

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Mourne country

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News reports

Further Support for Ukraine from Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal

The Church of Ireland's Bishops' Appeal for World Aid and

Development is releasing a further €40,000 and £35,000 to Christian Aid and Habitat for Humanity in support of humanitarian efforts in Ukraine and the surrounding countries. This brings the total released so far to €50,000 and £43,300.

Donations continue to pour in, and Bishops' Appeal therefore anticipates releasing more funds shortly after Easter. Financial support is being utilised as soon as it is received and even in anticipation of being received, such is the need.

Partner agencies continue to focus on people who have been displaced within Ukraine and who have become



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refugees in Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland. They are providing both temporary shelters and longer-term accommodation, food, money and vouchers, help with travel, and medical supplies, and are responding to more specific needs as they arise. So far, 10 million people have fled their homes – 3.5 million fleeing to other countries and a further 6.5 million displaced in Ukraine itself. This makes up nearly one quarter of the country's population.

Bishop Ferran Glenfield, Bishop of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh and Chair of the Bishops' Appeal Advisory Committee, says: "Irish people north and south are known for being big hearted. The plight of the Ukrainian people has touched many hearts, which is reflected in the generous response to the Ukraine Appeal across the Church of Ireland."



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A selection of short videos – provided by Habitat for Humanity, ACT Alliance, and the Anglican Diocese in Europe from their responses to the crisis – is available on the Church of Ireland YouTube channel at this link:
<https://bit.ly/3udFNfw>

Readers can find out more about Habitat for Humanity's response in Eastern Europe at www.habitatni.co.uk/ukraine and www.habitatireland.ie/ukraine and the work of Christian Aid's partners in the ACT Alliance at www.actalliance.org/news

Presbyterian Church's Hate Crime submission

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has welcomed the opportunity to take part in the Department of Justice's (DoJ) public consultation on proposals for updating hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland.

Publishing its response the Church has re-emphasised the need for any future legislation to be 'handled with wisdom and sensitivity', recognising the truth-claims of an individual's faith, and an ability to express these publicly are 'a vital part of what it means for a society to genuinely value religious freedom.'

Four takeaways from PCI's Hate Crime submission

- Freedom to only express ideas that are popular is no freedom at all

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- The blunt instrument of the law, even as a last resort, is no substitute for the hard, and often challenging, work of transforming hearts and minds
- PCI would strongly oppose the removal of protection for individuals and families to freely express their personal views within their own home
- With challenges to the expression of faith in the public square becoming more common, the ability to publicly express faith is a vital part of what it means for a society to genuinely value religious freedom.

In its 2,000 word submission, the all-Ireland denomination reiterates the point that ‘freedom to only express ideas that are popular is no freedom at all’. The submission continues, ‘it is paramount therefore that efforts in finding a way forward on hate crime do not become a precursor to curtailing legitimate debate or the exploration of differences of opinion in a constructive and positive way.’

The Church has welcomed the indication from the DoJ that it does not propose to include a definition of hate crime explicitly in a forthcoming Hate Crime Bill. PCI recognises that including a definition ‘could be too prescriptive and open to interpretation, which in turn could have unintended consequences. Creating a definition in itself is not a panacea. The blunt instrument of the law, even as a last resort, is no substitute for the hard, and often challenging, work of transforming hearts and minds.’

The Church explained in its submission that ‘in a world increasingly defined through the lens of individual identity, and choices which we are often told are fluid and non-

binary, there is risk of being left with a binary option which boils down to this – “if you are not for me then you are against me, and if you are against me (while of course you have a the right to hold your personal beliefs) there is no place for you to articulate those beliefs.” The place of public debate or personal expression risks becoming a zero-sum game where if “you win, I lose” and vice versa.’ As stated in the response, ‘The issues involved are very important and will need to be handled with wisdom and sensitivity.’

In its consideration of the ‘stirring up offences’ the Church expresses its concern that ‘placing restrictions on discourse within private dwellings may remove the freedom to discuss controversial topics at home between family members, friends or other guests.’ PCI also noted the Department’s view that the dwelling defence is no longer fit for purpose and in particular does not provide an appropriate defence for private online communication.

That being said PCI, ‘would strongly oppose any change to legislation which would remove protection from individuals to express their strongly held personal and/or religious beliefs within their own home without being at risk of committing a criminal offence.’

Speaking about PCI’s submission, Rev Daniel Kane, Convenor of PCI’s Council for Public Affairs, said, “In a parable concerning a tree and the quality of its fruit, recorded in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus makes a comparison with the ‘fruit’ evident in our lives stating, “For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.” Transforming hearts and minds requires much more than legislative change.

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“The Department of Justice is tasked with drafting legislation that strikes a careful balance that protects the vulnerable and facilitates respectful debate. In our submission we recognise that challenges to the expression of faith in the public square in particular, are becoming more common. For many Christians grounding their public conduct in the truth-claims of their faith forms is a key element of their religious commitment.”

Mr Kane continued, “Recognising this is a vital part of what it means for a society to genuinely value religious freedom. There must be space within society to express views with which others may disagree, recognising at the same time, that this works both ways and allows people to express views about religious belief with which we may disagree. This includes in the home, where people of faith use their homes as extensions of their faith and religious activity.”

The Minister of West Church, Ballymena, “As part of the legislative process, we look forward to responding to further stages of public consultation, including consultation on the proposed Bill itself. This, of course, very much depends on having a functioning Executive after next month’s election with a Minister in place to draft legislation, and an Assembly to consider and pass it.”

Rev Daniel Kane

Rev Daniel Kane is currently minister of West Church, Ballymena in County Antrim. Born in Ballymoney, in 1960 he was educated at Ballycastle High School, Queen’s University, Belfast, Aberdeen University and Union Theological College.

He was ordained as Assistant Minister in Carryduff Presbyterian in 1986 and installed as minister of First Killyleagh, in County Down in 1988, where he ministered until being called to West Church in the year 2000. Daniel was convener of PCI's Youth Service and Leadership Training Committee from 1988 to 1993 and Youth Board from 1993-2000. He became convener of the Council for Public Affairs in 2019.

England begins speedy 'no fault' divorces, prompting debate on whether Northern Ireland should follow suit

Comparatively speedy 'no fault' divorces have been introduced in England and Wales, prompting debate as to whether Northern Ireland should follow suit, Philip Bradfield writes in the News Letter.

The changes follow the high-profile case of Tini Owens, who lost a Supreme Court fight in 2018 after failing to convince judges that her "loveless" 40-year marriage should end. The Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill came into effect in England and Wales on Wednesday.

Critics say the new legislation will allow spouses to 'simply walk away' from a marriage without having to give any reason – and without their spouse being able to contest the decision.

However Relate NI responded that Northern Ireland is now "falling behind" England and Wales in terms of "amicable

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divorce options". It notes that Northern Ireland, married couples will still only be able to secure a divorce after being married for one year, and on the grounds of 'irretrievable breakdown'. This will still need to include at least one of the following justifications; 1) Adultery 2) Unreasonable behaviour 3) Two years' desertion 4) Two years' separation (with partner's consent) 5) Five years' separation.

Relate NI says that in the instances of adultery or unreasonable behaviour, a divorce can be triggered immediately in NI because they are "fault based".

Otherwise married couples have to wait a minimum of two years after separation before they can activate a non-fault based divorce.

Relate NI CEO, Duane Farrell, said: "When couples are experiencing relationship breakdown, if both parties agree there is no prospect of reconciliation, should they be forced to blame the other just to achieve a speedier divorce?"

"England and Wales are moving on and saying that they shouldn't, but Northern Ireland continues to maintain an archaic divorce system which fuels unnecessary animosity and blame which does not encourage positive co-parenting relationships."

"A wealth of research shows that frequent, intense and poorly resolved conflict is damaging to children's life chances, whether parents are together or apart."

However the charity CARE for Northern Ireland, which champions pro-marriage policies, argued the changes would create "acute costs" for the whole of society.

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“Marriage is hugely important and benefits parents, children, and communities,” it said. “Making divorce easier undermines it and our concern has always been that if you make something easier to obtain, more people will choose it. More divorces mean more family breakdown, with acute costs to the whole of society.

“We believe marriage is one of the most important public commitments one can make. Politicians should be ensuring more funding for relationship support services to make sure the priority is on helping couples stay together, not talking up ‘quickie divorces’ that incentivise splitting up.”

The Bishop of Durham said previously that while the Church “shared the Government’s objective of reducing family conflict, it was not persuaded that the proposals for divorce had been sufficiently thought through”.

Bishop expresses 'deep alarm' at plans for Channel 4 sell-off

A leading Church of England bishop has expressed 'deep alarm' at plans announced by the UK government this week to press ahead with the proposed privatisation of Channel Four, despite widespread opposition.

Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Bishop of Ripon and Chair of the Sandford St Martin Trust – a charity promoting 'thought-provoking, distinctive programming that engages with religion of all faiths, ethics or morality' – made her views clear in a statement issued yesterday.



She said: "The Trust is deeply alarmed at the news that the government is pushing ahead with plans to privatise Channel 4. It is our belief that one of the many risks associated with privatisation would be the demise of religious and ethical content provision on the Channel.

"In its current form, Channel 4 has reasonably successfully delivered on its remit to represent and make content relevant to the UK's diverse faith communities, but we believe there is still room for improvement."

Bishop Hartley lists a series of Channel 4 programmes that have won awards from the Trust. These include 'It's a Sin', portraying the 1980s Aids crisis, 'Ramadan in Lockdown' following Muslims as they adjusted and coped during Covid, and 'For Sama,' that chronicled five years of the Syrian uprising.

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She also praised C4's 'Dispatches' and 'Unreported World' for being "unafraid of exploring the impact of religion on politics, economics and culture."

Bishop Hartley explains: "If ever there has been a need for such a valued and valuable public service, the time is now. The Sandford St Martin Trust has long argued that to ignore religion is to leave a gaping hole at the heart of public service broadcasting.

"Because of its current remit, Channel 4 has been at the frontline of promoting tolerance and understanding across a range of social differences. It must remain there."

Other Church of England bishops have also expressed reservations about the proposed sale. When the idea was first suggested, Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell wrote to Oliver Dowden, then Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

He told him, "Channel 4 offers something unique and precious in the British public service broadcasting ecology. I must emphasise how important is the programming it provides and how it should not be lost."

Archbishop Cottrell welcomed C4's investment in skills and training at its new Leeds headquarters and regional bases in Bristol, Glasgow and Manchester, and urged its work with the independent production sector to be recognised as part of the review.

Current Culture Secretary, Nadine Dorries, announced the government's decision to press ahead with privatisation this

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week, despite major opposition from the media industry, including leading broadcasters,

She explained: "A change of ownership will give Channel 4 the tools and freedom to flourish and thrive as a public service broadcaster long into the future. I will seek to reinvest the proceeds of the sale into levelling up the creative sector, putting money into independent production and creative skills in priority parts of the country."

Critics of the sell-off point out that C4 takes no public money, made £71 million operating profit last year, has developed extensive online services, and invests its income into more than 270 UK-based independent production companies. Much of the channel's content is produced outside of London and its new Leeds headquarters opened last September.

They have also pointed out that any new commercial owners will have to pay dividends to their shareholders, and that costly public service commitments – such as covering religion or carrying the channel's current commitment to news – will erode their potential profit margins.

Many observers see the potential sell-off as politically motivated, with C4 perceived as left-leaning and critical of the government.

Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds, has described the proposal as "ideologically driven and therefore short-sighted and wrong."

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Peter Crumpler, former director of communications for the Church of England, shares the concern. He said, "As someone who was watched the UK media scene for many decades, the potential proceeds of the C4 sale seem small against the risks to the UK TV production sector, and the threat to home-grown programmes that explore the UK's rich diversity, including in the areas of faith, morality and ethics.

"Any decision to sell C4 seems born more of political doctrine, perhaps even vindictiveness, than a carefully considered approach to public service broadcasting.

"It will be interesting to see if the government has the determination to see through this privatisation, in the face of strong opposition in both Houses of Parliament.

"Given all the other pressures on it – from Ukraine to the spiralling cost of living and 'Partygate' – this controversial move seems hardly worth the energy it will expend."

Bishop's furry friends on schools tour

The Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster, brought a number of 'furry friends' with him when he visited Gartan National School in Donegal recently, along with the Rector of Conwal with Gartan, Rev David Houlton.

It was the latest in a series of school visits Bishop Andrew's making to schools throughout the Diocese of Raphoe.



The pupils and their teachers laid on a special assembly for the Bishop, who's a patron of Gartan N.S. It included a number of hymns performed by junior and senior pupils, and prayers led by the seniors.

Bishop Andrew used a number of puppets as props to preach to the children about the Parable of the Lost Sheep, explaining to them how important each one of them was in the eyes of God. He also thanked the teaching staff, telling them that they – like healthcare workers – were among the 'heroes' of the pandemic, for the way in which they had performed their duties over the two years of the Covid crisis.

The Bishop and Rev Houlton were given a guided tour of the new extension to Gartan N.S. which is still under construction. The extension will double the school's size when it reopens after the summer holidays.

Retired Clergy Association meets again

The Retired Clergy Association (Northern Ireland) recently held its first meeting for over two and a half years, when 25 members came together in the parish church of St Philip and St James, Holywood, Co Down.

The guest speaker was the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, the Rt Revd Andrew Forster, who was brought up in Holywood and was delighted to be returning to his boyhood roots.

The morning began with a service of Holy Communion, celebrated by the Associate Vicar of Holywood, the Revd Ken McGrath, who welcomed members and passed on the apologies of the Vicar, Canon Gareth Harron, who was attending a Diocesan Clergy and Leaders' Day Conference.

This was followed by light refreshments, when members were able to catch up with all their news since the last meeting prior to the first lockdown in March 2020.

Taking as his theme 'From Holywood to Derry,' Bishop Forster charted, in a compelling, engaging and humorous address, his personal and ordained journey from a chorister in Holywood parish choir to his election as Bishop of Derry and Raphoe in 2019.

He spoke of the positive influence and impact on his life of family, friends, church and school as he was growing up in Holywood.



He also described a number of significant events and circumstances in the course of his ordained ministry in the varied settings in which he had served, both north and south of the border, events which he identified as personally important ‘models of incarnational ministry.’

The Association’s committee has planned a programme of events for the remainder of this year, including an outing to Enniskillen in April and the resumption of the annual buffet lunch in Tullyglass House in May. Members hope to entertain their southern counterparts from the Dublin and Glendalough Retired Clergy Fellowship when they visit Portadown on a date to be arranged in October or November.

The chairperson of the Retired Clergy Association, the Revd Canon Ken Smyth, said: “It was great to see the Association up and running again after our enforced break and to welcome both existing and some new members to the meeting.

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“We got off to a good start with Bishop Andrew, whose talk was entertaining, informative and very encouraging to us all.”

(For further information about the Association’s work and future events, contact the Honorary Secretary, the Ven Donald McLean, email: donaldmclean@btinternet.com).

Upcoming music events

8.4.22 – Bach ‘Mass in B Minor’ , Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin

9.4.22 – Bach ‘Mass in B Minor’ , St Nicholas Collegiate Church Galway

9.4.22 – French Connections: Saint-Saëns Organ Symphony, St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin

10.4.22 – Miserere - Concert for Palm Sunday, Clonard Monastery

10.4.22 – Choral & solo violin concert, Church of St John the Baptist, Killeagh, Co. Cork

10.4.22 – Choral & solo violin concert, Honan Chapel, UCC, Cork

Internship at Tullycarnet Church

Applications are invited for a new Internship Programme in Tullycarnet Church in East Belfast. It is the most recent Church Plant in Down and Dromore.

Tullycarnet Church aims to be vibrant and alive, marked by the message, lifestyle and love of Jesus, reaching out to the

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people of Tullycarnet and renewing the local community in Jesus' name.

The internship program will officially run from September 2022 and finish in June 2023, however, Interns will also have the option to continue to help over the summer in children's and youth outreaches as well as to attend the New Wine Ireland conference.

An Information Pack and an Application Form from links at -
[[<https://www.downanddromore.org/news/2022/04/internship-at-tullycarnet-church>]

Application forms should be returned to
info@tullycarnetchurch.com

Closing date for applications: Friday 29 July 2022 at noon

Perspective

How Ireland took on the church and freed its own soul by James Wood in The New Yorker

A nation learned to dodge God's law in everything from biscuits to birth control, until religious doublethink became an agent of its own undoing.

Excerpts -

...Reading Fintan O'Toole's new book, "We Don't Know Ourselves: A Personal History of Modern Ireland" (Liveright),

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is like reading a great tragicomic Irish novel, rich in memoir and record, calamity and critique.

The book contains funny and terrible things, details and episodes so pungent that they must surely have been stolen from a fantastical artificer like Flann O'Brien.

The pedophile Dublin priest who built a swimming pool in his back garden—in drizzly Ireland!—so that little boys could swim with him.

The censoring, all-seeing Archbishop of Dublin who kept a telescope and a magnifying glass in his official residence, and once boasted that, when he used the magnifier to scrutinize “the drawings of women in ads for underwear, it was possible to see the outline of a mons veneris.” The moment, in 1963, when Ireland acquired its first escalator.

The fact that Irish viewers could see only a chaste version of “Casablanca” that “cut out all the references to Rick and Ilsa’s passionate love affair in Paris, leaving their motivations entirely mysterious.” The deeply corrupt Prime Minister Charles Haughey, who spent a thousand pounds of someone else’s money a week on dinners with his mistress.



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The strange fact that Albania got its own television station before Ireland did. The bishop who fled Ireland for a convent in Texas after his lover told the press about their illegitimate son, whom he had refused to acknowledge.

O'Toole opens his book in 1958, the year of his birth. He was born into the working classes; his father was a bus conductor and his mother became an office cleaner. The family lived in a newish housing estate, "lined by largely identical two-storey working-class dwellings," in a suburb southwest of Dublin. The modernity of the housing stock was important: the O'Tooles had electricity, running water, and an indoor lavatory. In a book rippling with extraordinary facts, here are some of the starkest: at the end of the Second World War, two-thirds of Irish homes had no electricity. In the countryside, especially, development was sluggish. The 1961 census revealed that nearly seventy-five per cent of rural homes didn't have plumbing. At least half these houses "had no fixed lavatory facilities at all, indoor or outdoor." O'Toole remembers visiting his ninety-eight-year-old great-grandmother in County Wexford: her house had recently been electrified, but the toilet was a dry outhouse that had a plank with a hole in it, and water was brought from a distant pump.

Politically, the Ireland of his childhood appeared to be remarkably stable. It was the triumphant survivor of its Easter Rising struggle, in 1916, against British colonialism, culminating, six years later, in the establishment of the Irish Free State; a wily evader of the ravages of the Second World War (it stayed neutral); a newborn democratic republic where ancient Catholic identity and ancient national identity were fruitfully locked together in place. The state

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was presided over by its aging founding father, the noble and deeply pious Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Éamon de Valera, who had led forces against British soldiers in the Easter Rising and had been a British prisoner of war. De Valera's party, Fianna Fáil (Soldiers of Destiny), had comfortably dominated Irish politics since soon after its formation, in 1926.

Link to complete text -

[[] <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/04/11/how-ireland-took-on-the-church-and-freed-its-soul-fintan-otoole-we-dont-know-ourselves-a-personal-history-of-modern-ireland>]

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

