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**Image of the day - Climate and covid -
Launch of Presbyterian Church World Development
Appeal**

News Reports

PCI's World Development Appeal focuses on 'Climate and Covid'

At this time of year, for over 40 years now, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has come together over the Christmas and New Year period to marry Christ's love for their global neighbour with the sacrificial and faithful giving of congregations up and down the island of Ireland through the Church's World Development Appeal (WDA).

This is the first World Development Appeal that PCI has launched in two years, due to the Covid pandemic. Last year, for practical reasons, PCI launched a special Moderator's Christmas Appeal to provide support to people in fragile, vulnerable countries suffering due to Covid-19. In 'Weathering the Storm', the title of the 2021 WDA, both the pandemic along with Climate Change, are central to the Appeal – because together they present a unique and ongoing challenge for some of the most vulnerable countries on the planet. This year, the WDA will support projects in Ethiopia and Haiti.

Rev Richard Kerr, Convener of the Council for Global Mission's Global Development Committee, explained that the Appeal, primarily for Presbyterians, offers congregations across Ireland the opportunity to learn more about, and support, the work of sustainable development undertaken by

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PCI's global development partners, Christian Aid Ireland and Tearfund, in a number of countries across the globe.

"The World Development Appeal seeks to provide a breadth of understanding of what good sustainable development practices look like and the challenges they can encounter on the ground. It is hard work, but important work that also gives us a fresh vision of how we are connected to our brothers and sisters in Christ, however far away they may be," Mr Kerr said.

"For many in the world, the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to wreak havoc for years to come. Combined with a changing climate, and the increased uncertainty and extreme weather events which that brings, millions of people face a very real joint threat. It is a perfect storm if you like, of Covid and climate. As creation groans, so many communities are struggling to sustain even the most basic of livelihoods, fighting hard to provide for their families and loved ones."

The minister of Templepatrick Presbyterian Church in Co. Antrim continued, "The WDA is a great opportunity for us as a Church to join with our development partners, Christian Aid Ireland and Tearfund, as global disciples of Jesus Christ. This year we will be supporting Christian Aid's work in Ethiopia and Tearfund's in Haiti. From previous appeals I know that the Church is not only bighearted, but generous in its sacrificial giving, and many will be blessed through this appeal."

Over this summer, there have been emergency humanitarian crises in both countries - in Ethiopia a severe

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drought and locust swarms have devastated crops, which has left more people facing food shortages. Haiti was hit by an earthquake disaster resulting in a tragic loss of life and many damaged homes. In both situations, these emergencies have been made even more devastating and dangerous because of the ongoing challenge of both Covid and climate change.

This year's lead project comes from Ethiopia, through Christian Aid Ireland working with their local partner, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) Development and Social Services Commission. PCI's 2021 World Development Appeal project will provide support to farmers in the communities of Demboya, Lemo, Soro, Mida-Kegn, Berehe and Ambo, who have already benefited as a result EECMY's ecological food and agricultural farm resource management programme. The initiative, known as the Eco Farm Project for short, is in part in response to climate change.

Ethiopia is presently the second most populated country in the continent of Africa, it is also one of the poorest, with many millions of people affected by climate change-induced drought, which has caused failed harvests and loss of livestock. Recent months have seen a rapid increase in Covid-19 cases with the accelerated spread of the delta variant.

In a short video, produced specially for the World Development Appeal that gives an insight of how lives can be changed through sustainable development, Yohannes Forsido, a social worker with the EECMY, talks about the challenges Climate Change brings and how the right

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support can make a difference, like the Eco Farm Project, which the Appeal will be supporting.

“Our dry season is getting longer and hotter, which causes many problems for the poorest people. We have prolonged desertification with fires, dehydrated cattle and springs drying up. If the rain does come, it is more extreme with floods destroying the land and ruining crops,” he said.

Designed to help communities adapt to the effects of Climate Change, the Eco Farm Project has two branches, crop diversification and natural resource management, which enables farmers to best utilise their small plots with the right crops and to better manage the soil and water. The project also aims to improve soil fertility to ensure that the land yields more food, while helping farmers to adapt to the changing climate. The second branch focuses on women’s economic empowerment through self-help groups.

With around 20 women per group, the groups help women to grow in confidence and play a greater role in decision-making in homes and families, helping them to access loans to set up small businesses, whether making injera bread or a poultry business, for example, and save.

One of the participants, Tigist Melese said that the training provided her with a good understanding of agriculture and food security. Having been part of the programme for two years her family is now more self-sufficient and can now make a profit from their hard work. “Our greatest achievement is that we can provide healthy food for our children, they are healthier and safe,” she said.

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Welcoming the support, Christian Aid Ireland's Chief Executive, Rosamond Bennett said, "We're so grateful to be partnering with PCI again this year for their World Development Appeal. With the generous support from Presbyterian churches and members, our partner the Ethiopian Evangelical Church will provide vital support to farmers in Ethiopia who are battling the impacts of a climate crisis they didn't cause. Through agricultural training and self-help groups, families will be better able to survive droughts and provide healthy food for their children."

Speaking about the 2021 World Development Appeal and commending it to PCI's 500-plus congregations, Presbyterian Moderator, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce thanked church members across Ireland for their faithful and prayerful support for the most recent appeals. The 2019

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Appeal raised £573,484 (€673,844) while the 2020 Christmas Appeal raised £363,910 (€427,594).

“Along with our 2019 World Development Appeal, and our Christmas Appeal last year, PCI was able to raise nearly £1 million (€1.2million) for projects that continue to make a difference. On behalf of our Church I would like to thank everyone who contributed, especially last year. When things were difficult at home, we were still able to look beyond our front doors and our own needs to the needs of our global neighbours,” he said.

“Once again, through ‘Weathering the Storm’ we have two fantastic projects to prayerfully support and an opportunity to share in a vision and make a difference beyond these shores. Sustainable development is making a difference and PCI are in it for the long haul, supporting our global development partners who work with their partners on the ground, making a difference and honouring God in the process.”

While the project in Ethiopia is the lead project for this year’s WDA, it will also support a project in Haiti, where the earthquake in August 2021 has underlined the fragility and challenges of the country’s economy. The project is run by Christian Community Foundation in Action, a partner of Tearfund and will support churches and schools in Nippes and Artibonite to reduce the vulnerability to poverty that families face. This will be achieved through the planting of gardens and trees, which are a source of income, while protecting the local environment.



‘Have your booster jab’, says Church of England as Omicron cases in the UK continue to rise

The Church of England is encouraging everyone to take the necessary steps to protect themselves and others as the number of coronavirus omicron cases continues to rise in the UK.

The leader of the Church of England’s Covid Recovery Group, Rt Rev Sarah Mullaly, has urged people to get the booster jab “as soon as it is available”.

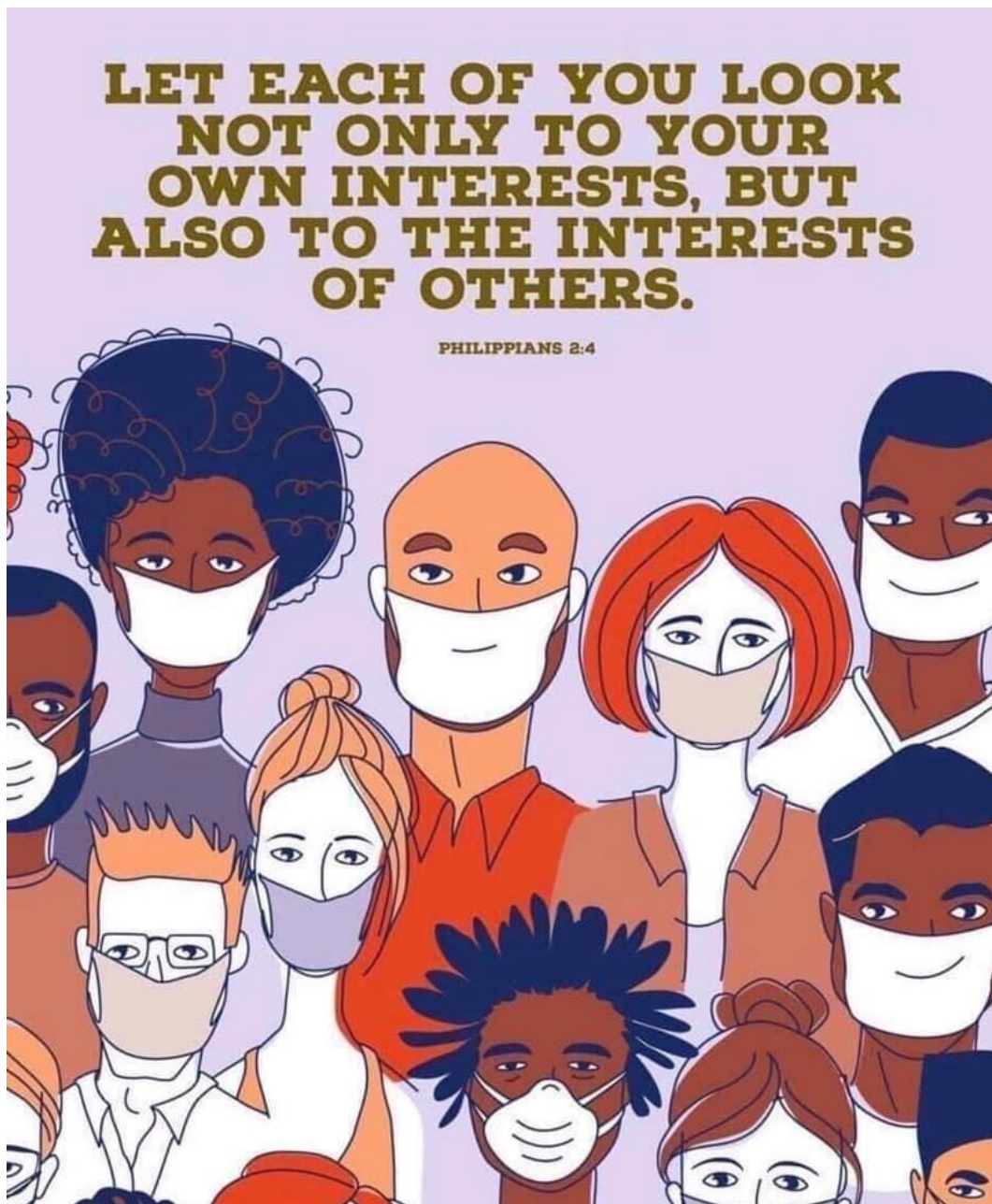
“There are important steps we should take now to protect ourselves and each another,” she said. “If you are eligible, churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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please also have your booster jab as soon as it is available,” she continued.

The government has announced all over 18s whose last vaccine dose was administered at least three months ago, will be offered a booster jab.

The Bishop of London also encouraged people to continue to follow other public health precautions that are already “very familiar” to us such as “regular hand-washing,



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observing physical distancing and ensuring good ventilation indoors.”

From Tuesday, face coverings are compulsory in shops and on public transport in England as well as well as for students in year seven or above while in school corridors or communal spaces.

Bishop Sarah continued: “We are grateful to the scientists around the world who have identified this strain so quickly and are working hard to learn more about it. As yet, little is known about its potential impact, and we must exercise patience as we wait for further information.”

“Meanwhile we are awaiting any new Government regulations and guidance and will update our advice for churches accordingly,” she concluded.

Two thirds of UK Christians say their church failed to embrace technology during the pandemic

Churchgoing Christians in the UK think the Church failed to adapt and embrace the use of technology during the pandemic.

That's according to new research commissioned by Premier, which showed 63 per cent thought the Church found it difficult to adapt to technology.

Over 2,000 Christians, who attended church at least once a month pre-pandemic were questioned by Savanta ComRes.

Speaking to Premier, Chris Bright, co-founder of Thinking Church, an organisation that helps churches to establish their ministry strategy, said there's a need to make content engaging for a digital audience.

"Before the pandemic, if a service wasn't engaging, people would sort of check out in their mind and you could see people wandering in their mind, but you wouldn't leave the building. But online, anyone can leave at any time," Bright said. "I think the problem that we've had is that the Church, by and large, has taken what it always did, beforehand, take the church service, and just put it online. But the online space and the in-person spaces are really different. They're very, very different spheres."

Among those who were less forgiving of the Church's capability to adapt to technology were those aged between 18 and 34.

Bright argues that, in order to engage with the Millennial and Gen Z generations, the church needs to start creating content that is more "native to the medium" that they are on.

"The church service traditionally has 30 minutes of music, and about a 30 minute preach, but that doesn't translate online very well. If you're doing an online service, that's not particularly engaging.

"If you have a monologue in a YouTube video, they tend to be about five to ten minutes or a TED talk maybe goes up to maybe 15 minutes long maximum. So, I think churches need to look at shortening some of the preachers, but then

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you can have conversations, which lasts from 45 minutes to up to three hours," he added.

Bright continued by saying he doesn't think the church needs to "shallow out" anything that it's doing but should instead take what they are already doing and think about it "from the mediums point of view."

He concluded: "I really [want to] encourage churches that this is where people are gathering. I think if churches can just go at it fresh, then there is a massive harvest that is available and just an encouragement for the churches just to give it another go. Keep going. Keep trying keep pressing on because it's definitely worth it."

People and places

A Christmas card with a difference

Each year the Moderator sends quite a few Christmas cards across this island and farther afield. For the current Moderator, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce, this year is no different – but the card he will send will be unique.

People of all ages in PCI were invited to either take, or send in a photograph that they had taken of what 'Hope at Christmas' looks like for them, in a special photography competition. Nearly 200 entries were received by the six-person judging panel, which included Dr Bruce, and an image of two travellers walking together across a snowy Cave Hill above Belfast came top.

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The picture was taken by Bill Corr, who has been taking photos since he was a teenager.

<https://www.presbyterianireland.org/News/December-2021/A-Christmas-card-with-a-difference.aspx>

Fit for the Purpose weekend at CITI

A total of 25 students were in attendance for the second cycle of the Certificate in Christian Theology and Practice which began last weekend at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute.

The programme, entitled 'Fit for the Purpose', takes as its theme a personal and biblical exploration of various matters to do with vocation.

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Participants in the Fit for the Purpose weekend with Canon Dr Christina Baxter, Canon Dr Maurice Elliott, the Revd Dr Patrick McGlinchey, the Revd Ruth Noble, the Revd Ken Rue and Jane Kelly. (Photo by Nick Elliott)

The lead facilitators are Dr Christina Baxter, former Principal of St John's College, Nottingham, and the Revd Dr Maurice Elliott, Director of CITI. The Revd Dr Patrick McGlinchey, Lecturer in Missiology in CITI, was also in attendance as the Course Co-ordinator.

Advent Watching and Waiting

Christ Church, Dublin, Cathedral Nights, Sunday, 5 December, 19.00

This time of year can be so busy we need intentionally to make space to slow down. There will be reflective music, a

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peaceful atmosphere, and suggestions for creative prayer to help us reflect on challenges faced over the last year. Email the Dean's Vicar on abigail@christchurch.ie to book a place.

The Anglican Communion Fund - Supporting the Church in Times of Crisis

'The ACF is extraordinary and people are profoundly encouraged by it, particularly in the most difficult areas - not because they suddenly got all their problems solved, but because they are not forgotten. This is as much as anything a symbol of being remembered, and that really matters.'

Archbishop Justin Welby



The Archbishop of Canterbury's
Anglican Communion Fund



theBigGive
CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE 2021

The Big Give #ChristmasChallenge21

Archbishop Justin Welby - "Delighted that the Anglican Communion Fund is taking part in the the Big Give #ChristmasChallenge21.

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“Every donation made until 7th December will be doubled and used to help the Church respond to the needs of local communities in times of crisis”.

👉 <https://donate.thebiggive.org.uk/campaign/a056900001xbGUCAA2/>



Christingle Service

Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin - Wednesday, 15 December, 18.00

“Join us for an informal Christingle Service, celebrating Christ the Light of the World. Sung by our girl choristers, this is a family-friendly and hands-on service which will give

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each family the opportunity to make a Christingle.” Doors open at 17.30.



Nine Lessons and Carols

Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. Sunday, 19 December, 15.00

Traditional service of music and scripture readings in preparation for Christmas. Sung by the cathedral choir. Doors open at 14.30. Congregation size will be limited. Email RSVP@christchurch.ie to book a place.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts and books

New Irish Arts Christmas Concerts livestreamed to your home

Jonathan Rea of New Irish Arts says, “Big announcement today about our Christmas concerts! We’re offering a

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livestream option to accommodate those who aren't keen to attend in person this year – or who live too far away. We will livestream the concert on 18 December, and you can watch it as many times as you like right up until 10 January.

“We have 3 types of livestream tickets –

Standard ticket - for a whole household - it's the same price as the cheapest adult seat in the concert hall.

Individual ticket - for people watching on their own

Exceptional Circumstances - for people who are experiencing financial difficulties

“These are sold on an honesty basis, and no specific checks will be made. We hope this means everyone who wants to can access the event.”

Livestream or In-person tickets – available now at www.newirisharts.com

Advent Video series from the Holy Land

Andy McCullough writes: The Bethlehem Story is a series of daily videos following the story of the little town in Palestine from the death of Rachel to the birth of Christ. Join the shepherds and the wise men. Explore overlooked Old Testament characters and examine unexpected oracles.

We will also be joined on some days by Palestinian Christians telling their story. You can't tell the story of Bethlehem without listening to voices from Bethlehem telling their own story. So we've partnered with Sabeel-Kairos, Bethlehem Bible College, and other Bethlehem-based

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friends in pulling together video footage to add colour and flavour.

Join us in a series of short daily videos from 1st - 24th December, by signing up here: <https://readingfamilychurch.us4.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=256f8f6e0dc1e0b05f4ff60e1&id=c4292ebb06>

or subscribing to the Unreached Network Youtube Channel: www.youtube.com/c/UnreachedRepresentingResourcingReleasing

Perspective

A very necessary public debate about personal and public moral standards by Norman Hamilton

Allegations of sleaze are making headline news. The response to the proposed sanction of Conservative MP Owen Paterson led to his resignation from the House of Commons, and now in Westminster, moves are afoot to change the regulations on what jobs MPs can have alongside their 'day' job as parliamentarians. Such change will no doubt help, but it fails to get to the heart of the problem of sleaze, which is described, in the Cambridge dictionary as 'activities, especially business or political, of a low moral standard'.

So, yet again, there is a very necessary public debate about personal and public moral standards. A few weeks ago (1

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November), a major report* on upholding standards in public life was published with no fewer than 34 recommendations to strengthen the ethical standards of public life. The current standards, known as the Nolan principles, go back to 1995, following the scandal of MPs asking questions in Parliament in return for payments from outside bodies and individuals. The standards are listed as selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. They provide a compulsory framework for almost everyone who holds any public office, and that includes all our MPs, MLAs, members of our local councils and many public and civil servants.

I find it fascinating and instructive that the Nolan principles describe high quality personal and moral qualities, rather than setting out a series of do-s and don't-s or a detailed list of regulations. It is clear that these principles require high standards of moral character from those in public service, so that rules can be kept to a minimum.

The need for constant updating of such principles may be all too obvious. Yet the core problem remains that since sleaze is one expression of poor moral character, regulation is needed to restrain wrongdoing. It is however equally obvious that morality and high standards of behaviour cannot be imposed through regulation, codes of conduct or even simply by keeping within the letter of the law.

This of course raises the tricky question of where a moral compass is to be found, or what values are to be properly expected not only from those in public life, but also from ordinary citizens like myself. As a committed Christian, I subscribe to the phrase, written by the Apostle Paul that

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‘There’s nobody living right, not even one’ (Romans 3v10). Moreover, the Bible is clear on how easy it is (for everyone) to do what is right in their own eyes, irrespective of the cost to or effect on others. Happily, it is equally clear on what standards can be expected from everyone, when God is welcomed into human life and invited to do his work. The scandals and the sleaze show only too clearly that to be human is to be deeply flawed - and in serious need of rescue by God.

And if it is proper to expect high moral standards from politicians, then it is equally proper to expect high moral standards from everyone else too, whatever their job or profession (and that of course includes clergy!). It is important to note also that whilst the overwhelming attention in recent weeks has been on politicians’ conduct, there are two sides to every transaction, and sleaze also requires companies or other vested interests who see advantage to be gained through paying those in public life to confer advantages to them.

Hypocrisy says - Do as I say, not as I do. But it is simply not ethical to base my own conduct on what everyone else does, or what I can get away with, or what is culturally acceptable, or what the minimum legal standards are.

Principles, which are imparted by training, may have some impact on behaviour, but cannot implant a moral compass in anyone, for such compasses are located in our hearts and minds. Proverbs 4v23 reminds us to ‘above all else guard the heart, for it is the wellspring of life.’ Such an expression may seem a foreign language compared to much debate in the public square, but put bluntly, the matter of the heart is

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the heart of the matter! We must all ask 'how is my heart and how does it influence my behaviour?'

I suggest that only when there is rising moral character in individuals, can there then be rising moral fibre in wider society. Then sleaze will become an increasing rarity rather than an increasing norm. But in the absence of any serious discussion and debate on public moral values, sleaze and scandal will continue to be headline news.

Very Rev Dr Norman Hamilton is a retired Presbyterian minister, former Moderator of the General Assembly, and Chair of Contemporary Christianity.

[[*https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/upholding-standards-in-public-life-published-report](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/upholding-standards-in-public-life-published-report)]

Poem for today

Autumn by John Clare

I love the fitfull gusts that shakes
The casement all the day
And from the mossy elm tree takes
The faded leaf away
Twirling it by the window-pane
With thousand others down the lane

I love to see the shaking twig
Dance till the shut of eve
The sparrow on the cottage rig

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Whose chirp would make believe
That spring was just now flirting by
In summers lap with flowers to lie

I love to see the cottage smoke
Curl upwards through the naked trees
The pigeons nestled round the coat
On dull November days like these
The cock upon the dung-hill crowing
The mill sails on the heath a-going

The feather from the ravens breast
Falls on the stubble lea
The acorns near the old crows nest
Fall pattering down the tree
The grunting pigs that wait for all
Scramble and hurry where they fall

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