

# Church News Ireland

---



**Image of the day – The Cross in Holy Week 1**

## Image of the day

### The Cross in Holy Week 1 - Celtic Cross, Belfast Cathedral

This is the largest permanent Celtic Cross in Ireland. It is north-facing and forms the exterior of the Regimental Chapel of the Royal Irish Regiment.

## People and places

### Joint Holy Week & Easter Message from the Archbishops of Armagh

**In the Christian calendar, Holy Week has sometimes been referred to as ‘The Week of Weeks’.**

All of the Gospel writers devote about half the content of their books to recounting in diverse ways what happened to Jesus and his friends in that dramatic week, and in drawing out the meaning of those events:

Jesus setting his face towards Jerusalem;

The welcome he received and the subsequent rejection he experienced;

His desire to be obedient to his vocation from the Father;



The scene in the Upper Room, where in word and sign he anticipated the manner of his death and gave the Church the sacrament which is both a source and an expression of the grace which lies at the heart of our mission;

His arrest in the garden, under the paschal moon;

His betrayal by a close friend and his denial by another before the cock crowed at dawn;

His “trial” before the keepers of orthodoxy in Israel, and then before the civil magistrate whose casual cynicism has marked him out as one of the dark figures of world history;

The courageous little group – mostly women – who “... stand not far off...” and the reordering of relationships at the foot of the Cross: “Woman behold your son; son behold your mother...”

The sordid, lonely and ignoble death which has given the world its most powerful religious symbol – the Cross;

The kindness of strangers in his burial;

The abject bewilderment of his followers, lying on the floor in the dust behind locked doors;

The various encounters by women of the risen Lord –  
unrecognised, but somehow known;

The dawning conviction that everything in every age has  
been changed utterly.

Centuries of spiritual reflection and theological debate have  
led to acceptance that the death and resurrection of Jesus  
was somehow an atonement that brought about a  
reconciliation.

This year our commemoration of the ‘Week of Weeks’ is all  
the more significant and poignant given that we mark  
twenty–five years since an historic agreement towards  
lasting peace and a resetting of relationships within and  
between these islands. That the Agreement was reached  
on a Good Friday gives it a special resonance.

Have we, in the Christian community in Ireland, allowed  
ourselves to forget the greatness of this achievement, the  
sacrifices and risk–taking that made it happen, the light it  
shone into the darkest of days and the promise and hope it  
offered?

Have we been open to establishing the full truth of our past,  
so as to enable justice and facilitate forgiveness and  
healing?

Might it be time for those of us who call ourselves His  
disciples, signed at baptism with the sign of his Cross, and  
who recognise, however dimly, the cost of our reconciliation,  
be prepared to make our own sacrifices and atonement for  
our carelessness with the precious opportunity for lasting  
peace that has been given to us?





## Rector to appear in next series Bloodlines

**Last week Drumbo Parish Facebook site carried the following item -**

Some weird but interesting news today. The church and the Rector have been approached to appear in the next series of Bloodlands.

On checking out the church as a film location the director noticed an uncanny resemblance between the Rector and James Nesbitt.

They said they had been looking for someone to do a walk on part as Jimmy Nesbitt's older brother.

April 3, 2024

The Rector is currently considering the offer, although the only acting experience he had was in old school plays and some may say his role as Rector!

The director was very impressed with our church building and especially loved what she said was one her favourite Bible verses in our window: Psalm 14:1

The item appeared on the site on April 1.

## **Belfast City Mission Hall at Ballysillan celebrates 60 years of Gospel witness**

**Bilston Road Belfast City Mission Hall in Ballysillan is marking their 60 Year Celebrations with a special week of meetings from Sunday 2nd – Friday 7th April 2023.**

Noted evangelist, John Weir is the speaker for the event. Sunday's meeting will commence at 7pm; the weeknight gatherings are planned for 7:30pm.

A spokesperson for the organisers told us: "Come and join us as we celebrate 60 years of Christian witness at Bilston Road Belfast City Mission Hall with evangelist, John Weir."

"In addition, there will be singers and real-life stories. Everyone is welcome."



## St Patrick's charity fundraiser

**Last month St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, held a fundraising coffee morning in aid of Irish Cancer Society and CMRF Crumlin, and in memory of a friend Dermot.**

The team raised over €1,100!

Thanks were expressed to Freda, the Cathedral team, and the Cathedral Grammar School TY students for helping to run the event.



## Canon of Armagh appointed

**The Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Reverend John McDowell, has appointed the Reverend Matthew Hagan as Prebendary of Mullabrack in the Chapter of St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh.**

Matthew will also succeed Archdeacon Peter Thompson as Rural Dean of Dungannon as of 1st May 2023.

The new Canon is Rector of the Parochial Group of Brackaville, Donaghendry and Ballyclog.

In response to the announcement the new Canon said, "I am delighted with my appointment as a Canon of St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh and as Rural Dean of Dungannon. I feel honoured and humbled as I have lived in the Diocese of Armagh all my life. It is a privilege to continue to serve the Church in these new roles."

Welcoming the appointment, the Dean of Armagh, the Very Revd Shane Forster, said: 'I have known Matthew since his ordination in 2006 and so am well aware of his many gifts and skills, not just as a parish rector but also as a dedicated hospital chaplain and in the Southern Area Hospice in Newry. I look forward to welcoming Matthew to his new role in the Chapter of our Diocesan Cathedral.'

Canon Hagan and Archdeacon Thompson will be installed in their respective stalls in the Cathedral during Choral Evensong on Sunday 23rd April at 3.15pm.



## Curate Assistant to the Parish of Castleknock

**The Rev Natasha Quinn-Thomas has been appointed Curate Assistant to the Parish of Castleknock with Mulhuddart and Clonsilla, diodes of Dublin & Glendalough.**

Rev Natasha is currently serving as a curate in Dyffryn Clwyd Mission Area within St Asaph Diocese in Wales.

Rev Natasha has a heart for children, schools and young peoples ministry alongside her experiences both ordained and in lay ministry. She will be a great asset to our ministry



### YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY TEAM LEADER



**First Presbyterian Church, Bangor are seeking to appoint a Youth & Family Ministry Team Leader!**

We are looking for a person with a passion for Jesus, and a call to work with young people and their families.

They will join a staff team in what is a large and vibrant congregation.

The post is permanent and while the initial contract is 25-30 hours per week, the vision is to expand this role into a full-time position.

The full time equivalent salary will be within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Salary Band B (£25,522 - £29,953) depending on qualifications and experience.

The post will require evening and weekend work.

For more information please contact:  
**Rev. David Stanfield**  
[david@firstbangor.org](mailto:david@firstbangor.org)

Application Packs are available from:  
[manager@firstbangor.org](mailto:manager@firstbangor.org)

Closing date for all applications is:  
**4PM on Friday 21st April 2023**

April 3, 2024

church and to the community and we look forward to welcoming her in June, further details to follow.

The Rector thanked Archbishop Michael Jackson for his support and encouragement in making the appointment possible.



## **Presbyterian church's Easter dawn services**

**On Easter Sunday each year, across various outdoor locations as the day dawns, Presbyterians will come together to celebrate and worship the risen Lord Jesus, proclaiming “He is risen!”**

April 3, 2024

Ahead of this Easter Sunday, on Sunday 9 April, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has compiled a list of upwards of 30 venues where services are taking place that have been organised by local congregations, or gatherings involving Presbyterian churches and others in the local community. Many more will also take place.

With the earliest services beginning at 6am (weather permitting of course), they vary in format involving praise, prayer, scripture readings and a short address.

A tradition that goes back many generations, for details and venues please visit [www.presbyterianireland.org/easterdawn](http://www.presbyterianireland.org/easterdawn).

Some even offer a tasty breakfast afterwards.

## **Irish Council of Churches meets in Limerick**

**The 100th AGM of the Irish Council of Churches was held last week in Saint Mary's Cathedral, Limerick.**

The ICC was founded in 1923 in the aftermath of the civil war and is the formal national body through which member churches formally engage, enter into dialogue and act on a wide variety of works to connect through a common belief in Christ.

The Church of Ireland has been a member since 1923 and the current ICC president is the C of I bishop of Diocese of



Derry and Raphoe the Rt Rev Andrew Forster , who spoke of the changes in ecumenism during the life of the ICC and the sharing of love.

The Rt Rev Michael Burrows, Bishop of Dioceses of Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe, spoke in his address of the need to cherish God's creation and renew the face of the earth.

Mrs Gillian Kingston , of The Methodist Church in Ireland , spoke in her address about the continued, unfinished, work of peace, and challenged us to engage in conversation about the things that divide us, noting that we can't complain that our churches are empty if we're not welcoming and hospitable.



## College library celebrates 150th birthday



**At a special reception to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the opening of Union Theological College's (UTC) Gamble Library.**

**Pictured in the library in front of the bust of Rev Henry Gamble, for whom the library is named after, are left to right: UTC's Principal, Rev Professor Gordon Campbell, the College's Rev Dr Martyn Cowan who gave a lecture at the reception, PCI's Moderator, Rt Rev Dr John Kirkpatrick, librarian Joy Conkey, and Queen's University of Belfast's Dr Andrew Holmes, who also gave a lecture during the evening.**

**Even in today's online electronic age, libraries are often at the heart of a local community – the same is true for schools, colleges, universities and other seats of learning.**

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland's (PCI) Union Theological College (UTC) is no exception, and has held a special event to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Gamble Library.

With the foundation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 1840 most Presbyterian ministers continued to be trained for the ordained ministry at Scottish universities, until the establishment of the Assembly's College (now UTC) in Belfast in 1853. The coming together of two groupings or Synods to form PCI also brought together two comparatively small libraries. While the library had grown by the opening of the College 13 years later, it was still not sufficient to meet the needs of the wider church – until a substantial gift to the College by Mrs Caroline Anne Gamble, the widow of the minister of Ballywalter Presbyterian Church, to create a library in memory of her late husband Henry.

Her gift of £1,500 in 1872 added 2,500 books to the College's collection and made possible the conversion of the College's Common Hall into the 'Gamble Library', complete with a bust of her husband. The Library opened on 8 April 1873, the last day of the academic session, and 150 years later, members of Faculty, teaching staff, students, library members and other guests gathered to celebrate that generous gift and the creation of what is now the largest theological library in Northern Ireland.



**Joy Conkey, the Gamble Library librarian at the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's (PCI) Union Theological College shows PCI's Moderator, Rt Rev Dr John Kirkpatrick, some of the exhibits on show in the Gamble Library exhibition during a special reception to celebrate the Gamble Library's 150th anniversary. The exhibition is also open to the public.**

Speaking about the special event, Joy Conkey, the Library's 10th librarian, welcomed the opportunity to mark the special event. "As we came together to mark this 150th anniversary, the words of the General Assembly's Library Committee from 1873 still ring true. In a report of the same year it said, 'An institution which aspires in any sense to be a seat of learning must possess a well furnished and well endowed library.'



“Today the Gamble Library has around 64,000 books and over 20,000 pamphlets and more than 50 theological journals, which staff, students and members have access to, while not forgetting almost 1,000 eBooks, several key databases and electronic journals that can also be accessed. The Library also holds an array of special collections, with membership not confined to our teaching staff and students, as it is open to all and we have over 320 life and 50 annual members who use the Library.”

During the evening guests were welcomed by UTC Principal, Rev Prof Gordon Campbell, and had the opportunity to view a new exhibition in the Gamble Library. The exhibition was officially opened by Presbyterian Moderator, Rt Rev Dr John Kirkpatrick, who expressed his warm appreciation for the Library as an inspiring venue for study and an enriching facility for intellectual and spiritual growth. Curated by librarian Joy Conkey, the exhibition contains some early and rare additions to the library's collection that tell the story of The Gamble Library.

Guests also heard a lecture given by Dr Andrew Holmes of the Queen's University of Belfast's School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics. Union Theological College's Rev Dr Martyn Cowan, who lectures in Historical Theology, spoke on religious libraries through the ages.

In his lecture, Dr Holmes gave an overview of Presbyterian education and theology from the early 1800s and then discussed Magee and Assembly's Colleges and their libraries. He also focussed on the history of the Gamble Library of Assembly's College, which became Union Theological College with the union of both colleges in 1978.



Key donations and individuals who shaped the collections were examined, as well as the use of the Gamble Library space. Dr Holmes reflected on the challenges faced by the libraries of the Presbyterian Church, such as lack of finance, the necessity of the financial and book donations and their impact on the Library's holdings, the historical significance of the collections and the importance of the Library as a meeting place. He shared examples of how he had met individuals in the Library who were to have a formative influence on his life and career. He concluded by questioning the future of theological libraries generally, given the increase in electronic resources, but expressed the hope that the Gamble Library's physical library and collections would continue to develop so that it reaches another 150 year anniversary.

Beginning with the Church in the first century, and ending with the 'Dissenting Libraries' of the 17th and 18th centuries, Dr Cowan said that a literary culture was clearly on display during the earliest days of the Church as "Christians were the people of the book". One example can be found in 2 Timothy 4:13 when the Apostle Paul asks Timothy to bring the books and parchments which had been left in Troas. He also said that Paul's letters "circulated rapidly enough around the empire, so much so that Peter assumed his audience was already familiar with a collection of Pauline letters," as we see in 2 Peter 3:15.

Dr Cowan concluded by saying that, "The people of the book are lovers of books and therefore creators of libraries. These fragile institutions are full of promise. They are collections which shape us every bit as much as we shape them. The developments within a theological library often

serves as something of an index to the state of the wider church. So as a college we are deeply thankful to God that this library has been preserved and grown over the last century and a half. It is my prayer that the Gamble library would continue to be a place of devotion, formation, and mission.”

Information on library membership can be found on the College website [www.union.ac.uk](http://www.union.ac.uk) An online exhibition on the story of the Gamble Library, curated by Joy Conkey, can also be viewed.

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

### 25th Anniversary Of The Good Friday Agreement

**Rev Steve Stockman writes - With a few television specials being produced for the 25th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, you can see myself and Fr Martin anywhere you watch TV next week.**

On Wednesday April 4th at 10.45pm on UTV, on a brand new series UP CLOSE, you will hear us talking to one of our finest young TV journalists Jude Hill in a programme called An Imperfect Peace. Standing by the Springfield Damn Fr Martin and I will be answering questions about the Good

April 3, 2024

Friday Agreement 25 years ago and also right now. Many others will be reflecting too.

Then the next day, Thursday April 5th at 4.35pm on RTE 1 we will be taking part in a Service For the 25th Anniversary Of The Good Friday Agreement. There are some wonderful people involved in this one including former Irish President Mary McAleese and Methodist minister and overseer of decommissioning Harold Good, among many as well as music from Kiran Wimberly and the McGraths. Personal thoughts and Bible reflection. It is a very well crafted piece.

It was an honour being involved in both.

## Coronation prayer booklets

**Prayer booklets are available for those who want to commit to pray for King Charles before his coronation.**

Beginning on Easter Day through to Coronation Day, the booklet provides a daily theme, reading, reflection, and prayer. Or sign up for emails.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/coronation/churches>

## Poem for today

### Pied Beauty by Gerald Manley Hopkins

Glory be to God for dappled things –  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;  
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.

## 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)



