

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – A heart for the community in Bunclody**

## Image of the day

### A heart for the community in Bunclody

Please see report below.

## People and places

### A heart for the community in Bunclody

**Many parishes around our island are considering how they can make the most of their land in a generous way.**

The Revd Trevor Sargent, Rector of the Bunclody Union of Parishes, reports on a project that will both help to look after the local environment and serve the community in and around the town.

‘Here in St Mary’s, Bunclody, we are in the process of creating a raised bed gardening area in front of the church in the shape of a large heart – as in the attached photograph which shows the project at an early stage.

‘We’re hoping to divide the heart shaped garden into four beds for the purpose of rotation sowing. The path will transect the garden in the shape of a cross which will be visible from the road (or from a drone)...

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‘Some of the overgrown rhododendron bushes in front of St Mary’s Church, were cleared over the summer, to make way for more pollinator–friendly native plants, which will be planted in the shape of a large heart, to signify to all passers by that ‘God is love’, (1 John 4:16).

‘Farming parishioners with access to suitable machines spent a long Saturday cutting, clearing and shredding. There was much debris to be cleared also from years of accumulated litter under the bushes.

‘This message may become more tangible whenever we have food to share from this garden.’  
The work party after clearing rhododendron in the grounds.

## Surprise for Connor rector on 20th anniversary



Canon Taylor tops off.

**The Rev Canon Mark Taylor was treated to a surprise celebration following morning prayers at St John’s Church, Islandmagee, on August 21 – the 20th anniversary of his incumbency.**





As Canon Taylor concluded the morning service, organist Loreto McAuley unexpectedly struck up the well-known tune Congratulations, made famous by Cliff Richard back in the 1960s, and the congregation clapped in time to the music.

After some words of appreciation and thanks for all that Canon Taylor and his wife Frances have

done for the parish, the couple were presented with gifts by members of the vestry and congregation. Canon Taylor was then invited to go out to the churchyard to plant a rowan tree to commemorate this special anniversary.

When Canon Taylor was told he deserved a medal for his service, he replied, 'It's the congregation that deserve the medal!'



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Following the tree planting ceremony everyone, including members of Canon Taylor's immediate family, gathered back in St John's for refreshments and a good time was had by all.

## **Beautifully restored St Bartholomew's Church in Ballsbridge an inspiration and incentive**

**The beautifully restored St Bartholomew's Church in Ballsbridge is an inspiration and an incentive to current and future generations.**

So said Archbishop Michael Jackson who yesterday evening (Wednesday August 24) joined the Vicar and parishioners to celebrate the fruits of six years of painstaking restoration work on the interior and exterior of the unique Clyde Road church.

The Archbishop said that the restoration and redecoration inspired people afresh to take up the cause of St Bartholomew and express appreciation by witnessing to the spiritual energy in the church which is a place of prayer, liturgy, confession and absolution, community and friendship. "Not only does St Bartholomew's inspire our wonder by its architectural and its aesthetic beauty; it also inspires our faith by the regularity of its worship and its holding faithfully to the fulness of expression of the Church of Ireland in being both Catholic and Reformed in the rhythms and in the cadences of its worship," he said.





James Howley (architect), Barbara Bergin (St Bartholomew's), Sylvia Mambriani (working architect), Archbishop Michael Jackson, Canon Andrew McCroskery and Abigail and Kerry O'Brien, at St Bartholomew's Patronal Festival and Service of Thanksgiving for the restoration works to the church.

The restoration work took place between 2014 and 2020 and included re-leading, roof repairs, repair and conservation of stained glass windows, complete restoration of the stonework, clockface restoration, reinstatement of tower pinnacles, restoration and conservation of the sanctuary paintings and the restoration of the decorative scheme, among many other items. While the work was completed some time ago, the

celebration and thanksgiving were delayed by the pandemic.

Canon Andrew McCroskery paid tribute to the members of the vestry and the fundraising committee for their bravery and enthusiasm in undertaking such an enormous project, which cost €2.3 million. In particular, he highlighted a generous donation from Dano and Iris O'Brien, and the continued support of the O'Brien family, which largely enabled the work along with fundraising and grant aid from a number of sources. "It was a tribute to the kind of person that Iris was that she wished their donation to remain anonymous in their lifetime," Canon McCroskery stated. "Their years with us have passed although their legacy lives on. Without their gift and the continuing support of the O'Brien family, we could not have undertaken this work." He also thanked all who worked so hard to ensure the restoration was completed to the highest standard.

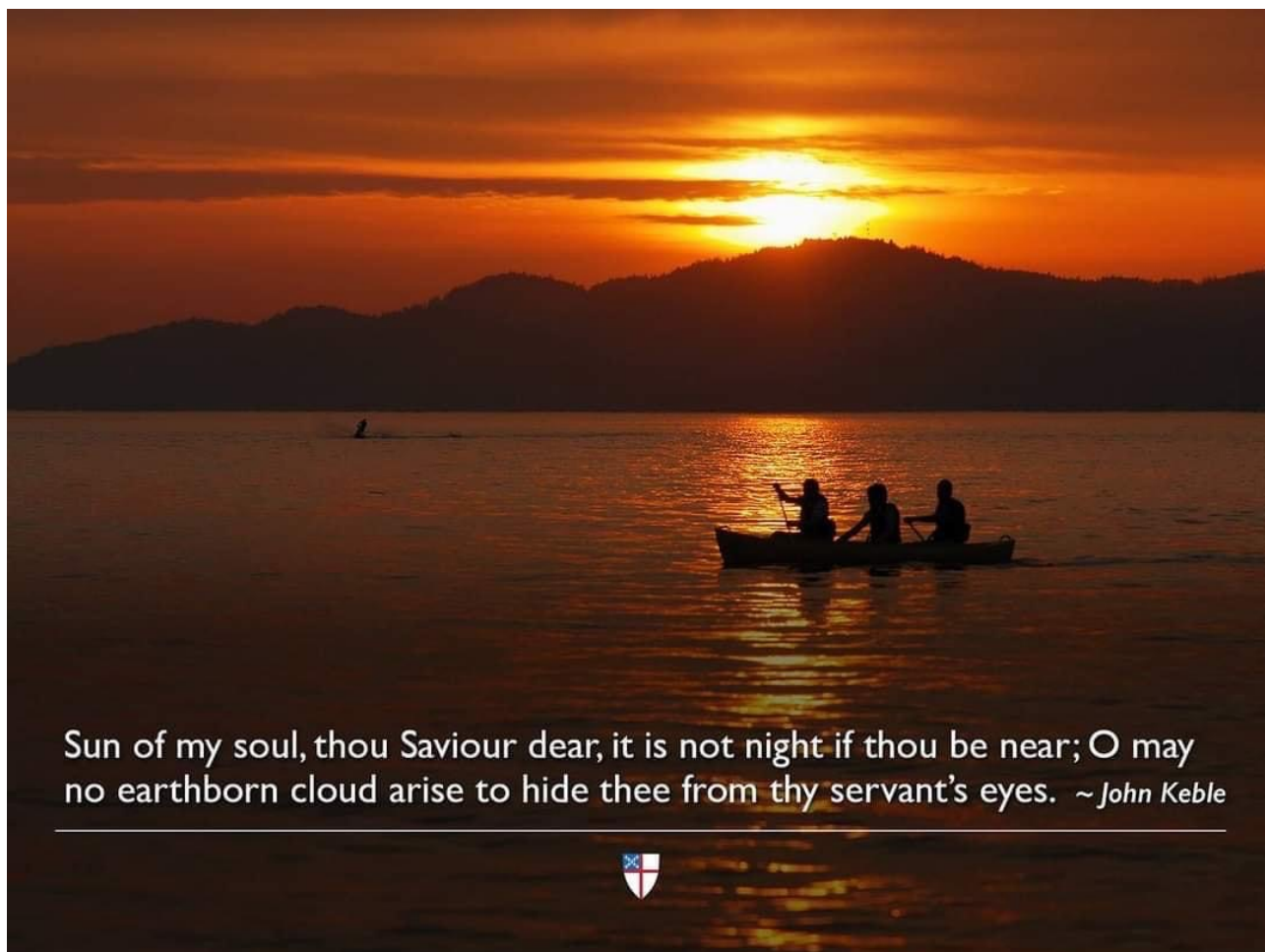
In his sermon, Archbishop Jackson spoke of St Bartholomew's vigorous missionary career and his subsequent martyrdom. He spoke of toxic workplaces (a recent survey highlighted that more than 70% of people would describe their workplace as toxic) and drew a parallel with the Gospel reading [St Luke 22: 24–30] in which the disciples was squabbling over status and hierarchy, as, he said, happens in many workplaces. He supposed St Bartholomew to have been present with the 12 when Jesus said '...For who is greater – the one who sits at table or the servant who waits on him? Surely the one who sits at table. Yet I am among you like a servant.' [St Luke 22: 26–27].



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“The toxic workplace – whether it be office, home or church – is here to stay. But what are we as today’s disciples going to do in order to redeem it and to reclaim it as a place of dynamic discipleship?” the Archbishop asked. “Emerging from Covid–19 Lockdown, we who are witnesses and martyrs, both to those times of terror and of loss and to Jesus Christ who continued to stand with us, we need to lead the way and show the way to others who are more lost and more lonely than we are. This church itself is an inspiration and an incentive to us in doing this because of its majesty and its colour.”

He added: “[This church’s] restoration and redecoration, painstakingly and professionally executed under the guidance and assurance of The Vicar and Professor Alistair Rowan, longstanding parishioner and devoted servant of



Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear, it is not night if thou be near; O may no earthborn cloud arise to hide thee from thy servant’s eyes. ~ John Keble





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this parish, inspire us afresh to take up the cause of Bartholomew and to express our appreciation by witnessing to the spiritual energy that resides within this place.”

Archbishop Jackson praised the generosity of those who made the restoration and redecoration possible and all who made the work happen – donors, designers, craftspeople, artists and all who maintained the work of God throughout the disruption.

## **Cost-of-living crisis: Irish church leaders call for help for vulnerable on both sides of border**

**The leaders of Ireland’s main churches have issued a joint call for practical support to be delivered to people struggling with the cost-of-living crisis on both sides of the border.**

The Church Leaders Group (Ireland), which includes the Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic archbishops of Armagh, the Presbyterian moderator and the presidents of the Methodist Church and Irish Council of Churches, said they are “deeply concerned regarding the government response” in both Northern Ireland and the Republic.

The church leaders said they were worried by what they are seeing on the ground concerning those who are vulnerable and living in poverty.

A joint statement said: “The unfolding cost-of-living crisis is affecting many households, across the island of Ireland, but



particularly those who were already vulnerable and living in poverty.

“Projections for the autumn point to the situation worsening while too many people are already struggling to afford essentials like food and fuel and are in real danger of losing their homes, health or lives.

“As leaders of churches with a presence across the island we are deeply concerned by what we are seeing on the ground, with the increasing energy and food prices disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable, often leaving people with impossible choices to make, missing meals and falling into arrears on bills.”

The statement continued: “We are also deeply concerned regarding the government response in both jurisdictions, in

meeting immediate needs and also in relation to longer term strategy.”

“In Northern Ireland, the Good Friday Belfast Agreement created a statutory requirement for the Northern Ireland Executive to produce an anti-poverty strategy on the basis of objective need.

“Almost 25 years later and this has never been agreed or produced.

“Likewise, in Ireland a cross-party anti-poverty strategy is badly needed to address issues in a comprehensive and effective manner.

“We want to join our voices with many others, calling for more practical support to be delivered urgently through direct government initiatives in both jurisdictions and also via grassroots charity and community partnerships.

“This must go hand in hand with a longer term refocusing of government policies to deliver real and meaningful social justice and eliminate poverty across this island.”

The statement concluded: “Followers of Christ have always been called to serve the poor, not just through acts of charity, though these continue every day in ways large and small, but through the pursuit of justice and mercy.

“It is our shared vocation to witness to Christ and to protect the dignity of those made in God’s image, and so we are compelled to speak up in this moment, out of concern and in hope, for the good and flourishing of everyone in our communities.”



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The statement was signed by Rev Andrew Foster, president of the Irish Council of Churches; Rev Dr John Kirkpatrick, moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland; Rev John McDowell, Church of Ireland archbishop of Armagh and primate of all Ireland; Fr Eamon Martin, Roman Catholic archbishop of Armagh and primate of all Ireland; and Rev David Nixon, president of the Methodist Church in Ireland.



## **Kildarton Sunflower festival**

**After much waiting and great anticipation, the parishioners of Kildarton are looking forward to welcoming everyone to Kildarton Sunflower Field over the next 2 weekends starting today Friday, 26th August.**

You are invited to take some time out in beautiful rural Co Armagh, halfway between Hamiltonsbawn and Armagh, you

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will be made very welcome. There are areas to walk, to sit, to view and lots of photo opportunities. There are also Nature Detectives activities for the kids as well as light refreshments, sunflower seeds and a sunflower for everyone to take home.

Opening Times are Friday: 11am - 8pm, Saturday: 11am - 8pm and Sunday: 2pm - 8pm.

Donations are in support of Air Ambulance NI and Kildarton Parish Church.



## Vacancies

**The following opportunities based in the Assembly Buildings in Belfast City Centre are currently available:**



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- SENIOR HR ASSISTANT (Temporary)
- HR ASSISTANT (Maternity Cover)

Visit [www.presbyterianireland.org/jobs](http://www.presbyterianireland.org/jobs) to find out more about these jobs and others available within PCI.

## **New Ecumenical Canon in Armagh**

**The Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Revd John McDowell, has appointed the Revd Dr Heather Morris, the General Secretary of the Methodist Church in Ireland, as an Ecumenical Canon of St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh.**

The installation of the new Canon will take place at a service of Choral Evensong on Tuesday, 13th September 2022, at 7.30pm. During this service Dr Kenneth Milne, the Church of Ireland Historiographer, will also be installed as a Lay Canon.

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Provision for two Ecumenical Canons was included in a new Statute governing St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, enacted by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland in 2011. The Ecumenical Canons are appointed by the Archbishop of Armagh for a term of five years, which may be renewed. They join the Dean, Precentor, Chancellor, Treasurer, Archdeacons and four Prebendaries as members of the Cathedral Chapter (but may not vote). Dr Morris will succeed the Revd Dr Tony Davidson who retired at the beginning of the summer.

Welcoming the appointment, the Dean of Armagh, the Very Revd Shane Forster, said: 'I have known and worked alongside Dr Heather Morris in the Church Leaders' Group (Ireland) for many years and am well acquainted with her many gifts and skills. Heather is an eloquent preacher with a pastoral heart, who is genuinely interested in and committed to ecumenical outreach across this island, and I know that she will receive a warm welcome in her new role in Armagh.'

In accepting the appointment, Dr Morris said: 'The Cathedral, placed as it is in the ecclesiastical capital, has played a significant role in the history of Ireland and, continues to do so under the leadership of the Archbishop, not least as a place in which any and all are welcomed in Christ's name. I am honoured to be invited to serve as a Canon and look forward to being part of the life and witness of the Cathedral.'

**CNI**

## World News

### Scots Churches issue joint statement on West Bank settlement proposal

**On 12 September a planning committee in the West Bank will consider an application from the Israeli Defence Ministry for a large new settlement project in the E1 area of the West Bank, to the east of Jerusalem.**

Representatives of the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church have responded with the following statement:

"Our churches have a close association with people of all faiths living in the land of Israel and Palestine through pilgrimage, long-standing partners in the region as well as with a direct presence. It has been painful over the years to see the expansion of occupation in the West Bank to such an extent that the vision of two states living side-by-side appears increasingly remote.

"The building of Israeli settlements on the E1 area has long been opposed by the international community as it creates an insurmountable impediment to the future possibility of a contiguous Palestinian State. It would effectively split the West Bank in two and deny Palestinians direct access to East Jerusalem. Building on the E1 area would most likely spell the end for a negotiated two-State solution.

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"In recent years, house demolitions have made thousands of families homeless. Palestinian communities and infrastructure have been devastated in order to make way for Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem, Hebron, the South Hebron Hills, around Bethlehem and in other places in the West Bank. Building on E1 threatens the homes and livelihoods of a further 2,000 people in Palestinian communities in the area.

"The UK government has repeatedly stated the construction of settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law. It is vital that our government acts with speed to halt this disturbing development.

"We pray for a negotiated settlement in Israel and Palestine and commit ourselves to working for a just peace so that communities might live side-by-side, valuing the interdependence of all peoples in the region.

"We joyfully celebrate positive relationships on the ground in which Israelis and Palestinians come together to articulate a common commitment to live, work and flourish together in the region. But we are in no doubt that failure to prevent settlements in the E1 area would imperil future chances for peace and further undermine the international rules-based system that our nation seeks to uphold.

"We ask that our government act urgently to make it abundantly clear that the granting of permission to build on E1 must inevitably have serious political and economic repercussions for the relationship between our countries.

Signatories



The Right Reverend Dr Iain Greenshields, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland  
The Revd Fiona E Bennett, Moderator of the General Assembly of The United Reformed Church  
The Revd Graham Thompson, President of the Conference of the Methodist Church

## **Afghan house churches 'continue to grow'**

**Despite intense persecution, the tiny Christian community in Afghanistan is growing, according to Voice of the Martyrs (VoM).**

In its new annual Global Prayer Guide, Afghanistan has been designated a "restricted" country because of the severity of the persecution being experienced by Christians.

It attributes this to radical Islam and "violent tribal political activity", which it says has made Afghanistan "a difficult and dangerous place" for Christians to practise their faith.

Owning a Bible is "extremely dangerous" but online and other digital versions are available to believers there, the ministry says.

"Both local and national governments are highly antagonistic toward Christians," the prayer guide says.

"Extremist groups, including the Taliban and the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS), are active, and believers

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are also persecuted by their families, friends and communities."

It is a year since the US and other Western countries pulled out of Afghanistan, plunging the country back into oppressive Taliban rule.

According to VoM, some Christians have fled abroad while those still inside Afghanistan must be "highly secretive" about their faith, meeting only in homes or other small venues because there are no church buildings.

Despite the risk to their life, house churches are reportedly growing.

"Although waves of Christians have moved to neighboring countries to worship openly, Afghan house churches continue to grow," it said.

"A small number of Christians are martyred every year in Afghanistan, but their deaths generally occur without public knowledge. A few are also in prison, but imprisonment is not common.

"Christian converts from Islam are often killed by family members or other radicalized Muslims before any legal proceedings can begin."

**CNI**

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## Poem for today

### Friendship by Elizabeth Jennings

Such love I cannot analyse;  
It does not rest in lips or eyes,  
Neither in kisses nor caress.  
Partly, I know, it's gentleness  
And understanding in one word  
Or in brief letters. It's preserved  
By trust and by respect and awe.  
These are the words I'm feeling for.  
Two people, yes, two lasting friends.  
The giving comes, the taking ends  
There is no measure for such things.  
For this all Nature slows and sings.

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## Church News Ireland

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