forest paths, stopping along the way to learn from Omagh Parish's Reece England about the flora and fauna in this beautiful part of the world. The highlight of day was seeing the sika deer close up in their enclosure. And one of the children even got to use the diocesan camera – taking a couple of photos which are featured below.

Volunteers from a number of parishes served as leaders for the day, assisting our Diocesan Children's Ministry Officer Kirsty, and our Diocesan Youth Officer Claire, by supervising the day's activities. And occasionally, when time allowed, a few of the adults reverted to childhood, testing themselves on swings and other park attractions.

The day concluded with some children and grown-ups picnicking in the forest while others chose to stop off for a treat on the way back home

## News briefs

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The UK must do more to eradicate the systematic persecution and “truly repugnant” treatment of Christians and other religious minorities in Pakistan, C of E bishops have told the Lords

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The UK Government has proposed lifting the 50-per-cent cap on faith-based admissions for new faith schools in England, subject to a consultation launched by the Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan.

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Archbishop of Canterbury - So much of how we understand Artificial Intelligence comes down to how we understand the nature of being human. I am delighted to support the Rome Call, which emphasises the dignity of every human being amid technological change. Let us all work to ensure that the dignity of every human being, created by God, not for profit or productivity, is central to all we do.

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The Anglican Communion Primates' Meeting is being held in Rome. The primates have spent time in prayer, Bible study on the book of Acts and discussion sessions. Day 1 saw the Primates make pilgrimages to Tre Fontane and the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls.

Archbishop of Canterbury - Yesterday's visits to Tre Fontane and St Paul Outside-the-Walls were deeply profound and significant: not only in that they are where St Paul the Apostle was martyred and laid to rest, but that the Primates all journeyed there together, in deep prayer and contemplation.

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Connor news: Happy 100th birthday Margaret!: Many congratulations to Mrs Margaret Stott, a parishioner of St Colmgall's, Rathcoole, who is celebrated her 100th birthday on Monday April 29. Margaret was visited by her bishop.

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Bicycles urgently needed for Maridi clergy: In an area with one tarmac road and parishes scattered widely in the bush, transport is the biggest challenge to ministry in Maridi Diocese. Could your church raise enough to buy one or...  
<https://downanddromore.org/news/2024/04>

## News

### **Mass attendance in Ballymoney and Derrkeighan increased by 19%**

**Great news from the Down & Connor diocesan census that took place this past weekend - Mass attendance in Ballymoney & Derrykeighan Catholic Parish has increased by an amazing 19% on last year.**

“This is a wonderful sign of the Holy Spirit at work in our parish and how our congregation is responding. Thank you to everyone who attends our Masses and supports our parish!

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“It's particularly interesting to see how our Sunday 5pm Mass has grown over the last few years - we have the only Sunday evening Mass anywhere between Belfast and Derry and the figures show that there is an increasing demand for it.



“There will be a more detailed breakdown of the census results in the bulletin next weekend”.

## ICS 200th Anniversary Northern Ireland Event

“We started our 200th celebrations last year in London and we're ending them next week with our celebration event in Northern Ireland”.

ICS writes - 2023 was a big year for ICS when we reached our 200th Anniversary. To celebrate this event in Northern Ireland, please join us on 8 May at Hillsborough Parish Church.

Samuel Codner started a mission to educate English-speaking settlers in Newfoundland. Through broad vision

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and lively faith, a great missionary enterprise that spread through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was born. Today, ICS has mission partners working in 65



congregations in Europe, North Africa, South America, the South Atlantic and Asia. We also provide Resort Mission in holiday destinations in Switzerland and Corfu.

Please join us as we celebrate our bicentenary in Northern Ireland. There will be a Thanksgiving Service, followed by a light lunch.

We will be joined by the following speakers:

The Revd Clive Atkinson (former ICS Chaplain in Vevey and Chateau d'Oex and now Rector at Willowfield Church in Belfast)

The Rt Revd Richard Jackson (Chair of ICS Council)

Ms Mimy Gardiner (ICS Council)

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The Revd Canon Richard Bromley (ICS Mission Director).  
Worship will be led by Mr Andy Flannagan.

<https://www.ics-uk.org/events/200th-anniversary-ni>

## **Dalriada School appoints new principal**

**Vice principal of Antrim Grammar school, Mrs Louise Aitcheson from Cloughmills will take up the post from August 1**

Dalriada School in Ballymoney has appointed a new principal following the sudden death of headmaster Tom Skelton earlier this year.

The much-loved and highly respected principal died at Causeway Hospital in February.

Vice principal of Antrim Grammar school, Mrs Louise Aitcheson from Cloughmills, will take up the post from August 1.

A statement posted on the school website, stated: “The Board of Governors are pleased to announce the appointment of Mrs Louise Aitcheson BA (Hons) P.G.C.E., MSc as the new principal of Dalriada School from 1st August 2024.

“Mrs Aitcheson, from Cloughmills, studied at Queen’s University Belfast gaining a B.A. Hons 2:1 degree and then completed a Post Primary P.G.C.E. certificate in Education



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in Geography at the University of Ulster. She also holds an MSc in Education from the same University.

“Louise has been teaching for 21 years. Her first post was in Larne High School as a geography teacher moving to Antrim Grammar school after two years to teach the same subject.

“During her time at Antrim Grammar School, she became head of geography, a senior teacher and then a vice-principal.

“On appointment she told the chairman of the Board of Governors, Brian Dillon, that she was delighted to accept the post and shared Dalriada’s vision for education.”

## **1000 Presbyterian women will attend Annual Conference**

**One of the leading best-selling Christian authors of the day, Dr Amy Orr-Ewing, is set to speak in Belfast next week, when the UK-based writer and theologian is the guest speaker at the Annual Conference of Presbyterian Women, the organisation that supports the development of ministry among women across the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.**

Upwards of 1000 women are set to gather in Assembly Buildings in Belfast on Saturday, 11 May to hear Dr Orr-Ewing, who will give two different talks around the organisation’s theme for the year, ‘Entrusted’, which comes from Luke 12:48, which says ‘... from one who has been

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entrusted with much, much more will be asked.’ The Morning Session is from 10.30am-12.15pm and the Afternoon Session is from 2pm-3.45pm.

Members and guests will also hear from the outgoing Presbyterian Women’s President, Mrs Ann Wilson from Saintfield, and welcome her successor for the year, Mrs Ellen Hillen from St. Columba’s Presbyterian Church in Lisburn, who will address the morning session. As one of the invited guests, PCI’s Moderator, Rt Rev Dr Sam Mawhinney, will give an address of welcome.

With the Conference just days off, Pauline Kennedy, PCI’s Women’s Ministry and Presbyterian Women Development Officer, is looking forward to the annual gathering. “As one of Ireland’s largest Christian women’s organisations, with around 450 groups across the denomination north and south, we aim to encourage and equip women to live for Jesus, being disciples and making disciples.

“The Annual Conference is always one of the highlights in the church calendar and is the biggest gathering in PCI after the General Assembly. Given how busy she is, this year we are delighted to be welcoming Amy as our guest speaker, who addresses the deep questions of our day with meaningful answers found in the Christian faith. Many of our women will know her many books, especially ‘Where is God in all the Suffering?’ and ‘Why Trust the Bible?’ and will have the opportunity of listening to her not once, but twice; firstly, in the morning and then in the afternoon session, as she will give two different talks around our theme for the year, ‘Entrusted’, so we will be doubly blessed,” Pauline said.

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“Having studied for her doctorate in theology at Oxford University, Amy serves as Honorary Lecturer in Divinity at the University of Aberdeen. A theologian and speaker for the past 25 years, she has spoken and ministered in 40 nations, and like the MPs, Peers and their guests who heard her speak at the National Prayer Breakfast in Westminster last year, we are also really looking forward to hearing from her.”

Interviewed for the spring edition of the organisation’s magazine ‘Inspire’, Dr Orr-Ewing said, “I believe the Lord has a wonderful word for us within the conference theme of having been entrusted with much in the gospel. He is calling us onwards and upwards, to go deeper with Him and to go further for him. To fulfil the potential and promise of our lives and to receive the riches of His love poured into our hearts.”

Asked about her hopes for the Annual Conference, which is a free non-ticket event, the best-selling author continued, “I hope and expect a divine encounter as we gather together and unite around the Word of God. I am looking forward to sharing fellowship with women, gathering and seeing Him heal and encourage hearts, strengthening us for the service He has called us all to.”

During the meeting this year’s Home and Overseas Special Projects will be unveiled with updates on last year’s projects, which were supported to the tune of £30,000. The Special Home Project focussed on mental health through the work of REACH and Biblical Counselling Ireland, while the Special Overseas Project supported Christian broadcaster, and one of PCI’s global mission partners, SAT-7, as it continues to reach people across the Middle East and North Africa.

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Each year Presbyterian Women supports its Mission Fund to the tune of around £380,000. This supports the work of PCI's deaconesses at home, the training of new student deaconesses, and the work of South Belfast Friendship House, alongside PCI's Global Mission Workers.

“As I have said many times before, together, Presbyterian Women is a real partnership that is able to support the development of ministry to women in the Church each year, and the generosity of our groups enable us to support our various special projects,” Pauline Kennedy explained.

“This year will be the first time that we have had British Sign Language interpreters, so I hope that as many women from across Ireland will be able to join with us in two weeks' time as we come together to worship and celebrate all that God is doing on our lives and through His church. I know that we will come expectantly, and with hope, to encounter Him afresh and take home to our churches and communities His blessing. To all who are able to come, you will be made very welcome and I look forward to seeing you on 11 May,” she said.

## Cathedral Call

## Methodist Ecumenical Canon at Belfast Cathedral

**Congratulations to Dr Janet Unsworth on her Installation as Methodist Ecumenical Canon of St**



**Anne's Cathedral on Sunday 28th April, as part of the service of Choral Evensong.**

Janet was joined after the service by Stephen Forde, Dean of Belfast, by the preacher Dr Heather Morris, by the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Rev David Turtle and by the Bishop of Connor.

Janet's daughter and husband both read lessons during the service, and were joined afterwards by members of the joint

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Methodist / Church of Ireland Chaplaincy Church of the Resurrection, along with Janet's parents, her sister, Rev Ruth Patterson and and brother, Rev Dr John Alderdice.

## Fáilte Ireland Visit Kilkenny Ireland's Ancient East

**On Tuesday  
the team at  
St Canice's  
Cathedral,  
Kilkenny  
were hosts  
for the Fáilte  
Ireland  
launch of  
the Kilkenny  
Destination  
&  
Experience**



**Development Plan and the Action Plan for Kilkenny's  
Night Time Economy.**

“Delighted to have the backdrop of the Cathedral to be involved and share the hard work that has gone into these two projects for Kilkenny

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“Thank you to the team in Failte Ireland Paul Kelly Justine Carey Brian O'Flynn Honor Byrne Eimear Whittle , pleasure as always to work with. On a local level Martina Comerford Conor Sweeney from Kilkenny County Council .



“Well done to our catering partners

Langtons Hotel Kilkenny , Eddie Langton and the team, food and service amazing.

## Haydn's Creation by Westminster Abbey Choir

**in 1798, Haydn's Creation was first premiered in Vienna, believed to be inspired by a performance of Messiah Haydn had heard at Westminster Abbey in 1791.**

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Join Westminster Abbey Choir alongside Britten Sinfonia for The Creation on 19 June.

More details and tickets here: <https://www.sjss.org.uk/events/haydn-creation-westminster-abbey>

## Three Choirs Festival

**Tickets are now available for Worcester 2024.**

Explore new music, discover past masters and unearth your favourites at this year's Three Choirs Festival!

[3choirs.org/whats-on](https://3choirs.org/whats-on)

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## In the media

### **Daily Telegraph - Ireland has made its bed with the EU. It must lie in it**

**On one level, the migrant row is a mutually-helpful farce. But has something changed in UK-Irish ties?**

**Ruth Dudley Edwards writes.**

Surveying the row over immigration policy in Ireland and the UK, I'm reminded of the Sham Fight, an annual event in Northern Ireland, in the tiny County Down village of Scarva, conducted by two groups of men dressed up as soldiers of King Billy and King James. There is much clattering of swords, at the end of which James falls theatrically to the ground, his troops pursued off the field, and the groundlings gigglingly ask each other the traditional question: "Who won?" You're supposed to answer: "I don't know. I'll have to ask."

The political equivalent is when – usually for pressing electoral reasons – a Taoiseach and a British prime minister saddle up and threaten each other with "unhelpful" legislation. What ought to be a minor matter that could be resolved amicably between the two parties is then turned into an entertaining political battlefield.

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This time, the two countries are in the mire over their own failed immigration policies and tempers are high over allegations that illegal immigrants are streaming from the UK over the border. Simon Harris, the new Taoiseach, goaded by Sinn Fein, clearly feels bound to square up to the Brits. As the Irish commentator John McGuirk put it, “the auld enemy has once again been rustled out from the back of the political cupboard, donned in the butcher’s apron \[a rude description of the UK flag], and cast as the oppressor of all things good and decent and celtic.”

Meanwhile, in advance of local elections this Thursday, Rishi Sunak is clutching joyfully at the present that has been inadvertently given him by Irish ministers, who have claimed that immigrants are heading for Ireland because they’re scared of being deported to Rwanda. The Irish high court stirred the pot further by declaring that the Rwanda threat made the UK unsafe for illegal migrants. A British Conservative commentator has cheekily suggested that the UK should take advantage of the situation, and send illegal migrants to Northern Ireland to occupy disused military barracks near the border.

So on one level, this is a farce rather than a crisis, one that suits both sides to play up rather than end. But in the UK’s refusal to contemplate taking migrants back, in the absence of an EU-wide returns deal, is there also evidence that something more fundamental may have changed in Irish-UK relations?

We need to remember that, despite problems caused by violent extremists, the two neighbouring countries had been getting on pretty well since Irish independence. Ireland

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pretended to be neutral in the Second World War, but helped the Allies covertly and almost 70,000 of its young men joined the British forces.

The Common Travel Area has mostly operated smoothly for a century, Irish immigrants have made an invaluable contribution to the UK workforce, Irish citizens can vote in British elections, Irish entertainers are wildly popular, and the two populations get along just fine. And on the whole, politicians and diplomats have tried to keep the peace.

Ireland doesn't admit it, but it has been exceptionally privileged. Without fuss, and drawing no attention to it, the RAF and the Royal Navy have guarded its seas and its airspace. During the financial crisis, when George Osborne provided a bilateral loan, it was to general approval.

But every so often, the national inferiority complex manifests itself in a bout of Anglophobia. Ireland saw Brexit as a betrayal, and responded like a spurned lover. While under Taoiseach Enda Kenny, British and Irish civil servants were discreetly sorting out a deal that suited both countries, from mid-2017 Leo Varadkar, his successor, mobilised the EU to reject any proposal of a land border, a petard from which the Republic now dangles. Many Brits will now consider that Ireland has made its bed with the EU, and should lie in it.

The truth is that Dublin probably has the ability to confront the immigration issue all on its own, without blaming the Brits. As McGuirk points out, immigrants are far more likely to be coming to Ireland because of Irish immigration policy, not the UK's. The Irish could emulate the British and make a deal with Rwanda, as Denmark, an EU country has

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contemplated. In fact, in its desire to be popular, Ireland has become a softer touch even than the UK.

But both sides seem to prefer this war of words. So who will win? I don't know. I'll ask someone on Friday.

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## Poem for today



### **Bluebells for Love**

**by Patrick Kavanagh**

There will be bluebells growing under the big trees  
And you will be there and I will be there in May;

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For some other reason we both will have to delay  
The evening in Dunshaughlin - to please  
Some imagined relation,  
So both of us came to walk through that plantation.  
We will be interested in the grass,  
In an old bucket-hoop, in the ivy that weaves  
Green incongruity among the dead leaves,  
We will put on surprise at carts that pass -  
Only sometimes looking sideways at the bluebells in the  
Plantation,  
And never frighten them with too wild an exclamation.  
We will be wise, we will not let them guess  
That we are watching them or they will pose  
A mere facade like boys  
Caught out in virtue's naturalness.  
We will not impose on the bluebells in that plantation  
Too much of our desire's adulation.  
We will have other loves – or so they'll think;  
The primroses or the ferns or the briars,  
Or even the rusty paling wires,  
Or the violets on the sunless sorrel bank.  
Only as an aside the bluebells in the plantation  
Will mean a thing to our dark contemplation.  
We'll know love little by little, glance by glance.  
Ah, the clay under these roots is so brown!  
We'll steal from Heaven while God is in the town –  
I caught an angel smiling in a chance  
Look through the tree-trunks of the plantation  
As you and I walked slowly to the station.

## Speaking to the soul

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Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## Church News Ireland

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