



**Image of the day -**

## **Rebuilding the Cathedral Choir in Cork**

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Front page photo - Some of the boy choristers of Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork meet outside to rehearse near the Cathedral Labyrinth (an appropriate place after all we have been through) to rehearse under the direction of Mr Peter Stobart.

## **Rebuilding the Cathedral Choir in Cork**

**On April 20th it was announced that groups of up to 15 can meet up for underage outdoor non-contact dance, music or arts activities. This presents an opportunity to begin the long process and hard work of rebuilding the Cathedral choir at Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork and no doubt, other cathedrals throughout Ireland.**

The choristers of St Fin Barre's Cathedral have been meeting up on Zoom on a weekly basis for several months, but in recent weeks the lack of personal interaction had been showing.

The announcement gave a fresh hope and on Monday 26th April the girl choristers met up in two separate groups for the first time this year. The labyrinth area of the Cathedral grounds seemed the most suitable spot, with walls on two sides to create some form of outdoor acoustic. One of those walls was of Library House – Cork's first public library established by Bishop Peter Brown in the 1720s.

The weather that day was the nicest that had been seen for some time and this combination of factors brought a cheerful atmosphere to the occasion.





A group of the girl choristers rehearse adjacent to Library House – Cork’s first public library founded in the 1720s by Bishop Peter Brown in the grounds of Saint Fin Barre’s Cathedral

Two days later the boys met up for a similar first session. Although it was less sunny, the same determination

was shown and they tried out some music which had been learnt over the internet, but not sung together as a group. After a few minutes of warming up, their voices slowly began to emerge once again, and the strangeness of singing outdoors was put aside and their confidence grew.

Several boys are now facing the challenge of changing voices and this brings a new chapter to their singing lives and to how they fit into the choir as a whole. It is early days in a long process of rebuilding the choir and its sound after a

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long fallow period, and it is difficult to guess when the choristers will return to singing for services once again.

However, it is hoped that things will not take a step backwards and that, as restrictions are slowly eased, the singing will be able to continue and move indoors at some point in the near future.

## **Arlene Foster to attend NI centenary event in Coleraine church**

**Arlene Foster will make one of her first public appearances following her resignation as First Minister and leader of the DUP when she visits Coleraine on Sunday, the Coleraine Chronicle reports.**

Mrs Foster, who announced earlier this week that she will step down as party leader on May 28 and as First Minister at the end of June, is due to attend an event in St. Patrick's Church marking Northern Ireland's centenary.

Around 90 dignitaries have been invited to attend what is believed to be the first significant civic occasion of any type since lockdown measures were imposed last year.

Among those accompanying the First Minister to Coleraine will be crown representatives, MPs and MLAs with the service being hosted by the mayor of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Alderman Mark Fielding.

Alderman Fielding admitted he was disappointed the public would be excluded because of Covid-19 restrictions but

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expressed his delight that such an historic occasion was being celebrated in his area.

“On the eve of the centenary of Northern Ireland on May 3, it is only fitting that on Sunday May 2 a Church Service of Commemoration, Thanksgiving and Reflection on the occasion of the Centenary of Northern Ireland will be held in St Patrick’s Church Coleraine to commence Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Northern Ireland centenary civic week and programme of events,” he said.

Mayor Fielding said he was looking forward to further events during centenary week including the planting of native oak trees in each of the borough's seven District Electoral Areas (DEAs).

“2021 is a very significant year in our history as we mark 100 years of Northern Ireland,” continued the mayor.

“Causeway Coast and Glens is an iconic part of Northern Ireland and on this historic occasion we want to celebrate the very best of the borough.”

## **Scottish bishops concerned at Irish ban on public worship**

**Commenting on the recent decision by the Irish Government to enact restrictions which do not allow public worship, the President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, Bishop Hugh Gilbert has issued the following statement:**

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"As the Catholic Church in Scotland this year celebrates the 1500th Anniversary of the birth of St Columba who brought the faith from Ireland to Scotland in the 6th century, the thoughts and prayers of the Church in Scotland are now directed to our brothers and sisters in Ireland."

"Recent developments that penalise the celebration of Holy Mass have been disturbing not only to the Irish Bishops' Conference but also to the Bishops of Scotland. We all recognise the need for restrictions to protect the common good of all people in a pandemic but to enact legislation that criminalises those who gather to celebrate Holy Mass is indeed extreme and unjust."

## **Holy Land's economic crisis forces pupils to withdraw from Christian schools**

**Christian schools in the Holy Land are struggling as families withdraw their children because of economic hardship brought on by the pandemic.**

The Holy Land's Christian schools rely on fees in the absence of financial support from local authorities, but in a region that relies heavily on tourism, many families have been left unable to meet the cost.

The charity Friends of the Holy Land, which supports Christians in the region, said Covid had devastated livelihoods after more than a year without pilgrims and tourists, placing a huge burden on families.



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The cycle of lockdowns means many families have used up all their reserves, leaving them unable to meet the fees for Christian schools - which are attended by both Muslims and Christians.

Suhail Diabes, principal at the Latin Patriarchate School in Beit Jala, near Bethlehem, said: "It's an unprecedented crisis."

## Armagh sunshine



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"Parents do not have work to pay their school fees. In Bethlehem in particular the majority of our Christian families earn their money in the tourism sector, which is blocked now.

"In 24 years of working in schools, I have never faced such a situation. If the schools collapse, hundreds of Christian families will not find any income."

Abeer Hanna, executive director of 13 schools run by the Roman Catholic Church in the West Bank, said she had heard of families having to choose which children to withdraw from school.

She said that over the course of the pandemic, 300 pupils had been forced to leave the school because of financial struggles at home.

Another struggling school is the specialist School of Joy in Bethlehem, which teaches children with learning difficulties, Down syndrome, autism or severe trauma. Friends of the Holy Land is now the school's only financial provider and it is in urgent need of extra funds to keep its vital services running.

Friends of the Holy Land has launched a sponsored Pentecost Challenge encouraging people to walk, cycle, swim or run in a virtual pilgrimage of 84 miles - the distance from Bethlehem to Nazareth - to help children stay in school and keep the schools afloat.

People taking part in the Pentecost Challenge can plot their distance online and access videos from the locations along



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the way that include local history and insights from teachers and priests.

Episcopalian priest Fr Nael Abu Rahmoun from Christ Church, Nazareth, who will 'welcome' pilgrims at the final destination said: "Some families cannot pay school fees including those at our Christ School. They are hoping for some support to offer a life with dignity for their children.

"Please continue to support Friends of the Holy Land so we can offer a candle, a light of hope for our people, our students and our families.

"In Nazareth and the villages around, people are still hoping to get the good news and get new hope after the pandemic, as they wait to return to their jobs, as we try to support them with so many difficult situations in their families."

To find out more about the Pentecost Challenge visit:[www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/pentecost](http://www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/pentecost)

## **Retirement of Cork Diocesan Reader after 33 Years Service**

**George Quinn, a Diocesan Reader for the past nearly 33 years in the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross has indicated to the Bishop, Dr Paul Colton, his decision to retire from Reader ministry.**

George was licensed as a Reader on the 18th December 1988 by Bishop Roy Warke in Saint Peter's Church, Carrigrohane, then in County Cork, now in Cork City.



George recalls that he was the only one studying for the office at the time which in turn, at times, left him feeling isolated.

George continues:

There, was always a warm welcome at each church and by the necessity of time constraints some all too

brief chats with the churchwardens and members of the congregations which often showed their depth of faith as well as their care for one another and love of place. Over the years came a welcome change in worship when members of the congregation and particularly younger folk began to take the readings and intercessions.

George, who was a serving member of An Garda Síochána when he was licensed was, naturally, working shifts, so at the start of each year he forwarded the Sundays he would be available to take a Service to the Archdeacon of the day. George's records show that he has taken Services in 65 churches in the Diocese including St Luke's Home Chapel.

Thanking George, Bishop Paul Colton said:

I warmly thank George Quinn for his quiet and faithful ministry in the Diocese as a Reader for more than three decades. In thanking him I also thank Olive for her support of George in this voluntary work. It is thanks to the

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partnership of lay people like George that, together with the clergy of the Diocese, we are able to offer (in normal times) 65 Church Services, on average, every Sunday in Cork, Cloyne and Ross. This ministry is invaluable. I also take this opportunity to thank everyone who is involved in lay ministry in the Diocese.

## **World religious leaders call for massive increases in production of Covid vaccines and end to vaccine nationalism**

**Global faith leaders have united this week to call for the steps necessary to produce and distribute enough Covid vaccine for the entire global population.**

Urging leaders around the world to reject greed and vaccine nationalism, 145 religious leaders including Cardinal Peter Turkson from the Catholic Church, former Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams and Dr Thabo Makgoba, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, have released the statement as part of a campaign, which is also supported by the Dalai Lama.

It makes the moral case that it is not right that countries in the global north are hoarding vaccines while low- and middle-income countries are barely getting any doses. They also recognised the pressing need for global vaccine production to be urgently and massively ramped up and for countries to release their excess doses.

The call comes as part of action from the People's Vaccine Alliance, a coalition of organisations and activists



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campaigning for a ‘people’s vaccine’ for Covid-19, which would be based on shared knowledge and freely available to everyone everywhere.

The call for a People’s Vaccine is already backed by past and present world leaders, health experts, and economists.

In a statement released today, global faith leaders have said: “As religious leaders, we have witnessed the personal stories behind the Covid statistics - we have, every day, heard the cries, shared with us, of the suffering, the frightened, and the bereaved. We have witnessed too the profound love shown by those working at the frontline, and by those who have reached out to help their neighbours.”

Fionna Smyth, head of global advocacy and policy at Christian Aid, said on behalf of the People’s Vaccine Alliance:

“We know that our best chance of all staying safe is to ensure Covid-19 vaccines are available for all as a global common good as soon as possible. This will only be possible with a transformation in how vaccines are produced and distributed — pharmaceutical corporations must allow the Covid-19 vaccines to be produced as widely as possible by sharing their knowledge free from patents.

“Instead they are protecting their monopolies and putting up barriers to restrict production and drive up prices, leaving us all in danger. No one company can produce enough for the whole world. So long as vaccine solutions are kept under lock and key, there won’t be enough to go around. We need a People’s Vaccine, not a profit vaccine.

“The failure to provide vaccine equity to some of the poorest and most marginalised communities around the world is a moral issue, which the world must face up to. So we are deeply encouraged that leaders of the world’s major faith traditions have joined us in calling for a People’s Vaccine.”

The religious leaders’ statement added: “The Covid crisis has reminded us all of our interdependence, and of our responsibilities to care for one another. We can each only be well, when all of us are well. If one part of the world is left to suffer the pandemic, all parts of the world will be put at ever-increasing risk.

“The access of people to life-saving Covid-19 vaccines cannot be dependent on people’s wealth, status, or nationality. We cannot abdicate our responsibilities to our brothers and sisters by imagining that the market can be left to resolve the crisis, or pretend to ourselves that our country has no obligation to people in their country. Every person is precious. We all have a moral obligation to reach everyone.”

They added: “This unprecedented public health crisis calls, above all, for global solidarity, for all people to stand together as brothers and sisters. The same spirit of unity and common purpose that has driven scientists to develop Covid-19 vaccines at breathtaking speed, that drives the care of those tending to the sick, must also inspire the leaders of government, civil society and the private sector to massively ramp up vaccine production so there are sufficient doses for every person in the world to be vaccinated.

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“We call on all leaders to reject vaccine nationalism and embrace a commitment to global vaccine equity.

“As religious leaders, we join our voices to the call for vaccines that are made available to all people as a global common good – a People’s Vaccine. This is the only way to end the pandemic.”

## **Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars**

### **A season of equipping and encouragement in Down & Dromore**

**As churches emerge into a new landscape, we introduce *Strength for the Task*, a season of equipping and encouragement for the diocese between Ascension and Pentecost (13–23 May).**

Bishop David McClay warmly invites you to the online events below, all of which are hosted on Zoom and open to anyone. Register and find out more at the links beneath each description and feel free to invite others.

### **Monday 17 & Tuesday 18 May at 7.30 pm: Reaching People with Jesus**

David Collum is a former Dean of Albany Cathedral and CEO of the [Pocket Testament League](#). David will join us to share stories of God at work in people’s lives as copies of John’s Gospel are given away and equip us to do this with faith, boldness and imagination.

**Part 1 [Click here to register](#)**



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## **Part 2 [Click here to register](#)**

### **Wednesday 19 May at 7.30 pm: Minds Matter**

Tim Burns will host an evening with Patrick Reagan and Sara Allen from the mental wellbeing charity [Kintsugi Hope](#). Patrick will share Kintsugi's vision and purpose and encourage parishes in supporting those in our midst who struggle with mental wellbeing.

[Click here to register](#)

### **Thursday 20 May at 7.30 pm: The Challenges of Community Engagement**

Gareth Brown from [Cinnamon Network](#) will explore some of the challenges that churches face when working with their local communities and provide some practical hints and tips on how we can engage more effectively. Gareth will also give us access to resources that can help churches take practical steps towards community transformation.

[Click here to register](#)

### **Saturday 22 May from 10.00 am: How much more?**

We're thrilled that John and Anne Coles have agreed to lead a day of retreat that will take place over four, hour-long sessions (with breaks) in the morning and afternoon. The theme for the day will be the refreshment, rest and the refilling of the Holy Spirit. John and Anne led New Wine England for many years. John is a canon in St Paul's Cathedral and now in retirement both are sought after speakers.

[Click here to register](#)

## Media review

### **Wrights Group administrators sell building which was occupied by ex-boss Jeff Wright's Green ...**

Belfast Telegraph

Green Pastures Church has a major following, drawing worshippers from the Catholic and Protestant communities. Deloitte's report said Bank of Ireland ...

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/northern-ireland/wrights-group-administrators-sell-building-which-was-occupied-by-ex-bossjeff-wrights-green-pastures-church-40366791.html> ]

### **Church opposes Dún Laoghaire rezoning on basis it will lower its land value**

The Irish Times

In a submission on behalf of the Marianists of Ireland, Hughes planning consultants said an application for a strategic housing development (SHD) on ...

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/church-opposes-d%C3%BAAn-laoghaire-rezoning-on-basis-it-will-lower-its-land-value-1.4550438> ]

### **Sinn Fein Senator admits he prayed not to be gay**

IrishCentral

The Sinn Fein senator, who serves as the party's spokesman on LGBT rights, said there was "a lot to unpack in the news that the Irish Bishops' ...

[[] <https://www.irishcentral.com/news/politics/sinn-fein-senator-admits-prayed-not-be-gay> ]

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## **Why did the DUP turn on Arlene Foster?**

The Week UK

Arlene Foster has resigned as DUP leader and Northern Ireland first ... Foster told Sky News that serving the people of Northern Ireland had been “the ... There was also upset among the party's Free Presbyterian religious base that ...  
[[ <https://www.theweek.co.uk/northern-ireland/952668/why-has-the-dup-turned-on-arlene-foster> ]

## **Christians can be peacemakers**

Church Times

Coverage of a film series from the Archbishop of Canterbury exploring how Christians can be peacemakers.  
[ <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/30-april/news/uk/archbishop-of-canterbury-launches-film-series-on-faith-and-conflict> ]

## **Post Office and priest**

Express

Further coverage of the announcement that the Revd Paula Vennells, former Chief Executive of the Post Office, is stepping back from her duties as a priest in the Diocese of St Albans. Full statement can be read here.  
[ <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1428482/post-office-scandal-chief-quits-board> ]

## **Pointers for prayer**

Mighty God,  
in whom we know the power of redemption,  
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.  
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,





uphold us with knowledge of the final morning when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son, we will share in his resurrection, redeemed and restored to the fullness of life and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,  
long ago, faithful women  
proclaimed the good news  
of Jesus' resurrection,  
and the world was changed forever.  
Teach us to keep faith with them,  
that our witness may be as bold,  
our love as deep,  
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,  
you made the world in beauty,  
and restore all things in glory  
through the victory of Jesus Christ.  
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured  
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,

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the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love, and peace, to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his resurrection, teaching them to love all people as neighbours. As his disciples in this age, we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe in which we are privileged to live and our neighbours with whom we share it...  
...Your intercessions ....

Open our hearts to your power moving around us and between us and within us, until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy, in communities transformed by justice and compassion, and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Holy God, you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son, and to care for those who are our companions, not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love. Seeking to be true friends of all, we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world....  
...Your intercessions ....

Guide us in the path of discipleship, so that, as you have blessed us, we may be a blessing for others, bringing the promise of the kingdom near by our words and deeds. Amen.

## Speaking to the Soul

**The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.**

1 Corinthians 1:18 NLT

Paul was absolutely sure that the cross of Jesus stood right at the heart of his life and ministry. Nothing was more important than the fact that God showed his perfect love for us by sending Jesus to die the most excruciatingly painful death for us. It was, if you like, the lens through which Paul saw everything. For him it was the most wonderful message in the world communicating God's love and power and the way in which he could bring peace into the world. So Paul was determined to take every opportunity to speak about the cross.

But Paul was more than aware that the message of the cross sounded like nonsense to many people. The Greeks were looking for wisdom. They were very happy to listen to carefully reasoned arguments and to enter into learned debate. But the idea of a man dying at the hands of the Romans, showing that he was totally powerless and completely beaten by his enemies, didn't sound at all wise. It sounded like foolishness. And to the Jews, Jesus' own people, there was a fundamental problem. In Deuteronomy it was specifically stated that anyone who hung on a tree was cursed by God (Deuteronomy 21.23) It looked to the average Jew that hanging on the cross couldn't possibly be something that God would allow to happen to his own son.

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The cross was, therefore, for Jews a total stumbling-block. It made belief almost impossible.

Paul is well aware of how foolish and problematic his message is. But he doesn't try to change it to make it sound acceptable to his hearers. He simply declares that for those who believe it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. It turns all our normal thinking upside down, but that's how God works. For those who want to get to the heart of understanding what love is all about, or who want to live lives that are full of God's power there is only one place to look – to the cross of Jesus.

## QUESTION

What does the cross mean to you personally?

## PRAYER

Thank you Lord that when you went to the cross you showed us the full extent of your love. Amen





