

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Holy Week starts

News reports



Palm Sunday procession to Enniskillen Cathedral

Palm Sunday was marked in Enniskillen yesterday with a procession led by a donkey.

Tom, the donkey was led by his owner, Matthew Hall at the head of the procession while Dean Kenneth Hall was joined by Curate, Revd Chris West and Parish Reader, Scott Elliott, as well as the organist and choir members and many of the members of the congregation waving palm branches.

The procession began at the Cathedral Hall, along Hall's Lane to St. Macartin's Cathedral.



This was the first service in the Cathedral following extensive internal repairs and repainting carried out over the past few months.

During the service, the choir and congregation sang the hymns, “Hosanna, Hosanna,” “Ride on, ride on in majesty,” “All glory, laud and honour” and “Blessed city, heavenly Salem.” The organist was Mr Glenn Moore.

Dean Kenneth Hall was assisted in the service by Curate, Revd Chris West, Canon Desmond Kingston and parish Reader, Scott Elliott.

50th anniversary of the Catholic Chaplaincy at QUB

What an amazing celebration of the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Catholic Chaplaincy at QUB on the Elmwood Avenue site -

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Huge congratulations to Shannon Campbell, Director of Campus Ministry at the Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's University Belfast, who last week graduated from Trinity College Dublin with an MPhil in Theology.

a place that enriched my Queen's student experience in so many ways in the late and great Fr Ambrose Macaulay's long period as Chaplain. So fitting to see prizes named after him and Mgr Arthur Ryan and awarded to students of distinction., Martin O'Brien writes.

And what a fine collaborative effort this gala celebration in the Great Hall between the Chaplaincy team led by Fr Dominic McGrattan and Shannon Campbell and the Vice-Chancellor's Office at the University, led by President and

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Vice Chancellor Prof Ian Greer who attended and paid generous tribute to the Chaplaincy's service to Queen's over the past half century.

There was a triple premiere! Michael Longley's poem 'Canticle'; Colin Davidson's commemorative painting and Sir James MacMillan's 'With My Heart I Worship'.

Spell-binding performances by the Queen's University Chamber Choir and the Chaplaincy's Canticle Choir. So uplifting to savour the talents and leadership of Donal McCrisken, Marcella Walsh, singer and Canticle Choir director - and Dr Niall Leonard on the cello, who also happens to be choir master in my parish, St. Brigid's, following in the footsteps of Bob, his late father. Lovely words by Bishop Noel Treanor at the end commending the inter-play of talent on display that made the evening so memorable. Congrats and thanks to all who made it happen. Deo Gratias.

Walled City Passion in Derry

'Walled City Passion' is a live performance festival that reimagines the Easter story for a modern audience. This unique event – on April 14th, 15th and 16th – features promenade performances on Derry Londonderry's historic walls, at 12.30 pm and 4.30 pm each day.

It is broadcast on 'big screens' in Guildhall Square, with a host of family-friendly activities available daily from 11.30 am to 6.30 pm.



Walled City Passion will be live streamed by RTÉ and BBC on Good Friday. RTÉ One television will broadcast the event on Easter Sunday night at 10.30 pm. Join in the fun and even become part of the story!

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How do I watch Walled City Passion?

You can attend Walled City Passion and watch live on the big screens in Guildhall Square and Waterloo Place. It will also be streamed live on the BBC and RTÉ players at 4.30pm on Good Friday, and will be televised on RTÉ One on Easter Sunday night at 10.30pm.

Further information at -

[[] <https://walledcitypassion.com/>]

New church opens its doors in Mountmellick

A new church was inaugurated in Mountmellick on Sunday 3 April. Called the Irish Reformed Church, the ceremony was held in the Methodist Church building, where a deacon, elder and minister of religion of the new church were ordained.

Other clergy from the community bestowed their blessings on the new group of believers, including Fr Michael Murphy, who spoke on behalf of the Catholic Church; Rev Tim Irvine spoke on behalf of the Church of Ireland and Beverly Barbour spoke on behalf of the Methodist Church.

One of the driving forces in setting up the new church, Rassie Erasmus, said: “When you are a part of the Calvinism branch of Protestants, you will find no spiritual home in Laois because there is no church with those beliefs in Laois. The Irish Reformed Church has now filled that void. Since the Presbyterians left Mountmellick in 2021, Rev

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Rassie Erasmus is the only ordained minister of religion in the Calvinist branch of the Reformation in Co Laois.

“Our ambition is to preach and teach the word of God with a pure heart, good conscience and sincere faith,” said Rev Erasmus. Courtesy the Laois Nationalist



New Children’s Officer appointed for Down & Dromore

Emilia Bellew has been appointed as the new Diocesan Children’s Development Officer. She will take up her post at the beginning of May.

Emilia is currently a Church and Community Officer at Christian Aid Ireland, but has had a range of jobs, from youth worker to University researcher. However, it is her interest in the relationship between children, parents, and the church which has ultimately led her to join the Down and Dromore team as the new Diocesan Children’s Development Officer.

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Emilia, or 'Millie' to her friends, graduated with a BA(Hons) in Theology from the University of Nottingham in 2017, and then moved to Northern Ireland to study an MSc in Children's Rights at Queen's University Belfast. She has recently completed her PhD thesis on the topic of family faith in the Church of Ireland.

In her spare time, Millie also hosts an evening radio show called the 'Sunset Slot' on Sunshine 104.9FM.

Millie got married in September 2021 and lives in Newry with her husband Laurence, 3 Guinea Pigs, and a (very spoilt) dog named Willow.

Four Clogher parishes amalgamate

A new parish grouping has been announced in Clogher Diocese.

The amalgamation of Derryvullen South and Garvary with Tempo and Clabby has been approved by Diocesan Council and ratified by the Representative Church Body Executive.

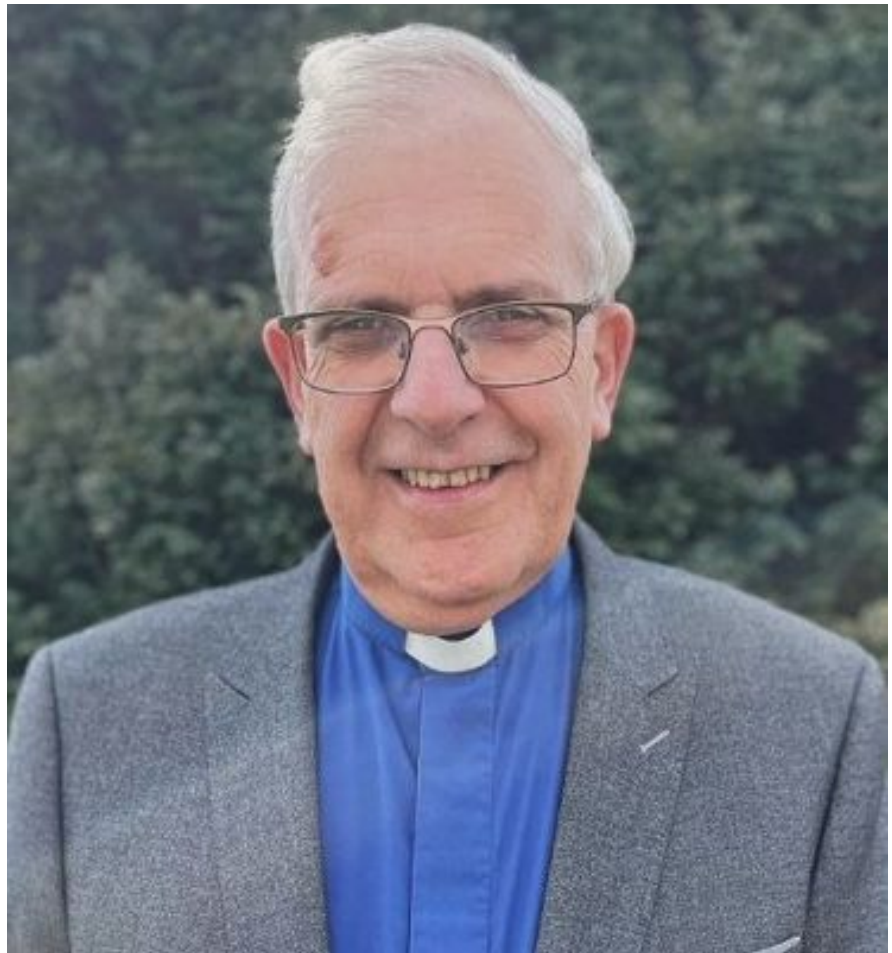
The Revd Canon Maurice Armstrong, Rector of Tempo and Clabby, is also to be Rector of Derryvullen South and Garvary, having been nominated at a Board of Nomination on Thursday.

Canon Armstrong will oversee a team of ordained and lay ministry in the new group.

A date for his institution will be announced in due course.

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The Bishop of Clogher, the Right Revd Dr. Ian Ellis offered his best wishes to Canon Armstrong and the new group of parishes as they embark together on a new era of ministry in the four parishes of Derryvullen South, Clabby, Garvary and Tempo.



Bishop Ellis said: “I am very pleased with the appointment of Canon Maurice Armstrong (Photo above) as Rector of Derryvullen South and Garvary and welcome him as incumbent of the newly amalgamated four-parish group comprising Derryvullen South, Clabby, Garvary and Tempo. Canon Maurice is well known to us in Clogher Diocese where he has been rector of his current group for the past 21 years. His experience, pastoral care and organisational skills will be soon recognised by his new parishioners, and I wish him God’s blessing as he begins this new chapter of his ministry’.

Canon Armstrong, looking forward to taking charge of the new group said; “I am looking forward to the new and fresh challenges of being Rector of this new grouping of Parishes

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and getting to know the Parishioners of Derryvullen South and Garvary. As a family we are looking forward to moving into a comfortable new Rectory in Derryvullen South Parish.

Please pray for us as we prepare to move house and for the future and as we move out of Covid, as we rebuilt church life and adapt to the challenges and changes that the amalgamation brings. As the writer to the Hebrews writes 'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.'

Canon Armstrong grew up on the family farm at Drumrush near Kesh and attended Drumkeeran Parish Church where he was involved in youth organisations.

Following his education, he graduated in 1984 from the University of Ulster, Jordanstown with BA (Hons) in history and Politics and after studying at the Church of Ireland Theological College, Dublin he was ordained in 1987 serving his curacy in St. Mark's Parish, Portadown. He was Rector of Sixmilecross and Carrickmore followed by Rector of St. Matthew's, Richhill before being appointed Rector of Tempo and Clabby parishes in 2001.

Canon Armstrong has been involved in diocesan work, having served as a member of Diocesan Council, Diocesan Synod and General Synod and also as Diocesan Nominator.

He served as Rural Dean of Clogher for 16 years and was also Executive Chairman of the Diocesan Ministry of Healing until retiring from this responsibility in 2021.

Churches in Northern Ireland chart the path to normal activities

Most churches in Northern Ireland are gradually getting back to a near normal situation at congregational and parish level, after the difficult challenges faced over the past two years by restrictive regulations imposed to counter the covid pandemic, Billy Kennedy writes

Two lockdowns at the beginning of of the pandemic in 2020 and in the first months of 2021 had a damaging effect for churches of all faiths, both spiritually and financially, and in recent past weeks, clergy have been preparing and advising their flocks on a return to full participation in Sunday services and mid-week activity.

A recent meeting of the general council of the Presbyterian Church agreed that the best way forward, in line with normalisation of society, would be to remove remaining covid mitigations and measures that were in place in its 500-plus congregations.

As covid legal restrictions have moved to formal government guidance, the Presbyterian church replaced its own mitigations with guidance to congregational kirk sessions to assist them to make individual decisions, with regards to their local situation.

Presbyterian general secretary the Rev Trevor Gribben said: “Along with others in society, we welcome steps taken by administrations in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic to move from covid legal restrictions to guidance. In working

through the implications of these changes, centrally and locally, we met with senior government officials, including the chief medical officer and chief scientific advisor.

“In making our own recommendations, it is important for us as a church to balance the natural desire to move towards more normal church life, while at the same time, keeping our members and those who also worship with us safe, particularly the most vulnerable.”

Mr Gribben explained that the church recommended that while social distancing was no longer required in church buildings and halls, where possible an area of seating should be set aside, where one or two-metre social distancing is maintained, for those who wish to avail of it.

It was recommended that while face coverings are no longer required in church buildings or halls, including when singing, those who prefer to continue to use them should be free to do so.

At the same time, kirk sessions can decide to enhance the church recommendations and continue to require additional measures depending on their local situation.

In the Church of Ireland, meanwhile covid restrictions as they applied to parishes in all 11 dioceses north and south of the border, were officially lifted last Monday.

In a letter to clergy and select vestries, the bishop of Connor, the Rev George Davison, whose sprawling diocese takes in 70 parishes in Belfast and Co Antrim, said his church had taken the decision to ease any remaining

restrictions after discussions with with other Northern Ireland bishops and leaders in other denominations.

The bishop stressed that each parish should decide at what pace they moved forward, adding: “There is no expectation that all parishes will make the changes at the same time.”

He warned that the covid pandemic remains a reality, and hard work was still needed to limit the spread of the virus and protect the most vulnerable in society.

“I am extremely grateful to everyone in our parishes for playing their part in caring for the whole community in the most difficult of times and am also acutely aware of the hardship, pain and sorrow that has been endured.

“Church buildings should continue to be as well ventilated as possible,” he added.

Bishop Davison outlined the covid guidelines for parishes as follows:

- Social distancing will no longer be required in church buildings and parish halls.
- Face coverings will also no longer be required in church buildings or parish halls (including when singing), with those who prefer to continue to use face coverings clearly being free to do so.
- Restrictions relating to catering on church premises will no longer be required, though it is recommended that sensible precautions should continue to be taken.

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– Previous restrictions on aspects of youth and children’s ministry will also no longer apply.

– Pastoral visiting in private homes may continue to move towards a more normal and sensible pattern of regular in-person visitation.

Report courtesy the News Letter

Man's 1957 gift to church now worth nearly £13m

A church fund set up 65 years ago in memory of a Northern Ireland couple is now worth almost £13m, writes Ciaran O’Neill.

When Belfast man John Craig died in 1957, he left £130,000 to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in memory of his parents, Frank and Sarah.

It was the largest ever donation made to the church and would today be the equivalent of £3.2m.

The church clearly invested the money wisely and the Sunday Independent has learned that the latest valuation of the Craig fund is around £12.7m.

Frank Craig had run a successful drapery business called Frank Craig & Son in Ballymena for many years and also owned several other properties and land in the Co Antrim town.

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He died in the early 1900s and following his death, his wife and their three children, John, Hester and Sophie, moved to live at Windsor Avenue in an affluent area of south Belfast.

After relocating to Belfast, the family worshipped at Fisherwick Presbyterian Church which was a short distance from their home.

The 1911 census records show that Mrs Craig was aged 70 at that time and lived in the Windsor Avenue house with her three adult children and a servant.

Following Mrs Craig's death a number of years later, the family's financial assets were inherited by their only son.

In 1930, John Craig paid for a large stained-glass window to be installed at Fisherwick Church in memory of his parents. The window remains in place today.

Neither Mr Craig nor his sisters ever married, and they are understood to have remained living together at the family home until his death in June 1957, aged in his mid 90s.

A report in the Ballymena Observer newspaper on October 18, 1957, outlined details of Mr Craig's will.

According to the report, he left a block of five shops at Church Street in Ballymena and other property and land in the town to his two sisters, along with the house in Belfast.

He also left £1,000 for the upkeep of the window at Fisherwick Church.

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The will stated that the remainder of Mr Craig's estate was to be donated to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to set up a fund called the “The Frank McCaughey Craig and Sarah Remington Charles Trust” in honour of his parents.

Mr Craig requested that the fund be used to augment the “salary and stipend of clergymen who are not paid the minimum of £600 a year”.

However, he stressed that this was not to include “assistants or retired ministers”.

The newspaper report added: “An official at Church House, Belfast, said that they had known for some time that a substantial bequest was likely. Final details were not yet available, but it was estimated that, after several bequests and other questions had been settled, the sum would be around £130,000.”

Tragically, according to the newspaper report, Hester Craig died a few days after her brother. It is believed she was around 90 years old.

As a result of her death, all of the family's assets were inherited by Sophie Craig.

However, Ms Craig did not live for much longer after the deaths of her siblings. She died in February 1960, at the age of 83.

Death notices which appeared in the following day's Newsletter and Belfast Telegraph newspapers provided very little information about Ms Craig or her family.

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The notices simply stated she had died at her residence at Windsor Avenue and that the house and funeral were “private”.

The details of her will were subsequently published in the Belfast Gazette a couple of months later in May 1960.

The notice states the will was originally written on May 25, 1959 before alterations were made on January 19, 1960, and February 22, 1960, just three days before Ms Craig passed away.

In her will, the Belfast woman asked that £2,000 be bequeathed to Fisherwick Presbyterian Church for the upkeep of the window in memory of her parents, as well as for the “interior decoration” of the church.

The will stated that the rest of her estate was to be donated to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to be added to the fund set up a few years earlier as a result of her brother's bequest.

When contacted by the Sunday Independent last week, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland was unable to say how much was added to the fund following Ms Craig's death.

A spokesperson for the church was also unable to provide the current value of the fund.

However, the church's latest publicly available accounts show that the Craig trust fund was valued at £12,716,804 on December 31, 2020. That year the Presbyterian Church received a dividend of £247,929 from the fund.

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The continued growth of the fund in recent years is evident from the church's 2015 accounts which show that on December 31, 2015, it was valued at £9,587,296. The church received a dividend of £280,267 from the Craig fund in 2015.

The money generated by the fund continues to be used by the Presbyterian Church to supplement the salaries of its ministers.

A spokesperson for Fisherwick Presbyterian Church said they were aware of a fund having been set up to provide for the upkeep of the prominent stained-glass window in the church.

However, he added that very little was known about the origins of the fund.

Report courtesy The Sunday Independent.

Poem for today

Sunday Morning

By Louis MacNeice

Down the road someone is practising scales,
The notes like little fishes vanish with a wink of tails,
Man's heart expands to tinker with his car
For this is Sunday morning, Fate's great bazaar;
Regard these means as ends, concentrate on this Now,

And you may grow to music or drive beyond Hindhead
anyhow,

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Take corners on two wheels until you go so fast
That you can clutch a fringe or two of the windy past,
That you can abstract this day and make it to the week of
time

A small eternity, a sonnet self-contained in rhyme.

But listen, up the road, something gulps, the church spire
Open its eight bells out, skulls' mouths which will not tire
To tell how there is no music or movement which secures
Escape from the weekday time. Which deadens and
endures.

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