

# Church News Ireland

---



**Image of the day – Belfast reflections**

## Image of the day

### Belfast reflections

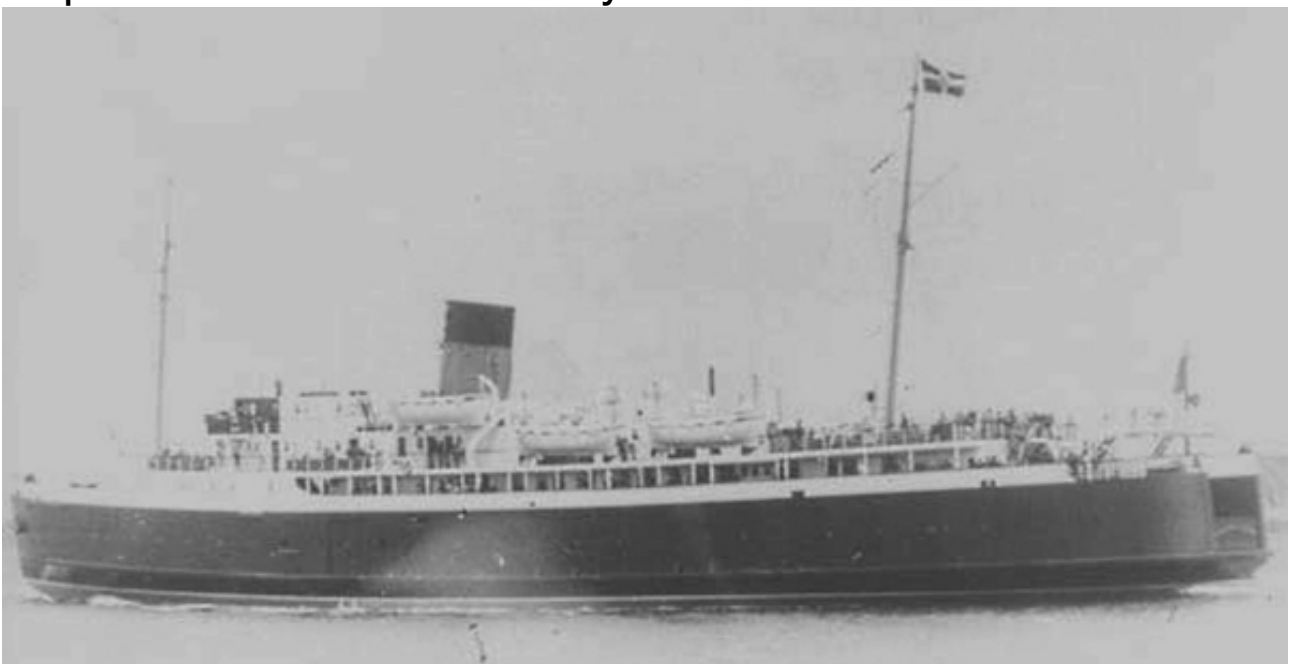
Samson and Goliath at Harland and Wolff's shipyard

## People and places

### Service to commemorate loss of MV Princess Victoria in 1953

**The 70th anniversary of the sinking of the MV Princess Victoria in the mouth of Belfast Lough with the loss of 135 souls will be commemorated at a special service in Belfast Cathedral on January 29.**

The Princess Victoria, a roll-on roll-off ferry which sailed the crossing from Stranraer to Larne, floundered off the Copeland Islands on January 31 1953.



January 24, 2023

Many of those lost to the sea that day were residents of Belfast, along with the many crew members whose homes were in port towns of Larne and Stranraer in Scotland.

The dead included the Deputy Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Maynard Sinclair, and the MP for North Down, Sir Walter Smiles. There were no women or children among the survivors.

The service at Belfast Cathedral is being organised by the Rev Mark Reid, Belfast and Northern Ireland Chaplain to the Mission to Seafarers, with involvement from the Flying Angel

# Healing Service

*"Living Hope in 2023"*

**7.30pm Tuesday 31st January**

**St. Finnian's Parish Church**  
**Cregagh Park**  
**Belfast**

**Bishop Harold Miller**

**Prayer Ministry and Anointing with Oil**



Centre, the port authorities and the Harbour Commissioners.

The King's Chorale choir will lead the singing and Dean Stephen Forde, who was rector of Larne for 18 years, will be preacher. All are invited to this 3.30pm service, which will be one of a number held to commemorate the worst post-war loss of life in British coastal waters.

Dean Forde said: "The 70th anniversary of the loss of the MV Princess Victoria may be the last occasion when significant numbers of those who were present, and even those who remember 31st of January 1953, will gather to recall their personal experiences of that day. Those who were in their 20s in 1953 are now in their 90s.

"This 70th anniversary service is an important moment. It allows the memories of the last of those who were directly involved with that unforgettable day to pass on to others the call to remember, for the loss of the Princess Victoria remains the occasion of the greatest loss of life at sea in British waters since the end of the Second World War."

The Dean added: "I very much hope that anyone who has a personal link with those who were lost, or rescued or involved in that day, and especially those with a Belfast connection, will join us for this service of reflection and remembering.

"We also look forward to welcoming those who are involved in today's maritime trade in shipping, and those whose work is in the ports of this province."





## Archbishop visits Whitechurch parish and school

Parishioners of Whitechurch in Dublin were joined by Archbishop Michael Jackson for their midweek Eucharist on Wednesday morning (January 18). Following the celebration of Holy Communion, the Archbishop and the Rector, the Revd David Bowles enjoyed tea and coffee in the hall.

January 24, 2023

They then travelled the short distance down the road to Whitchurch National School where pupils of sixth class filled them in on a recent visit they had to the church and virtual tour of the graveyard.

## News reports



## Special service celebrates centenary of Churches working together

**The Irish Council of Churches – one of the world’s oldest national representative church bodies – has celebrated its centenary with a special service of worship at Belfast Cathedral on Sunday afternoon (22 January).**

The service, with the theme ‘Celebrating our Reconciling Vision of Hope’ took place on the eve of the Council’s first meeting 100 years tomorrow (23 January 1923) at the height of the Civil War in Ireland.

Present were representatives from 16 all-Ireland member denominations, including the Most Rev Eamon Martin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, and the Rev Dr Harold Good, former President of the Methodist Church, who both delivered an address. The service was led by the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde.

The service also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Ballymascanlon Talks, which led to the establishment of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting. In 1973, in the midst of The Troubles, the Council began ground-breaking historic talks in Ballymascanlon Hotel in County Louth with senior members of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. Over the course of time, these became formalised as the Irish Inter-Church Meeting (IICM), the means by which the ICC continues to engage and collaborate with the Catholic Church. The IICM is co-chaired by the President of the ICC, currently the Rt Rev Andrew Forster, Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, and a representative of the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference, currently the Most Rev Brendan Leahy, Bishop of Limerick, who also took part in the service.

Archbishop Martin’s address is available in full - see ‘Perspective’ on page 16 and ‘In the Media’ page 10.



## **C of E Synod to get first ever vote on same-sex marriage**

**The Church of England could get its first ever vote on same-sex marriage after equality campaigners tabled a motion at Synod to overturn its ban.**

Last week, following six years of debate, Church of England bishops refused to endorse same-sex marriage, but agreed to “apologise” to LGBT+ people and offer them blessings following a civil partnership.

The bishops’ proposals will be debated next month at synod, which is being convened from Feb 6 to 9. Once the proposals have been debated, the House of Bishops will refine the prayers and then commend them.

However, equality activists within General Synod, the Church’s legislative body, have tabled a motion to the bishops’ proposals which asks for equal marriage proposals to be brought back to the next synod meeting in July. This means that next month, for the first time in its history, the Church of England could be asked to vote on whether it should back equal marriage.

Jayne Ozanne, an LGBT+ campaigner and member of General Synod, said that her amendment “scraps both the hollow apology and the prayers for blessings” and instead offers the chance for an historic vote to overturn the “unbiblical” discrimination of minorities.



## **‘The Church of England must not be allowed to discriminate against gay or bisexual people’**

She said: “The Church of England must not be allowed to continue to discriminate against people who are gay or bisexual – it is unjust and in the minds of many, unbiblical.”

Ms Ozanne’s amendment has been tabled with the support of the General Synod Gender and Sexuality Group, with the chair (Revd Neil Patterson) and vice-chair (Prof Helen King) as its seconders.

The amended motion would ask the House of Bishops “to end discrimination on the grounds of sexuality by bringing forward immediate legislation to provide for equal marriage in church for review”.

A synod source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told The Daily Telegraph that “it would be pretty difficult to see if there’s a procedure by which this amendment can be challenged and claim that this is not considered a legitimate question to be asked”.

It is highly irregular for an amendment put before synod to be rejected by the archbishops.

# **Church News Ireland**

## **First Palestinian woman ordained to serve as a pastor in the Holy Land**

**The Lutheran World Federation has congratulated Rev. Sally Azar and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.**

Rev. Azar is the first Palestinian woman ordained to serve as a pastor in the Holy Land. Her ordination took place in the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem today.

The church was filled to the brim and there was much joy on this historic occasion. Church leaders and representatives from around the globe gathered to participate in and witness the historic event.

An LWF Council member, Azar has served the Communion as a young woman in a leadership role for a number of years already. LWF looks forward to her continued engagement and ministry for many years to come.

A full interview with Sally Azar on the occasion of her ordination is available at: <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/first-palestinian-woman-be-ordained->

## **In the media**

**Church leaders could play role in Troubles legacy 'truth recovery' gathering hears**

News Letter - Church leaders could play a role in developing a truth recovery process as Northern Ireland addresses the “pain and mistrust” of the Troubles’ legacy, the Catholic primate has suggested.

[<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/people/church-leaders-could-play-role-in-troubles-legacy-truth-recovery-gathering-hears-3996669>]

## **RTÉ priest Fr Michael Toomey speaks out over ‘weekly attacks’ on priesthood**

Irish Independent -A well-known priest has spoken about the challenges of being a clergyman, with “divisions” in the Church and that priests should accept they'll be “shamed, ridiculed, belittled, told to be quiet,” and “attacked.”

Fr Michael Toomey, who celebrates Mass on RTÉ News, stated in his Sunday homily that he was praying “that the many divisions and challenges within the Church can be resolved in a spirit of mutual respect and fraternity.”

[<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/rte-priest-fr-michael-toomey-speaks-out-over-weekly-attacks-on-priesthood-42305849.html>]

## **Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books**

### **How do Christians respond to the reality of POVERTY in their midst?**

**Contemporary Christianity invites you to join them for a special evening on Thursday this week where they will**

**be exploring the issue of poverty in our local context and how we should respond.**

The evening will have input from Jonny Currie (Trussell Trust), Dr. Ciara Fitzpatrick (Ulster University) and Danielle McElhinney (Evangelical Alliance NI).

There will be time for table discussions, and then a panel discussion for questions and feedback.

This event is free, but please register for the event via their Eventbrite ticket page for catering and planning purposes.

Location: The event is being held at Ulster University's Belfast campus on York Street. If leaving the city centre, this is the new building on your left before Frederick Street.

Transport: Metro buses serve the Ulster University York Street Campus and off street car-parking is available.

Venue: The room will be signposted, but if you're stuck, simply ask at reception and you will be given directions.

Refreshments: Tea and coffee will be available from 18.30.

Eventbrite and flyer links at -

<https://contemporarychristianity.net/how-do-christians-respond-poverty/>

[\[https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/in-these-timeshow-do-christians-respond-to-the-reality-of-poverty-tickets-489799893667\]](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/in-these-timeshow-do-christians-respond-to-the-reality-of-poverty-tickets-489799893667)



## Education across the Island of Ireland: differences in educational outcomes, earnings

The details are as follows:

**Title:** 'Education across the Island of Ireland: differences in educational outcomes, earnings, and intergenerational mobility'

**Speakers:** Dr. Anne Devlin and Professor Seamus Mc Guinness, ESRI

**Date:** Thursday 26 January 2023

**Time:** Tea and coffee from 15:00. The lecture will run from 15:30 to 16:30.

**Location:** INTO offices, 23 College Gardens, Belfast, BT9 6BS

### Details of seminar:

Dr. Anne Devlin and Professor Seamus Mc Guinness, ESRI will present on their paper on education across the island of Ireland. Subsequently, a discussion will be open to the floor where the chairperson will present questions to the speaker.

### Abstract:

This paper builds upon their earlier study on educational differences across Ireland, North and South (Smyth et al.,

2022), to explore in more detail the relationship between educational attainment, social background, and wages.

In so doing, they find evidence of substantial wage premia across all qualification levels in Ireland relative to Northern Ireland. This wage advantage in Ireland is widespread and not merely driven by higher returns to professional occupations or FDI employment which is how higher wages in Ireland are usually explained.

The mean wage gap between the regions was 27 per cent in 2014 in favour of Ireland, with approximately 25 per cent of this difference explained by lower levels of educational attainment in Northern Ireland.

Consistent with their previous study, they again find that levels of educational attainment (early school leaving) are substantially lower (higher) in Northern Ireland relative to Ireland, with evidence also of differences in how the education level of parents affects off-springs' attainment.

The authors conclude that the continued use of academic selection in Northern Ireland is likely to be a contributory factor in limiting the extent to which the Northern Irish educational system facilitates intergenerational educational mobility.

Eventbrite link -

[\[https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/education-across-the-island-of-ireland-differences-in-educational-outcomes-tickets-427948484437?aff=erellivmlt\]](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/education-across-the-island-of-ireland-differences-in-educational-outcomes-tickets-427948484437?aff=erellivmlt).

## **Holocaust Memorial Day exhibition in Ballycastle**

**Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's Good Relations Team is marking Holocaust Memorial Day with an exhibition in Ballycastle.**

The display is open to the public in Sheskburn House from January 25 until February 1, Monday – Friday 9.30am – 4.30pm.

Holocaust Memorial Day takes place on January 27, coinciding with the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp. It encourages remembrance in a world scarred by genocide, reflecting the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, alongside the millions of other people killed under Nazi persecution of other groups and during more recent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

The theme for this year is Ordinary People, with genocide facilitated by ordinary people who turn a blind eye, believe propaganda and join murderous regimes. Those who are persecuted, oppressed, and murdered in genocide aren't persecuted because of crimes they've committed – they are persecuted simply because they are ordinary people who belong to a particular group.

Ordinary people were perpetrators, bystanders, rescuers, witnesses – and ordinary people were victims. There were also ordinary people who made brave decisions to rescue, to hide or to stand up.

The Mayor of Causeway Coast and Glens Council Borough Councillor Ivor Wallace, said: “The theme prompts us to consider how ordinary people can play a bigger part than we might imagine in speaking out and challenging prejudice today.

“It is important that we continue to remember the terrible events that led to the deaths of so many innocent people during the Holocaust.”

A virtual exhibition is available here -

[https://niarchive.org/resources/?fwp\\_project=holocaust-memorial-day](https://niarchive.org/resources/?fwp_project=holocaust-memorial-day) .

Further information about Holocaust Memorial Day Trust can be found at - [www.hmd.org.uk](http://www.hmd.org.uk)

## Perspective

### **Praying for unity amidst injustice - Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh**

Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh, Primate of All Ireland, delivered the following address at a service in Saint Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on Sunday 22 January. It marked the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on the theme, 'Celebrating our Reconciling Vision of Hope'. The service celebrated the centenary of the Irish Council of Churches and 50 years since the commencement of the Ballymascanlon peace talks.

Archbishop Eamon Martin's address:





**Today's anniversary celebrations invite us to look to the future with a holy 'longing' for greater togetherness and deeper friendship.**

Although I was only 11 years old in September 1973, somewhere lodged in my boyhood memory are news images of Church leaders gathering for an historic meeting - while others marched in protest. I knew instinctively that something special was happening at Ballymascanlon - it was a beacon of hope in dark times.

Some years afterwards Cahal Daly and Stanley Worrall described a sense of "excitement" and "momentous new departure" as the delegates convened at Ballymascanlon. Yet they also admitted their anxiety that perhaps the Churches might have been too ambitious and it all might fail (see Cahal Daly and Stanley Worrall, Ballymascanlon, An

Irish Venture in Inter Church Dialogue, C JL/Veritas 1978, p 10).

But it couldn't fail, for its vision was inspired by the longing of our Saviour who prayed, "that they may be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you (John 17:21)."

That high priestly prayer of Jesus is the motivation behind all our working and praying and hoping together as Churches; and the reason why we are "longing" that we may be one! For decades those words, 'That they may be one', have guided visionary people from our various traditions to boldly confront the reality and pain of our divisions and to set out on a pilgrim journey, daring to dream of greater unity.

Sadly, it hasn't always been so. On Saint Patrick's Day 2021 our Church leaders lamented that sometimes in our history we have, "failed to bring to a fearful and divided society that message of the deeper connection that binds us, despite our different identities, as children of God". (Church Leaders' message: In Christ We Journey Together of 17 March 2021).

Today, then, let us re-commit to being the peacemakers, the healers, the reconcilers that our Saviour longed for his followers to be, even though we know that our ongoing pilgrimage towards unity will always involve risk - just as it did for the pioneers of the Inter-Church bodies that we are commemorating today.

Just four months ago, at the Memorial Service for Queen Elizabeth II here in Saint Anne's Cathedral, my brother Archbishop John, reminded us: "Reconciliation is about the restoration of broken relationships. And the word should

never be cheapened by pretending it's an easy thing to achieve ... Reconciliation requires the greatest of all religious virtues, love; and it requires the greatest of all civic virtues, courage".

I also believe Reconciliation requires trust. And trust is perhaps all the more important on this island where people from different traditions have often regarded one another with fear and suspicion. I thank God today for the trust and friendship that has already been built up between us - fellow pilgrims - on the path to unity.

At a recent Irish Inter-Church Meeting it was agreed that "our friendship allows us to go together to places where it might be difficult for us to go as individuals". In recent years trust has enabled us to facilitate together shared spaces for encounter, dialogue, healing, conversion and reconciliation. There have been initiatives at Church leadership level and - even more importantly - on the ground, in partnerships between groups of Christians at parish, congregation and community level. We long for more of this. For it is only in safe, shared and prayerful spaces, inspired by the Word of God, that the truth of our divided past can be sensitively unfolded and hopes enkindled for renewed encounter and healthy relationships on this island.

Three years ago, in his message for the World Day of Peace, Pope Francis said, "every peace process requires enduring commitment; it is a patient effort to seek truth and justice, to honour the memory of victims and to open the way, step by step, to a shared hope stronger than the desire for vengeance." (Message for the 2020 World Day of Peace p8).

Peace, reconciliation and forgiveness on this island can only be progressed if we bring to light the truths about our troubled past that remain hidden and festering and engage in respectful conversations across our communities about what we mean by a shared future. It may seem ambitious, but might we in the Churches offer to help develop an agreed truth recovery process to address the legacy of pain and mistrust that continues to hang over us? And might our Churches also work together to create spaces for dialogue at parish, congregation and community level so that all voices can be fully heard about the kind of society and values we want for our children and grandchildren.

Such initiatives are essentially about deep and intentional listening to 'the other' who differs from us - and really 'getting' where they are coming from. The Churches have no desire to dominate such conversations. We are merely servants, inspired by the words of the prophet Micah in this afternoon's reading:

"What does the Lord require of you,  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with  
your God (Micah 6:8)."

The theme for this year's Christian Unity Week calls on Churches not only to connect with each other, but also to engage with the questions and demands of justice - and to do so together - not separately. A manifesto for the next 50



years might include: Churches together confronting homelessness; together responding in practical ways to racism and sectarianism; Churches together tackling human trafficking, exploitation and poverty; Churches together welcoming and providing hospitality for migrants and those seeking refuge among us; Churches together addressing climate injustice; Churches together upholding the right to life and dignity of every human person.

To engage in such issues - together, and with honesty - may uncover ways in which we ourselves might be supporting or facilitating unjust systems and structures. But it will also bring us closer in Christ and strengthen our sense of common Christian purpose.

It is a credit to our predecessors, the pioneers of Ballymascanlon, that we gather today as much closer companions on the Way. Looking around the Cathedral this afternoon we see brothers and sisters - friends - in Christ who can share each other's joys and burdens, successes and vulnerabilities.

So let us journey onwards with a reconciling vision of hope. "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:5-6)." Amen.

# Church News Ireland

## Poem for today

### Going Home to Mayo by Paul Durcan

Leaving behind us the alien, foreign city of Dublin  
My father drove us through the night in an old Ford Anglia,  
His five-year-old son in the seat beside him,  
The rexine seat of red leatherette,  
And a yellow moon peered in through the windscreen.  
'Daddy, Daddy,' I cried, 'Pass out the moon,'  
But no matter how hard he drove he could not pass out the moon.

Each town we passed through was another milestone  
And their names were magic passwords into eternity:  
Kilcock, Kinnegad, Strokestown, Elphin,  
Tarmonbarry, Tulsk, Ballaghedereen, Ballyvarry;  
Now we were in Mayo and the next stop was Turlough,  
The village of Turlough in the heartland of Mayo,  
And my father's mother's house, all oil-lamps and women,  
And my bedroom over the public bar below,  
And in the morning cattle-cries and cock-crows:  
Life's seemingly seamless garment gorgeously rent  
By their screeches and bellowings. And in the evenings  
I walked with my father in the high grass down by the river  
Talking with him – an unheard-of thing in the city.

But home was not home and the moon could be no more  
outflanked  
Than the daylight nightmare of Dublin city:  
Back down along the canal we chugged into the city  
And each lock-gate tolled our mutual doom;  
And railings and palings and asphalt and traffic lights,

January 24, 2023

And blocks after blocks of so-called 'new' tenements –  
Thousands of crosses of loneliness planted  
In the narrowing grave of the life of the father;  
In the wide, wide cemetery of the boy's childhood.

## 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](mailto:houstonmckelvey@mac.com)

---