

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – Job done again**

## Image of the day

### Job done again

Inspiration from - and for - Knitters and Natters groups

## CNI Events diary

### CNI Events diary January - June 2023

Information about events and services invited by e-mail to [churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com)

### January 2023

**Wednesday 18th January** – Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service in St. Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen at 7.30pm with special guest preacher, the Rt Rev'd Trevor Williams (former Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe).

**Saturday 21st January** - Armagh Youth and Children's Board

Mini residential for young people from parishes and their friends at Kilbroney Centre, Rostrevor

### January 27 - January 29, Vocation Retreat 2023

The C of I Commission on Ministry is organising a Vocation Retreat taking place from January 27-29, 2023, at the

Dromantine Centre near Newry. Bookings are open until December 23 and the retreat is open to people with an interest in ordained ministry... Dromintine Retreat & Conference Centre 96 Glen Rd, Newry

### **Friday 28th January, Stepping Forward: Stepping Up**

Webinar - Stepping Forward: Stepping Up is a Presbyterian Church Congregational Life, programme for four events equipping those who have been thrust into the leadership limelight with the tools they need to lead well in this and every season of church life. 10.00 am.

[<https://www.presbyterianireland.org/Events.aspx>]

**Sunday 29th January.** Diocesan Big Sing in St. Maeldoid's Church, Castleblayney at 7pm. A warm invitation is extended to all parishioners and the wider community across the diocese and beyond!

## **February 2023**

**Saturday 4th February.** Sharing Faith – growing with confidence

Presbyterian Church four session event. Online and in person.

[<https://www.presbyterianireland.org/Events/Sharing-Faith-%E2%80%93-growing-with-confidence.aspx>]

**Sunday 5th February.** Launch of Church of Ireland Pioneer Ministry Initiative

The Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin will formally launch and commission the Pioneer Ministry initiative and team in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin at 15:15 on the 5th February

2023. Sermon by the Archbishop of Wales, the Most Reverend Andy John. For contact information see - <https://www.pioneerministry.org>

## **March 2023**

### **Saturday 11th, March. Kids' Big Day Out**

Kids' Big Day Out is back! This fun afternoon will be packed full of music, interaction, games and activities while learning about God together.

This event is for children of primary school age. Children will need to be accompanied by the appropriate number of adults to adhere to Taking Care guidelines. Waringstown Presbyterian Church.

[<https://www.presbyterianireland.org/Events/Kids-Big-Day-Out-2023.aspx>]

### **March 17, 2023. St Patrick's Day**

Parish churches and cathedrals to celebrate how St Patrick brought the Christian Gospel to the island of Ireland. The nearest Sunday to St Patrick's Day will be 19th March.

## **April 2023**

### **Palm Sunday April 2, 2023**

Marking the entry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, into Jerusalem, on the way to the Cross for us.

### **Good Friday April 7, 2023**

Mark the sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for us on the Cross, in churches and cathedrals around the island of Ireland.

## **Easter Sunday April 9, 2023**

You are very welcome to join with us to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the new life he gives.

## **MAY 2023**

### **12th–13th & 16th May 2023. General Synod**

General Synod 2023 will take place on Friday, 12th May, and Saturday, 13th May 2023, in White's Hotel, Wexford, with Day 3 taking place remotely on the evening of Tuesday 16th May and the evening of Thursday 18th May (if required).

**19th–21st May** 'Be Thou My Vision' – a Festival of Flowers Celebrating 60 years of worship at St Molua's Church, Stormont. St Molua's 645 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast

### **28th May Pentecost Sunday 2023**

Celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church.

## **JUNE 2023**

### **June 30th - July 4th, 2023. Summer Madness 2023**

## Portglenone

Summer Madness 2023 will run from June 30 until July 4.  
The Big Connor BBQ will be on Sunday July 2.

## News reports

### Christian Aid condemns Taliban ban on female NGO staff

**Responding to the announcement of a ban on NGOs employing women in Afghanistan, Christian Aid's Head of Asia, Middle East, Latin America, Caribbean & Global Programmes Ray Hasan said**

“Millions of people in Afghanistan are on the verge of starvation. Reports that families are so desperate they have been forced to sell their children to buy food are utterly heartbreaking.

“Imposing a ban on female aid workers will only curtail our ability to help the growing number of people in need, and



risks compounding the dire humanitarian crisis that women and girls face. Moreover, this ruling will deeply trouble families relying on the income of female aid workers amidst Afghanistan's severe economic crisis.

"Christian Aid is rapidly seeking clarity on this announcement and urging the authorities to reverse the ban. Whilst we do this, we are unfortunately pausing the work of our programmes."

## **Pope Francis asks for special prayer for 'very ill' Benedict XVI**

**In a surprise statement at the end of his public audience on Dec. 28, Pope Francis asked people to say "a special prayer for the emeritus Pope Benedict" because "he is very ill."**

The fact that Pope Francis broke the news, and that it has come through non-official channels, indicates that Benedict's condition is critical.

More than an hour later, the Vatican spokesman, Matteo Bruni, issued a statement to the media in which he confirmed that "in these last hours, there was a deterioration in his health due to advanced age." He said the situation "at the moment remains under control" and is being monitored by the doctors of Pope Benedict XVI. He revealed that Pope Francis visited Benedict immediately after the public audience.



Benedict was the eighth German pope in the history of the church and celebrated his 95th birthday on April 16, 2022. He was elected pope on April 19, 2005 as the successor to John Paul II, but surprised the world by announcing his resignation on Feb. 11, 2013. The resignation took effect on Feb. 28, 2013.

Those who have visited Benedict in recent times reported that while his mind is lucid, his physical condition has been deteriorating.

He has lived at the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery in the Vatican Gardens, behind St. Peter's Basilica, since some months after his resignation in February 2013, and has been cared for by four members of the Memores Domini consecrated women of the Communion and Liberation movement, as well as by the Rev. Georg Gänswein, the German monsignor who was his private secretary throughout his pontificate.



Francis, who succeeded Pope Benedict XVI on March 13, 2013, has always considered him “a wise grandfather in the home” and has consulted him from time to time. He has visited him on many occasions and has also been in contact with him by phone and by letter throughout Francis’ pontificate. Following a tradition that he set early in his pontificate, Francis has visited Benedict with every new batch of cardinals he has named. He did so again at the end of August; one of the new cardinals told “America - The Jesuit Review” afterward that Benedict was physically very fragile but mentally lucid.

## Remembering Archbishop Desmond Tutu

**A year ago, on Boxing Day, South Africa's beloved Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu passed away after a protracted struggle with prostate cancer, teaching lessons about life, love and human values until the very end.**

The image of this man - who in life rubbed shoulders with some of the most powerful and celebrated people on earth - lying in state in a simple pine coffin with rope handles, was both gorgeous in its humility and a searing indictment on the culture of extravagance that has overwhelmed traditional human practises venerating the departed.

The first anniversary of his passing marks the end of the traditional mourning period by his widow, Mrs Nomalizo Leah Tutu.

**LIVE STREAM WATCH HERE**

Desmond & Leah Tutu  
LEGACY FOUNDATION

**DESMOND TUTU**  
12TH INTERNATIONAL PEACE LECTURE

**A VISION FOR**  
*Hope & Healing*

7 OCTOBER 2022, 7 PM SAST  
CITY HALL, CAPE TOWN

Amina J Mohammed,  
Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations  
Joined by co-speaker, **Doug Abrams**, best-selling author

Share your visions of **#HopeAndHealing** on social media  
using the hashtag **#TutuPeace2022**

It also marks the beginning of a new global digital journey to protect the Archbishop's body of work for future generations.

Archbishop Tutu occupied a unique position (organically, without being appointed or elected, guided by his faith) as a global moral conscience and human role-model. We have been acutely conscious of his silence this year.

Were he still here, he'd have helped us understand, from an inter-connected human family perspective, where we should stand in this year of war in Europe, accelerating climate calamity, energy crisis - and increasing social and political bankruptcy at home.

The Arch's work took him around the world, dropping pearls of wisdom as he went. These teachings, unlike Hansel and Gretel's breadcrumbs in the old European fairy-tale, remain relevant and accessible today. Gathered together, they comprise what we term the Archbishop's Heirloom to Humanity.



The Archbishop Tutu IP Trust and the Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation will work together on the development of a single-site, accessible and usable global digital archive (The Heirloom Project) in collaboration with South African and international universities associated with the Archbishop. Several have already committed to the project; details will be announced early in the new year.

The university consortium model is inspired by the approach of the Atlanta University Center Robert W Woodruff Library, which serves the research and information needs of four historically Black colleges and universities: Clark Atlanta University, the Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse College and Spelman College.

The objective of the digital archive project is not to eulogise the Archbishop, worthy as he is of acknowledgment and praise; or to commemorate him, worthy as he is of being remembered.

The objective is to harness the full body of his teaching in order to be able to contribute meaningfully to the endeavours of those he left behind, and are still to come... Those interested in pursuing their faith, spreading the truth of our interconnectedness and interdependence as a single family of human beings and/or or completing the unfinished business of addressing unresolved injustices and inequities.

Among the obvious advantages of working with prestigious universities on several continents is that they are well-established, living institutions inhabited by successive generations of curious people with an interest in knowledge, and keeping it alive.

The archive will, eventually, contain an exhaustive collection of easily searchable digital files of papers, speeches, statements, comments, interviews, articles, photographs, television footage and artefacts associated with the Arch.

On the 1st day of 2022, the Archbishop was laid to rest. It has been an eventful and productive year, steeped in sadness and loss.

On behalf of Mrs Leah Tutu, we very gratefully acknowledge the loving support of family and friends across South Africa and the world throughout the mourning period.

## **Organist pulls out all the stops to land top position across the pond**

**James O'Donnell oversaw music for state occasions in his 23 years of working at Westminster Abbey**

His work has included overseeing the music at some of the country's most imposing royal occasions, from the funeral of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother to the state funeral of Queen Elizabeth II in September.

Now, James O'Donnell, the organist and master of the choristers at Westminster Abbey, is crossing the Atlantic to take up the post of professor in the Yale School of Music and Yale Institute of Sacred Music. The 61-year-old will leave at Christmas after overseeing the work of its choir, which has sung daily services since its foundation in the 14th century, for 23 years.

'We have been privileged to listen to the music he has made. He has given glory to God'

Mr O'Donnell, the first Catholic to be appointed to the nearly 500-year-old role, was responsible for the music and choir at the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, and the service of thanksgiving for the life of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.



Mr O'Donnell heard news of the death of Queen Elizabeth II on switching on his mobile at Heathrow Airport after returning from a visit to Yale earlier this year.

He was responsible for the music for the late Queen's funeral service, which featured two specifically commissioned pieces, three hymns and two anthems, including The Lord is My Shepherd, which is believed to have been requested by the Queen and was also played at her wedding in 1947.

The choir at the time consisted of several new choristers, because of the timing of the Queen's death in September, early in the school year.

“It has been hugely inspiring to make music day by day with the Abbey's outstanding choristers, lay vicars, and organists



and to have played a part in so many great occasions in this extraordinary place,” said Mr O’Donnell.

Speaking of his Yale appointment, he added: “While it will be very difficult to leave when the time comes, I am fortunate to have been offered this unparalleled opportunity at one of the world’s great universities.”

The Dean of Westminster, The Very Rev Dr David Hoyle, said: “In Westminster Abbey we strive for excellence. That is a difficult thing to deliver; it is a hard discipline. Yet, for 23 years, it is precisely what James O’Donnell has given us. We have been privileged to listen to the music he has made. Yale have chosen well. He has given glory to God.”

Mr O’Donnell, who is visiting professor of organ and of choral conducting at the Royal Academy of Music, has performed as a conductor and organ recitalist in the US, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and throughout Europe.

He has also worked with many of Britain’s leading ensembles and appeared regularly with the BBC Singers.

Martin Jean, the director of Yale Institute for Sacred Music, said: “James O’Donnell brings a combination of gifts that seem unmatched in our field: command of a vast range of organ and choral repertoire; a deep engagement with multiple ecclesial and liturgical traditions, and a world-class reputation as an artist in multiple mediums.”

In his new role, Mr O’Donnell will direct a new professional choir that will perform liturgies in some of Yale’s “sacred spaces”, as well as teaching graduate students.

Andrew Nethsingha, the director of music at St John’s College, Cambridge since 2007, will replace Mr O’Donnell in the New Year.

## Perspective

### Christmas Day address by Bishop Donal McKeown

**As human beings, we have always loved stories. Down through the centuries, people huddled around fires on dark nights to hear tales of heroism and tragedy. In many cultures, storytellers were important because they could create and retain stories that held people's attention. We all know how much children enjoy stories which nourish their rich imaginations. In modern entertainment, plays, films and books are key ways for a culture to hand on how it views the past, the present and the future.**



Christmas is a core part of the story that Christians tell about the world. What might we learn from it this year?

Firstly, this is a story about a God who bursts into our world. That inconvenient God is central to our way of looking at life. The strong in every generation like to think that they can be in control of politics, economics or God. Christmas turns that arrogance upside down. Christmas is a subversive feast for little people. The central characters are unknown and unnoticed by the strong. Shepherds, a stable and foreigners do not belong to the inner circle. Caesar Augustus is keen to count how many people there are in his empire so that he can extend his power. God is concerned with what one child can change the world through being little. At the beginning and the end of Jesus' life, the powerful try to swat him away as a nuisance – but they fail. Mary gets it right when she praises God in the Magnificat, saying that God 'puts forth his arm in strength and scatters the proud hearted'.

Thus, this is a much more powerful message than a passing winter festival when people exchange gifts and celebrate – and then get back to normal. This asks us to see the world as a place that is marked by much arrogance and exclusion - but where God still breaks through on a dark night with news of great joy. When church becomes too attached to power, when we think that we have to be able to control the agenda, we can be blind to the fact that God does not need our perceived success and learning in order to achieve great things. History has shown how God uses amazing little people and out of the way places. Today we celebrate a high point of our story, all of which reveals God's unstoppable work for our salvation.

Secondly, Jesus is born powerless. From Bethlehem onwards, everything that he does speaks of the power of weakness. He is foretold by John the Baptist who lives the life of a radical drop-out in the desert. Mary his mother does not understand the apparently crazy journey that she is asked to undertake where her own soul will be pierced with a sword. Joseph is asked to believe something that no right-minded person could take seriously. But this Christ child will bear witness to the power of grace, mercy and forgiveness to change the mess that we often make of our relationships and our world. He came, not to change a political system but to change human hearts. Overthrowing the Roman invaders in the Holy Land and replacing them with local rulers would not guarantee a wonderful country, if those leaders were not people of wisdom and humility. Similarly, the future of this island and this continent will not be secured merely by changing politicians or borders, unless we have leaders who call us all to a shared greatness and not merely to narrow victories over those labelled as enemies. If government is merely about economics and without inspiring community-building ideals, then we give tired answers to threadbare questions. In the creation of a just world, our greatest enemy lies in our own hearts if they have not been healed by forgiveness and mercy. A just country will not be achieved by changing the deckchairs on the Titanic – and deciding who sits on those fragile deckchairs. Christmas people will always challenge politicians to inspire young people with truth and not merely to sell self-serving political fairy tales.

Christmas does not offer us a sweet tinsel-wrapped story for escapists. It proclaims a daring vision of hope and a call to believe, to become involved in spreading that message of

hope. As with Jesus, that subversive message will be unwelcome.

Thirdly, in the dark night, the angels tell the shepherds not to be afraid because they bring news of great joy. Those are core elements in Christian faith for every generation. We have versions of Christianity that tell us we need to be afraid, and they preach a message of terrible plots that we have to fight. It is true that, in every generation, original sin has driven people to do terrible things. But the message of Bethlehem says that Christ's followers should be people noted for their great joy, no matter what situation they face. And why should that be one of our core messages, why did Pope Francis write about the joy of the Gospel? Because Christmas tells us that grace is stronger than sin and that God is always quietly at work, even when we think that he is hidden. It is true that this is a time of crises in politics, in the environment and in the church. But the voice from heaven still tells us not to be afraid because we know a message of great joy for the whole world. If we want to know where God is speaking in the world today, we need to reject those who peddle fear and anger. Such messages do not lie at the heart of the story that Christmas wants to tell.

The Christmas story speaks of God breaking into the world in a powerless child and offering a message of joyful hope for the future. That is the message that has filled the hearts of Christ's followers for two thousand years. We will face many problems in 2023 as we struggle with the mess that unredeemed human nature has made of our society.

Christmas does not offer us a sweet tinsel-wrapped story for escapists. It proclaims a daring vision of hope and a call to believe, to become involved in spreading that message of

hope. As with Jesus, that subversive message will be unwelcome. That is why we have to build prayerful communities when the young can discover the divine dream for the world. We need one another if we are to face the cold winds of cynicism and rejection. Like Mary, Joseph and the shepherds, are we prepared to take this message seriously? If we do, we will give glory to God in the highest and bring peace to people of good will.

+ Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry. Address in St Eugene's Cathedral

## Poem for today

### Christmas by John Betjeman

The bells of waiting Advent ring,  
The Tortoise stove is lit again  
And lamp-oil light across the night  
Has caught the streaks of winter rain.  
In many a stained-glass window sheen  
From Crimson Lake to Hooker's Green.

The holly in the windy hedge  
And round the Manor House the yew  
Will soon be stripped to deck the ledge,  
The altar, font and arch and pew,  
So that villagers can say  
'The Church looks nice' on Christmas Day.

Provincial public houses blaze

And Corporation tramcars clang,  
On lighted tenements I gaze  
Where paper decorations hang,  
And bunting in the red Town Hall  
Says 'Merry Christmas to you all'

And London shops on Christmas Eve  
Are strung with silver bells and flowers  
As hurrying clerks the City leave  
To pigeon-haunted classic towers,  
And marbled clouds go scudding by  
The many-steepled London sky.

And girls in slacks remember Dad,  
And oafish louts remember Mum,  
And sleepless children's hearts are glad,  
And Christmas morning bells say 'Come!'  
Even to shining ones who dwell  
Safe in the Dorchester Hotel.

And is it true? and is it true?  
The most tremendous tale of all,  
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,  
A Baby in an ox's stall?  
The Maker of the stars and sea  
Become a Child on earth for me?

And is it true? For if it is,  
No loving fingers tying strings  
Around those tissued fripperies,  
The sweet and silly Christmas things,  
Bath salts and inexpensive scent  
And hideous tie so kindly meant.

No love that in a family dwells,  
No carolling in frosty air,  
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells  
Can with this single Truth compare -  
That God was Man in Palestine  
And lives to-day in Bread and Wine.

## Speaking to the soul – Christmas series

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## Church News Ireland

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