

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Knock Shrine

Image of the day

Knock Shrine

With each day that passes, the light grows longer and the day lengthens. Breathe in the clear air on this beautiful day

Every shower and dew, bless the Lord.
All you winds, bless the Lord.
Fire and heat, bless the Lord.
Cold and chill, bless the Lord.

People and places



Happy birthday twin Christian Aiders

January 19, 2023

Happy birthday to Christian Aid supporters Moyra Megarry from Lisburn and Suzanne Shepherd from east Belfast who turned 75 this week. The twin sisters have raised tens of thousands to help people living in poverty and crisis overseas. Many happy returns to both of them on their milestone birthday!



Royal recognition

Warmest congratulation to Mrs Angela McIntyre HM Deputy Lieutenant for Londonderry who accompanied by her daughters received her richly deserved MBE at Windsor Castle in December.

The award was presented by HRH The Prince

of Wales in recognition of Angela's contribution to the Foyle Hospice and wider community.

Welsh Male Voice Choir and The Priests at Westminster Cathedral



There's a chance to see the London Welsh Male Voice Choir and The Priests next month, when they perform in a concert for Friends of the Holy Land at Westminster Cathedral.

The London Welsh Male Voice Choir has sung at many of Britain's most prestigious concert halls and cathedrals, has appeared twice at the Royal Variety Command Performance and has recorded with Charlotte Church, Aled Jones and Bryn Terfel.

The Priests, from the Diocese of Down and Connor in Northern Ireland are two brothers, Fr Eugene and Fr Martin O'Hagan and Fr David Delargy. They have been singing together since they were students at St MacNissi's College, Garron Tower, County Antrim. Since signing a deal with

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SonyBMG in April 2008, their debut album, 'The Priests', in Northern Ireland and Rome, (partly recorded in St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican) was a huge success. They have released several more albums since then, and are very much in demand for concerts - while they continue to serve in their parishes.

The concert takes place at Westminster Cathedral on 16th February at 7.30pm. For more information and to book tickets see links below.

The Priests: www.thepriests.org

London Welsh Male Voice Choir: www.londonwelshmvc.org

Book tickets here: www.friendsoftheholylord.org.uk/Event/westminster-concert2023





The crew of Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat 1953.

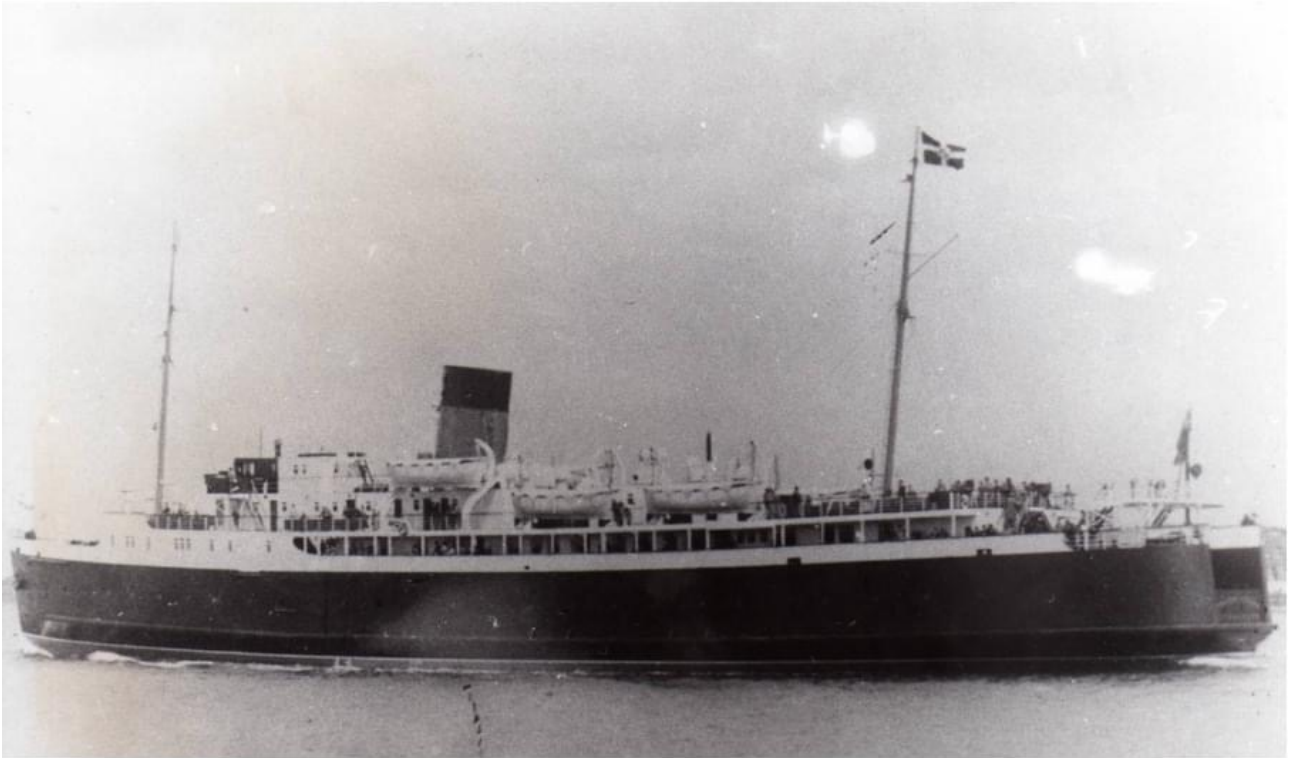
Service to mark Donaghadee RNLI crew role in Princess Victoria Disaster

31st January 2023 is the 70th Anniversary of the loss of the Larne - Stranraer ferry MV Princess Victoria off the North Down Coast.

Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company is conserving the Sir Samuel Kelly lifeboat which rescued many of the survivors from this disaster. An exhibition will be held in Donaghadee Community Centre from Friday 27th to

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Monday 30th January 2023, 11am-7pm, about the Princess Victoria Disaster and Donaghadee lifeboats.



The Princess Victoria

On Friday 27th January at 7.30 pm - 'The Princess Victoria Disaster' a talk by Stephen Cameron in Donaghadee Community Centre (£5 including refreshments).

On **Sunday 29th January at 3pm** at Donaghadee Harbour there will be a **Memorial Service** to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the loss of MV Princess Victoria on 31 January 1953 (Refreshments served afterwards in the Community Centre). Everyone welcome.



Memorial in Nigeria to Irish Presbyterian minister

Rev Brian Wilson writes, "It was a privilege to be present on Tuesday (17th January 2023) at the dedication of the Iris Ogbonna Memorial Clinic and Rev Adrian Adger Memorial Library at William Wheatley Theological College, Abia state, Nigeria. Iris Ogbonna was a long serving Scottish Mission Africa missionary and Adrian Adger was an Irish Presbyterian minister, taken by cancer, who had a deep concern for God's work in Nigeria. Miss Caz Bustard and Mrs Pamela Gaiya represented Mission Africa, and the United Evangelical church council chairman Rev Samuel Ebukiba were also present along with the Wheatley Provost Rev Dr Enejo Abalaka Idachaba."

News reports

Mordaunt's landmark plea on gay marriage

First intervention by a Cabinet minister ahead of historic vote by bishops comes with a warning

Penny Mordaunt has urged the Church of England to allow gay marriage before a historic vote by bishops.



Her plea marks the first intervention by a Cabinet minister on the issue. Ms Mordaunt, Leader of the House of

Commons and MP for Portsmouth North, has written to the Bishop of Portsmouth.

She called on him to “recognise the pain and trauma” that the failure to recognise same-sex marriage causes to “many LGBT+ people who are left feeling that they are treated as second- class citizens within our society”.

It prompted a number of cross-party MPs to come forward to say that they have also written to their bishops urging them to recognise same-sex marriage, warning this is the “moment of truth for the Church of England”.

According to canon law, no C of E minister can bless or marry gay couples.

Ms Mordaunt’s interjection marks the first time that a serving Cabinet minister has called for the issue to be reformed within the Church. She also warned that if bishops failed to approve same-sex marriage, the issue would only “fester and detract” from any positive contribution from the institution.

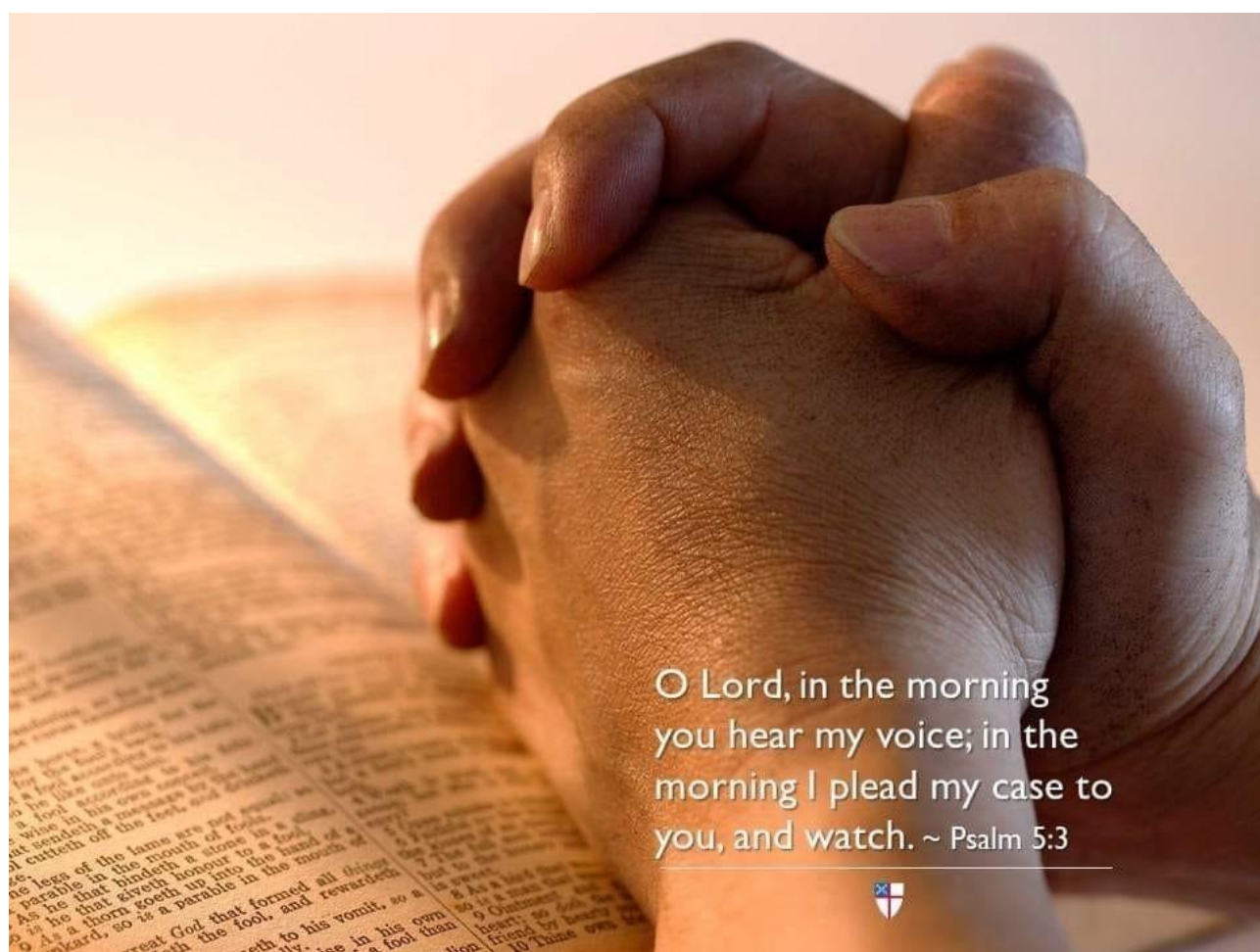
She made the comments in the lead-up to bishops presenting their long-awaited findings to the General Synod, the Church’s legislative body, next month on whether the ban on gay marriage could be overturned.

Traditionalists are hoping that bishops will veto any changes to the existing stance – that church weddings should be for only opposite-sex couples and that sex among gay couples amounts to a sin.

In contrast, more liberal members of the Church are calling for it to modernise and welcome gay members. In a letter to the Bishop of Portsmouth, the Rt Rev Dr Jonathan Frost, Ms Mordaunt said that she was writing “regarding discussions on how the Church will move forward on the issue of same-sex relationships. I hope they will back reform”.

The letter said: “I want all of my constituents and others to be able to have the right to have their relationships solemnised in their local parish.”

She added: “It is some time now since Parliament legislated for Civil Partnerships and then same-sex marriage. Since then, both the Episcopal Church in Scotland and the Church of Scotland have agreed to offer same-sex marriage and the Church in Wales plans to do so.”



Ben Bradshaw, Labour MP for Exeter, said: “It’s not a sustainable situation for an established church to allow same-sex marriages in Scotland and Wales and on the continent and not in England. It’s a disgraceful position.”

Jayne Ozanne, an LGBT+ campaigner and General Synod member, described Ms Mordaunt’s letter as a “game-changer – something that all Church of England bishops must read”.

Bishops call on Scottish Government to reject 'Conversion Therapy' report

Responding to the publication of the Scottish Government's 'expert' advisory group on 'Ending Conversion Practices', Scotland's Catholic Bishops have issued the following statement:

The Church is pastorally sensitive to the experience of people who identify as homosexual. They are to be met with compassion and particular care and support in the challenges that come with all that life brings them. The Church supports legislation which protects people from physical and verbal abuse. The advice of the expert committee, however, seeks to extend the scope of such legislation in a way that is gravely concerning in regard to freedom of religion and expression.

A fundamental pillar of any free society is that the state recognises and respects the right of religious bodies and organisations to be free to teach the fulness of their beliefs



and to support, through prayer, counsel and other pastoral means, their members who wish to live in accordance with those beliefs.

The conclusions of the Scottish Government's 'expert' advisory group on 'Ending Conversion Practices' are gravely concerning. If accepted, legal counsel has warned that they would outlaw pastoral care, prayer, parental guidance and advice relating to sexual orientation, expression of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, other than that which is deemed by the state to constitute 'affirmative care'.

These proposals, if passed by the Scottish Parliament, would criminalise mainstream religious pastoral care, parental guidance, and medical or other professional intervention relating to sexual orientation, unless it was approved by the State as acceptable.

It could criminalise the Church's teaching about God's creation of the human person as male and female and the

meaning of sex as within marriage, and that anyone who proposes this teaching to someone with same sex attraction or gender identity issues would face sanctions. This would apply even if the person with these issues wanted help to follow Church teaching since this law would say they cannot consent to this teaching.

Priests could be banned from working in Scotland, the Church could lose its charitable status, and classroom and pastoral teachers could lose their jobs. There would be uncertainty about the future of Catholic schools and children could be taken away from their parents. As the first educators of their children, parents alone have the right to advise and guide their children in such matters.

Moreover, the 'expert' advisory group is unclear what is meant by the term 'conversion practices' and this will create a chilling effect and may criminalise advice or opinion given in good faith.

Existing legislation rightly protects all people from physical and verbal abuse, however, these proposals go much further.

In urging the Scottish Government to reject this report, we are drawn to the recent words of Pope Francis who has pointed out: "There is a risk of drifting into what more and more appears as an ideological totalitarianism that promotes intolerance towards those who dissent from certain positions claimed to represent 'progress'" but in fact would appear to lead to an overall regression of humanity, with the violation of freedom of thought and freedom of conscience."

Calling for Christian Unity requires “both a prophetic and pastoral approach”

Rev. Dr Curtiss Paul DeYoung, co-chief executive officer of the Minnesota Council of Churches, helped convene the team of authors for this year’s Week of Prayer for Christian Unity materials. Here he reflects on the challenges and hopes the team brought to the table as they composed the text.

What were the biggest challenges the authors faced in drafting this year’s materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity?

Dr DeYoung: The work of composing the materials was very personal for the team of authors. They all had direct experience with racism, intense feelings of grief and outrage at the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, and subsequent involvement in the protests that resulted. Engaging scriptural texts to call for racial justice and unity required revisiting the very personal nature of the work. Another challenge was selecting language that would convey a Minneapolis or United States perspective of racism in a way that could be understood by a global audience. A third challenge was how to speak to an institutional church that contains both those in power and those who feel powerless. Calling for Christian unity requires a balance of both a prophetic and pastoral approach that acknowledges complicity and offers healing.

For people that would term some of your resources “political” rather than “spiritual,” what would you say to them?

Dr DeYoung: Issues of racial and social justice cannot easily be divided between political or spiritual. The Hebrew prophets often spoke truth about injustices to the political leaders of their time. Jesus preached a gospel that was good news and liberation to those oppressed. The spiritual is political; and the political needs the spiritual.

What is your personal hope for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity?

Dr DeYoung: I hope that this resource created by a team of Minnesota Christian leaders will motivate Christians around the world to address the injustices in their context that divide society and the church. This begins with dialogue that creates a biblically-informed shared understanding and is followed by a commitment to the long haul.

Can you tell us a little about how the team was selected?

Dr DeYoung: Given that George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis in 2020, the World Council of Churches reached out to the Minnesota Council of Churches to form a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity writing team that represented racial justice activist voices here. We organized a team with a majority of Black voices, yet included others who were engaged. The 2023 resources were designed by a team of six Black, two Indigenous, and one Latine

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Christian leaders in Minnesota. All eight equally contributed in the writing and editing. They are as follows:

African American

Stacey Smith and Anthony Galloway – African Methodist Episcopal Church

DeWayne Davis – United Church of Christ

Leslie Redmond – Pentecostal Assemblies of the World

Cynthia Manns – Roman Catholic

Jia Starr Brown – Disciples of Christ

Native American

Kelly Sherman-Conroy – Lutheran (ELCA)

Jim Bear Jacobs – Presbyterian Church USA

Latine

Jose Antonio Machado – Lutheran (ELCA)

In the media

Ireland priest shortage sees families waiting up to two weeks to bury loved ones

Irish Mirror - Stephen Murphy, of Jennings Funeral Directors, said more people are holding ceremonies in funeral homes as fewer priests means a longer wait for a church Mass.

[<https://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/ireland-priest-shortage-sees-families-28958527>]

Mental health: Appeal over EU funding as cuts in NI loom

BBC - A Northern Ireland man who has hailed the benefits of a mental health charity says he is worried its services could be cut as EU funding in Northern Ireland ends.

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-64248456>]

First school transfers patronage from Catholic Church under pilot project

Irish Examiner - A national school in Westmeath is to change its ethos from Catholic to multi-denominational, the first school to do so through a pilot project aimed at improving the divestment process.

With almost 90% of Irish primary schools currently under Catholic patronage, about 5% have a multi-denominational ethos.

[<https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-41046614.html>]

UK government re-ignites plan to ban transgender ‘conversion therapy’

News Letter - The Government is set to publish draft legislation setting out how it will ban conversion therapy for “everyone” – including transgender people.

[<https://app.newsletter.co.uk/2023/01/17/uk-government-re-ignites-plan-to-ban-transgender-conversion-therapy/content.html>]

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Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books



Theological foundations for engaging children, young people and families.

Webinar, Thursday 19 January, 2pm



How do we think theologically about the spirituality of children?

Going deeper into growing younger: theological foundations for engaging children, young people and families |
19 January 2023 2:00-3:30pm

Growing younger is a major focus of the Church of England's vision and strategy. But is being 'younger' a virtue? How do we think theologically about the importance and spirituality of children, and how they both benefit from and contribute to, engagement in our churches? This webinar is part of a series of discussions to develop a richer theological conversation on the Church of England's Vision and Strategy. This webinar features insights from a panel of expert practitioners, academics, and young people.

Hear from expert practitioners, academics, and young people at our upcoming webinar.

Register for free at cofe.io/VisionWebinar

Poem for today

The Church Bell by Elinor Wylie

As I was lying in my bed
I heard the church-bell ring;
Before one solemn word was said
A bird began to sing.
I heard a dog begin to bark
And a bold crowing cock;
The bell, between the cold and dark,
Tolled. It was five o'clock.
The church-bell tolled, and the bird sang,
A clear true voice he had;
The cock crew, and the church-bell rang,
I knew it had gone mad.
A hand reached down from the dark skies,

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It took the bell-rope thong,
The bell cried "Look! Lift up your eyes!"
The clapper shook to song.
The iron clapper laughed aloud,
Like clashing wind and wave;
The bell cried out "Be strong and proud!"
Then, with a shout, "Be brave!"
The rumbling of the market-carts,
The pounding of men's feet
Were drowned in song; "Lift up your hearts!"
The song was loud and sweet.
Slow and slow the great bell swung,
It hung in the steeple mute;
And people tore its living tongue
Out by the very root.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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