

Church News Ireland

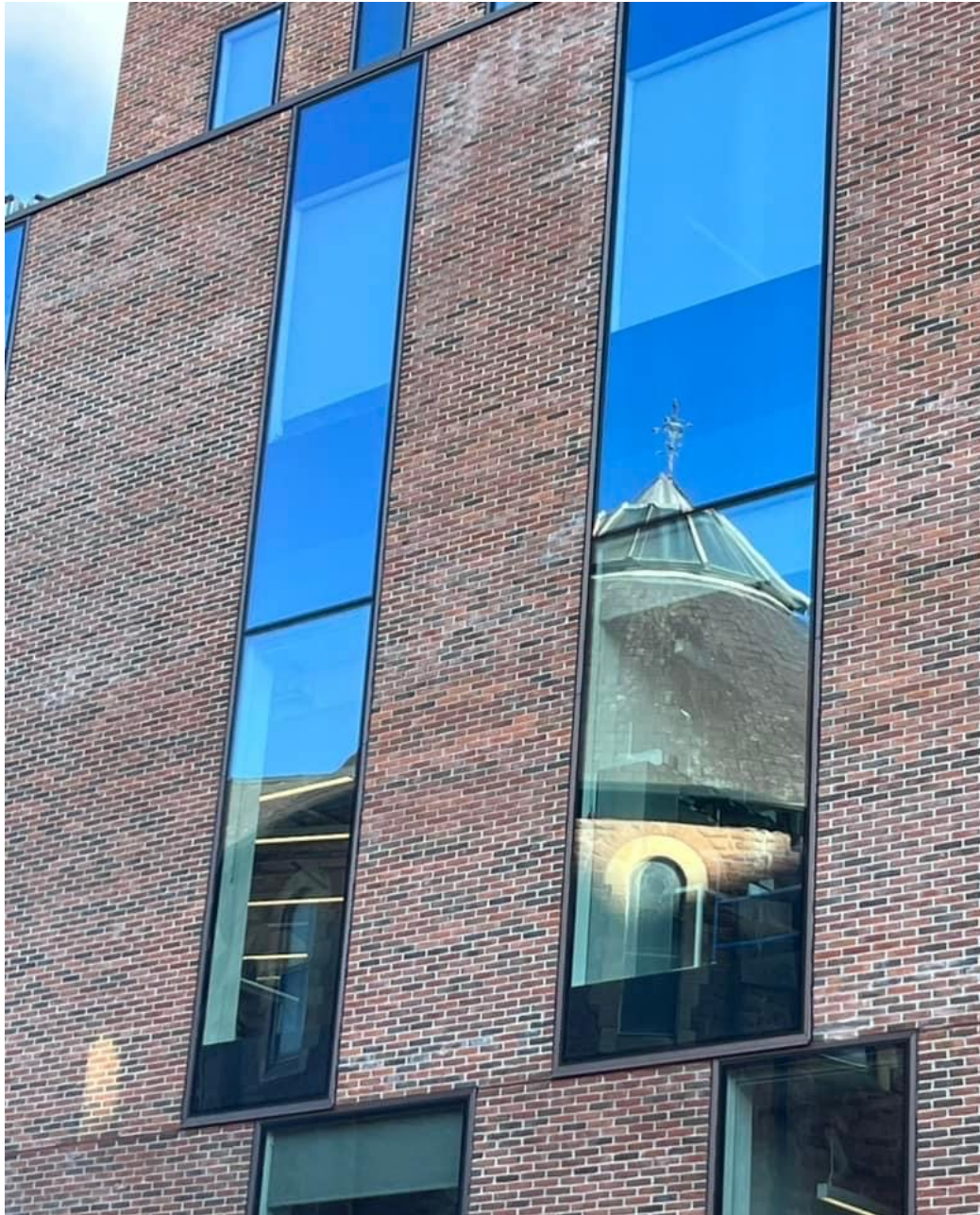


Image of the day – Ulster University reflections



Image of the day –

Ulster University reflections

The new buildings at the centre of the University of Ulster's Belfast Campus reflect aspects of St Patrick's Church - Photos by Duncan Morrow

People and places

Easter Witness review - part 3

The Ecumenical Stations of the Cross took place in Tuam on Good Friday

The cross was carried through the streets of the town from the Cathedral of the Assumption to Saint Mary's Cathedral by Mr William Fennell and Archbishop Francis Duffy.

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[\[https://tlk.ie/ecumenical-stations-of-the-cross-tuam/\]](https://tlk.ie/ecumenical-stations-of-the-cross-tuam/)



Clergy and parishioners of Glenraig gathered for worship on the foreshore of nearby Belfast Lough

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Across Belfast Lough parishioners of Greenland went upwards and some to hold their outdoor service at the Knockagh War Memorial Monument which may be seen from five of the six counties of Northern Ireland

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The young folk of Lisbellaw know when it is Palm Sunday

Christ Church Carrowdore United Dawn Service in Millisle on Easter morning. “Another beautiful morning watching the rising sun and worshipping the risen Son”





East Belfast Mission takes on Mournes hiking challenge to help homeless

Organisation inviting teams and individuals to take part to raise much needed funds

East Belfast Mission (EBM) is inviting teams and individuals to take part in a '7x7s Mourne Challenge' to raise much needed funds for its homelessness services.

The '7x7s' trail is approximately 18 miles long and includes the seven highest Mourne peaks from Slieve Donard at 853m to Slieve Meelmore at 687m.

The hike usually takes around 13 hours to complete.

EBM is particularly keen to encourage companies to use the challenge as a team building exercise.

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East Belfast Mission has been running its Hosford Homelessness Service from its Newtownards Road base for over 20 years.

It provides services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Hosford provides two main services – a homeless hotel containing 26 rooms/apartments for people who have lost their home and a Tenancy Support Service.

This work is about preventing homelessness and associated suffering.

Hosford provides one-to-one support individually tailored to the needs of its residents and also people within the local community.

The service helped approximately 400 people in 2021.

Andrew Irvine, chief executive at East Belfast Mission said: “We would like to encourage anyone and everyone to get involved in this amazing yet difficult challenge for a good cause. The work at Hosford is about saving lives through the provision of accommodation and the prevention of homelessness, a vital service to the local community.

“EBM want to support Hosford Homeless Services with their mission in any way we can and would urge others to do so as well. This challenge is a great way to improve your fitness, make friends, while also fundraising to help mitigate homelessness.”

Khalid, a Hosford service user said: “The treatment I received from the people at Hosford and from the accommodation has really helped me. So many things have

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given me back my confidence. Services like this are very important, people come from hard lives and difficult situations and they are scared. Hosford helps us through these difficult times.”

The hike will take place on September 9 and costs £40 to sign up, with all money going towards Hosford Homeless Services.

EBM are working with established outdoor activity provider, Outdoors Concepts, to ensure the hike is safe and sound for all involved.

Sign up by May 28 by [clicking here](#). You can also contact Becky on 02890 458 560 or email rebecca.larney@ebm.org.uk.

East Belfast Mission is part of the Methodist Church in Ireland and has a long track record of social engagement in the inner city and works to achieve renewal and transformation in the East Belfast community.

Courtesy of Joanne Savage at The Newsletter.

<https://app.chariteer.co.uk/charities/east-belfa-1/donate/mournechallengesignu2023/or>

News reports

Stand for peace with Palestinian and Israeli people, church leaders urged

This Easter church leaders across the UK are being urged by the international development charity

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Christian Aid to stand with the Palestinian and Israeli people in building a just peace.

Since the beginning of 2022, more than 270 Palestinians and more than 30 Israelis have been killed due to escalating violence. Christian Aid warned in their report, *Where is Palestine?*, that the deep inequalities between Palestinians and Israelis threaten a further escalation of violence and loss of life if left unaddressed.

In a bid to galvanise action for peace among church leaders in the UK, more than 1,000 olive trees have been planted, one for each member of the General Synod and the Methodist Conference. Trees have also been planted for the Archbishop of Canterbury and other prominent church leaders. And every UK Member of Parliament has had a tree sponsored by Christian Aid.

In an Easter card to church leaders, the Chief Executive of Christian Aid Patrick Watt explains that olive trees are often mentioned in the Bible as “a source of basic livelihood and a symbol of peace.”

The olive trees, located in the Bethlehem area of the occupied Palestinian territory, have been planted by Palestinian farmers. The project, led by Christian Aid’s partners East Jerusalem YMCA and the YWCA of Palestine are part of the Keep Hope Alive action for a peaceful future in Palestine for all.

Christian Aid is urging churches to support the Investing for Peace Campaign, which includes reviewing their

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investments and pension funds to ensure they do not invest directly or indirectly in firms that profit from occupation.

William Bell, Head of Middle East Policy & Advocacy at Christian Aid, said: “Violence, poverty and despair dominate so much of everyday life for Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory.

“The symbolic power of hope that comes with planting an olive tree should not be underestimated. It demonstrates a steadfastness of people determined to stay on their land.

“By gifting these trees, Christian Aid urges Church Leaders across the UK to stand with these farmers to build a just peace for all Palestinian and Israeli people.”

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/our-work/where-palestine-story-loss-inequality-and-failure-report>

In the media

Archbishop welcomes pope’s prayers for peace on 25th anniversary of Belfast Agreement

Archbishop Eamon Martin says Pope Francis wants the Irish to renew efforts to find solutions to problems and to work to bring about healing and reconciliation, writes Patsy McGarry, Religious Affairs Correspondent in The Irish Times

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Catholic Primate Archbishop Eamon Martin has warmly welcomed prayers for lasting peace and harmony in Ireland offered by Pope Francis at St Peter's Basilica in Rome today, the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Belfast Agreement.

“The Holy Father has shown great interest in our peace process and is always anxious to be kept up to date with developments here. I am confident that his prayerful thoughts today will be welcomed by all people of goodwill,” the Archbishop said.

He recalled how “when he visited Dublin in 2018, Pope Francis encouraged us to persevere in the work of peace and reconciliation. He acknowledged on that occasion the huge efforts that had been made to reach the Agreement and to find a peaceful settlement to end the conflict here which he said had caused such ‘untold pain’ to everyone. He has often spoken about the importance of reconciliation in the world and about being willing to break down barriers by crossing the road ‘to the other side’ in the spirit of the Good Samaritan.”

Yesterday, in his Easter Sunday Urbi et Orbi message “to the city and to the world”, Pope Francis encouraged all to pursue paths of peace and fraternity, and drew attention to the awful impact of war and violence in so many troubled parts of the world.

“I am always struck by the way that Pope Francis draws out the horrific consequences of conflict, especially on families, children, and communities, and how violence drives displacement of peoples, forced migration, social and

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economic hardship and humanitarian crises,” Archbishop Martin said.

“As we mark the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement today, Pope Francis would want us to redouble our efforts at finding solutions to our ongoing problems and to work earnestly at restoring relationships here in order to bring deeper healing and reconciliation on this island, and between these islands. May God bless Pope Francis and give him health and strength to continue his mission of peace in the world,” he concluded.

Irish Times 10/04/2023

Fermanagh principal grateful for church support after grant cut

The Impartial Reporter states that the principal of a local primary school has spoken out about the generosity of an Enniskillen church community that has provided support following the Department of Education’s decision to end the School Holiday Food Grants (SHFG), which will be “devastating” for many families over the Easter break.

Principals were informed at the end of last week that the SHFG would cease from March 31 – just days before schools went off on the Easter half-term break.

It was also announced that important education support programmes including the Healthy Happy Minds Pilot and the Engage programme would end on March 31.

Mrs. Sandra Isherwood, principal at Jones Memorial Primary School, shared with this paper that it was

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“devastating” for so many families to hear news that holiday hunger payments were being cut by the Department of Education.

“We all know the negative effects of children not being fed properly during school holidays,” she said.

Although the Department has cut the SHFG, also known as the ‘holiday hunger’ payment, Jones Memorial PS has been given a very generous donation from Rossorry Parish Church that ensures every family entitled to free school meals will receive the equivalent holiday food payment.

“Thankfully Jones Memorial stepped into action fast, and through the partnership we have with Rossorry Parish Church, we have distributed hunger payments to those children in our care who need them,” said Mrs. Isherwood.

Rev. McWhirter, Rector, is grateful that Rossorry Parish Church recognises the need for local families to have practical support for basic need and they are very pleased to be able to help at such a time as this.

“Thank you must go to the church for their financial and prayerful support,” added Mrs. Isherwood.

SDLP Councillor Adam Gannon, who works as a teacher in the local area, has slammed the decision by the Department, explaining that school leaders were given only a single day’s notice of their intention to end these important education support programmes across Northern Ireland.

*Report by Jessica Campbell in the Impartial Reporter,
09/04/2023*

Perspective

The radical hospitality of peacemaking - David Porter

It was the helicopters, that potent background hum of troubles Belfast, that signalled what progress was being made or not made.

Our home sat just below the Gilnahirk ridge with a view of Parliament Buildings at Stormont. Several times on 10 April 1998, two helicopters came in to land. The television screen confirmed that the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was not yet ready for his ride home.

I was not in the room that day, but with thousands of others, my heart was. It certainly was not with those who had gathered at the gate the night before to try to disrupt whatever sellout was being brewed, the last ditch defenders of the narrow ground of Protestant Ulster.

Many in the room were more than just a talking head in the news. Since the breakdown of the [IRA ceasefires in February 1996](#), along with other colleagues in ECONI (Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland), I had been involved in a number of contacts aimed at building relationships and resetting the conditions that would lead to this day.

There were dozens of such initiatives across civic society and from church groups. All had their own contribution to make to create the context in which the peace could be built. Following the initial ceasefires, based at the Belfast YMCA, ECONI had begun a public series... the Christian

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Citizenship Forum... aimed at exploring our responsibilities in the new era that presented itself. With this came our public statements in response to the landmark moments of the peace process.

Looking back, it was the extensive private dialogues involving a small group from ECONI that became the most rewarding activity of this period. We met with loyalists and republicans, unionists and nationalists, inviting them to speak at the forum, while engaging behind the scene to build trust and understanding. Keeping in touch with the NIO and the Irish government, we took part in the [Forum for Peace in Dublin](#).

When the IRA ceasefire broke in early 1996, we increased our contact with republicans. No one ever said making peace would be easy. I became part of a small group convened by Father Gerry Reynolds that met regularly in Clonard monastery with some of the republican leadership, and alongside this, we intensified our contacts with loyalists over monthly lunches in the home of David McMillan.

It was during a rather heated personal conversation with Tom Hartley, when the prospect of talks after a resumed ceasefire was looming, that he challenged me on the nature of the relationships we were building. His point was that politics is not just what happens in the room; it is often dependent on the relationships we bring into the room. Relationships built through common interests and shared space, which had not been possible during the violence. Republicans were at the table, but not in the tearooms where these relationships could be made.

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What did he expect after the violence of the IRA campaign? Cosy chats over tea and scones between negotiating sessions? However, something resonated. Peacemakers, the children of God, surely have something distinctive to offer in the painful process of talking through the hurt and pain that governments cannot provide. At the heart of our faith is God's invitation to God's table, not because we merit the invite, but because God is a God of grace, mercy and love. Hospitality, without agenda, became the watchword.

Along with David Hewitt, David McMillan, Norman Hamilton and with the superb logistics of Stanley McDowell, 'Creating Tea Rooms' came into being. We secured the generous financial support of Atlantic Philanthropies and a few local business leaders. More importantly, we engaged the participation of a contact group of senior Evangelical leaders in Great Britain.

Convened by Sir Fred Catherwood, it included Rev Joel Edwards and Martyn Eden (from [Evangelical Alliance](#)), Rev David Coffey (from the [Baptist Union](#)), Viscount Crispin Brentford (a member of [General Synod](#)), Rt Rev Roy Williamson (Bishop of Southwark), Dr Neil Summerton (Brethren leader and senior Whitehall civil servant), Eamon Donnelly (a Dublin businessman) and Lord Len Murray (former General Secretary of the TUC and a Methodist layman). They agreed to make themselves available to be briefed in person by key participants in the all-party talks.

While that was the formal cover, the purpose, understood by all, was to provide a context in which local politicians could relax, have good food and hospitality and talk not simply on the business of the week, but reflect on the challenges for their constituencies and the pressures they faced in being

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part of the thing we called the peace process. The first two weekends, in the spring of 1997, one in a hotel outside Dublin and one in a hotel outside Ballymena, brought together participants on traditional lines. We then moved to a hotel near Heathrow for two more weekends in the autumn, when the renewed IRA ceasefire allowed for more creative mixing. On both these occasions, recognising the strain the process put on home life, we invited spouses/partners to attend if they wished.

When it came to 10 April 1998, many of those in the room were no longer media figures, but men and women who my colleagues and I had got to know and understand, and to respect the responsibility they carried. My prayers were personal for them as decisions needed to be made. Not all were able to remain in the room, for their own legitimate reasons, and now today face another decisive moment in their political life.

The deal struck on that day was a moment where people reached out and were able to touch and see a better future. It could not be made the day before and, the day after, it began to come under great strain.

I stubbornly refuse to call the [Belfast Agreement](#) after the day in the Christian calendar on which it was made. For while it speaks of aspirations of a reconciled and shared future, all of which I long to see realised, it is and always has been a political deal, flawed as all such deals are, and not accruing any divine sanction because of the day on which it was made. It aimed at scoping out the narrow ground in which the toxicity of our past, the violence, hatred and hurt, could meet the vision and hope of a better future together.

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The tragedy is that this narrow ground still remains waiting to be gained. We are, in the words of Yeats, still a people of '[great hatred, little room](#)'. In a place where churchgoing remains higher than in most parts of these islands, we still await the dawn from on high where grace, love and mercy bear the fruit of a peaceable kingdom. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Canon David W Porter

David was a co-founder and Director of ECONI. He left Belfast in 2008 to lead the international reconciliation ministry at Coventry Cathedral, before being appointed by Archbishop Justin Welby in 2013 as his Director for Reconciliation. He became Chief of Staff at Lambeth Palace in 2016, retiring from that role in November 2022.

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Poem for today

Christ walks the world again by Dorothy L Sayers

Christ walks the world again, His lute upon His back,
His red robe rent to tatters, His riches gone to rack,
The wind that wakes the morning blows His hair about His
face,
His hands and feet are ragged with the ragged briar's
embrace,
For the hunt is up behind Him and His sword is at His side, .
. .
Christ the bonny outlaw walks the whole world wide,

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Singing: "Lady, lady, will you come away with Me,
Lie among the bracken and break the barley bread?
We will see new suns arise in golden, far-off skies,
For the Son of God and Woman hath not where to lay His
head."

Christ walks the world again, a prince of fairy-tale,
He roams, a rascal fiddler, over mountain and down dale,
Cast forth to seek His fortune in a bitter world and grim,
For the stepsons of His Father's house would steal His Bride
from Him;
They have weired Him to wander till He bring within His
hands
The water of eternal youth from black-enchanted lands,

Singing: "Lady, lady, will you come away with Me,
Or sleep on silken cushions in the bower of wicked men?
For if we walk together through the wet and windy weather,
When I ride back home triumphant you will ride beside Me
then."

Christ walks the world again, new-bound on high emprise,
With music in His golden mouth and laughter in His eyes;
The primrose springs before Him as He treads the dusty
way,
His singer's crown of thorn has burst in blossom like the
may,
He heedeth not the morrow and He never looks behind,
Singing: "Glory to the open skies and peace to all mankind."

Singing: "Lady, lady, will you come away with Me?
Was never man lived longer for the hoarding of his breath;

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Here be dragons to be slain, here be rich rewards to gain . . .
If we perish in the seeking, . . . why, how small a thing is death!"

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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