

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Dublin reflections

Image of the day

Dublin reflections

Central Canal basin - courtesy of Scott Hayes.

People and places



Church Leaders mark Holocaust Memorial Day

To mark this year's Holocaust Memorial Day, the Church Leaders Group (Ireland) held a time of reflection as part of their meeting in Armagh yesterday morning.

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Pictured, from left, are Archbishop John McDowell, the Church of Ireland Primate of All Ireland; Archbishop Eamon Martin, the Roman Catholic Primate of All Ireland; the Revd David Nixon, the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland; Bishop Andrew Forster, the President of the Irish Council of Churches and Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe; and the Rt Revd Dr John Kirkpatrick, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.



Moving beyond violence - Shankill and Falls dialogue

After learning together about the Decade of Centenaries (1912-1922/3) with The Corrymeela Community, the St Matthew's Shankill and St John's Falls group was back with more people including 2 people under 20 for the next part - moving beyond violence. With Rev Tracey McRoberts, Rev Don Gamble, Hedley Abernethy, Shona Bell. Catherine McCoy



First Winter Madness in Dublin

Dublin and Glendalough Youth Council is excited to be hosting the Summer Madness team in Dublin for its first Winter Madness.

It is on 11th March 2023 in Holy Trinity, Rathmines. Get it in your diary, it's not to be missed.

News reports

Two ministers in running to become next Moderator of the Presbyterian Church

The next Moderator of the Presbyterian Church is set to be revealed next week, Brett Campbell reports in the Belfast Telegraph



Rev Richard Murray (Photo left) of Drumreagh Presbyterian Church, near Ballymoney, is one of two men whose names have been put forward for formal nomination.

He is a contemporary of Rev Dr Sam Mawhinney, (Photo next page) of

Adelaide Road Presbyterian Church in Dublin, who is also in the race.

Both ministers studied together at Union Theological College and were called to their first congregations in the same year, 1997.



Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), Rev Trevor Gribben, said the successful candidate is traditionally chosen on the first Tuesday in February.

Rev Dr Sam Mawhinney

However, they will then need to be elected by members

of the General Assembly when they meet in June.

“The way in which we select our Moderator is a relatively simple process and one that is, in the best sense of Presbyterianism, a democratic one as well,” Rev Gribben explained.

“This year we have two names for presbyteries to prayerfully consider and each one may be proposed, seconded and voted on at February’s meeting.

“The candidate who has received the majority support of those voting then becomes the person for whom that presbytery has registered their vote for, and the person with

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the backing of the most of our 19 presbyteries becomes our Moderator-Designate."

The Moderator of the General Assembly is the most senior office-bearer of the church and serves as its principal public representative.

Nominees are put forward by presbyteries which begin to suggest names in late Autumn before a 'long list' is compiled before it is confirmed they would be willing to serve if shortlisted.

The next Moderator will succeed the Right Reverend Dr John Kirkpatrick when they become ninth office holder.

"I always look forward to the first Tuesday in February as this annual event is part of PCI's denominational DNA and there is always a sense of anticipation in Assembly Buildings that evening as we wait for each presbytery to phone through their vote," Rev Gribben said.

"Whoever is selected, I very much look forward to working with them when they take on their new responsibilities in June.

"As they step away from their congregations to lead and encourage the Church, playing an important role in the life and ministry of PCI, much of which is often unseen, one thing will remain unchanged."

The new Moderator-Designate is expected to be revealed at around 9pm on Tuesday.

Courtesy the Belfast Telegraph, 27 January 2023

4 Corners Festival bringing communities together through sport

Uniting children from across Belfast with a ‘Game of Three Halves’

The 4 Corners Festival returns for its 11th annual instalment on January 27 for a nine-day event running until February 5, covering a variety of music, art, talks, sporting and religious-based events, Joanne Savage reports.

This year’s theme, ‘Dreams...Visions For Belfast’ is hoping to inspire individuals from all areas within the city to create a peaceful home for all communities.

One of the many activities taking place within the festival is the ‘Game of 3 Halves’, which sees young people from all areas of Belfast brought together through the power of sports.

PeacePlayers NI are hosting the event, open to all young people aged 11 to 14, with the aim of changing the competitive nature of games and removing any conflict, instead replacing it with positive lessons and outcomes, on and off the court.

Games such as Gaelic football, soccer and rugby will be played by integrated teams from Belfast as well as having on-site PeacePlayers Coaches and mentors to help participants throughout the 3-hour long event.



Aoife Redmond, Regional Programme Coordinator, has seen how this scheme is successful in uniting children through engaging, fun, sports-based activities.

She said: “We get children together on integrated teams to play basketball, to engage in team building activities together and actually get to know one another. We run programmes for multiple age groups; our Twinning programme brings catholic and protestant primary school classes together on integrated teams, to play basketball and engage in good relations conversations and activities.”

Aoife also explained that PeacePlayers offer further programmes to promote togetherness outside of the festival, which is ideal for any children and young people who enjoy the event to continue with the inspirational messages the team and activities produce.

She added: “We also have our Leadership Development Programme, which is for participants in 4th year – Upper sixth to come together and learn about cultures, our core values and curriculum delivery as well as playing basketball together.”

Ed Peterson of Clonard Monastery, representing the 4 Corners Festival, explained that the event is aimed at bringing young people from all communities, backgrounds and corners of the city together.

He said: “I love the overall ethos of the 4 Corners Festival to encourage all of us to get out of our corner of the city, not only just the geographical corner of the city to experience other parts of Belfast but also just around other ideas and opportunities. Young people can meet new people and explore various different subject matters together with people from different areas of Belfast or even beyond.”

Open to both previous PeacePlayers attendees and young people (aged 11-14) who have never been to the programme before, perfect for anyone looking to get involved, meet new people and develop connections and friendships.

Siblings Abdelmoniem and Maryam Salman are both participants who regularly attend the PeacePlayers events,



with them both enjoying the sense of community they gain from going.

Abdelmoniem said: “PeacePlayers is always like a second home to me. I look forward to going to it every week.”

Maryam also explained how she has developed great connections with fellow students who attend the sessions, saying: “Because of PeacePlayers I got to meet new people and make new friends.”

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Joshua Curtis, another young person who attends the games, said he finds PeacePlayers to be incredibly fun and rewarding.

He said: “I’ve made plenty of friends through the festival. There’s so many games, there’s so much to do, there’s such a great atmosphere in the stadium – it’s really, really fun.”

Game of 3 Halves will take place on Wednesday, February 1 at Queen’s PEC at 6pm, and is open to young people across the city who have not attended these programmes before.

For more information on how to get involved with Game of 3 Halves go to eventbrite.co.uk/game-of-3-halves.

For the full 4 Corners Festival programme visit 4cornersfestival.com.

Churches reject ban on conversion therapy

Faith leaders tell Sunak to drop gender law they say criminalises Christians, teachers and parents

Christians risk being “criminalised” by a proposed ban on gender conversion therapy, 1,400 church leaders have warned Rishi Sunak.

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In a letter to the Prime Minister they warned the contentious new legislation will also see parents and teachers fall foul of the law.

They have called for a meeting in Downing Street and urged Mr Sunak to drop the “confused” proposal which is “unnecessary”.

The Government has said the law, which bans all forms of conversion therapy in England and Wales, will cover trans people.

Mr Sunak is facing a Tory revolt over the plans, with dozens of MPs from different wings of the party set to oppose it in Parliament. Church leaders from different denominations have warned the teachings of their faith are “at grave risk of being outlawed by the proposed legislation”.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, they wrote: “If the Government gives in to activists’ demands, it appears almost certain that innocent Christians will be criminalised.

“Indeed, this seems to be the goal of at least some of those most eager for a new law.”

‘Children are left confused about what it means to be male or female, and the question of who they are’

They added: “We trust you are well aware of the harm being caused to children by the inappropriate promotion of questionable ideologies. Children are left confused about what it means to be male or female, what constitutes

appropriate sexual behaviour, and the basic question of who they are.

“We fear that the proposed legislation could far worsen the situation by stifling the voices of loving parents and pastoral carers.” The letter has been written by the authors of the Greater Love Declaration, a message about Christian teachings on marriage, sex and identity.

They say the signatories to the document, which include 1,400 pastors, will continue to preach in the same way “even if this should become illegal”.

The Rev Dr Matthew Roberts of Trinity Church in York, who wrote the letter, warned campaigners are “pushing a narrative” that Christian beliefs “are harmful”.

He said: “They have made clear they are unwilling to accept a law which does not criminalise ordinary believers and Christian leaders. The Government has said it wants to protect religious freedom.”

“We remain unconvinced the Government can avoid unintended consequences in the passage of this Bill.”

Kemi Badenoch, the equalities minister, has written to Tory MPs setting out how freedom of religion must be protected.

In the letter she admitted the first draft will not be perfect and vowed to protect parents from prosecution.

In the media

Bishop Says Religious Education Has 'Never Been More Important In Ireland'

Extra.ie - Bishop Niall Coll said he would rather build a 'pluralist Ireland' than ... To exclude God and faith and Church from all public discourse doesn't ...

[<https://extra.ie/2023/01/27/news/religious-education-bishop-ireland>]

Sacked schoolteacher Enoch Burke faces a fine of €700 each day if he continues to turn up at his former school.

Irish Post - The teacher, who was formally dismissed from his role at Wilson's Hospital School in Heathland, Co. Westmeath last Friday, January 20, has arrived at the school every morning this week since Tuesday, January 24.

[[https://www.irishpost.com/news/sacked-irish-teacher-faces-e700-fine-per-day-if-he-continues-to-turn-up-at-school-246386?](https://www.irishpost.com/news/sacked-irish-teacher-faces-e700-fine-per-day-if-he-continues-to-turn-up-at-school-246386?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=trending)

[utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=trending](https://www.irishpost.com/news/sacked-irish-teacher-faces-e700-fine-per-day-if-he-continues-to-turn-up-at-school-246386?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=trending)]

Colmcille choir celebrating Golden Jubilee

Derry Now - Remembering the day St John Paul shushed the priests chatting during the Polonaise.

“Camaraderie” was the refrain on the lips of every member of the Colmcille choir enjoying their Golden Jubilee (plus two) civic reception in Derry’s Guildhall.

Hosting the ebullient event on Friday evening, Mayor of Derry and Strabane, Councillor Sandra Duffy, described the Colmcille choir as “one of the finest throughout Ireland”.

[<https://www.derrynow.com/news/home/1020707/colmcille-choir-celebrating-golden-jubilee.html>]

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books



International
Ecumenical Conference



LISTENING TO THE WEST

Synodality according to Anglican,
Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist,
and Old Catholic Traditions

organized by
Institute for Ecumenical Studies of the Angelicum
26-28 January 2023
Largo Angelicum, 1 - ROME

Cardinal Koch opens the Symposium "Listening to the West"

On Thursday, January 26, 2023, Cardinal Kurt Koch, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, and Sr. Nathalie Becquart, Undersecretary of the Synod, opened

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the international ecumenical symposium "Listening to the West".

The symposium, organized by the Institute of Ecumenical Studies of the Angelicum with the patronage of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity and the General Secretariat of the Synod, gathers over 40 theologians and aims to consider the different conceptions and experiences of synodality according to Anglicans, Lutherans, Reformed, Methodists and Old Catholics), as an ecumenical academic consultation for the current Catholic synodal process.

<http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/news/2022/2023-01-26-cardinale-koch-apre-simposio--listening-to-the-west-.html>

Perspective

Flourishing together in education - Archbishop Stephen Cottrell

The Archbishop of York gave a short key note address at the Church of England's National Education Conference 2023: Flourishing Together. This follows in full:

Sisters and brothers, it's a great joy to be with you and thank you so much first of all to everyone who's spoken, but also to the young people who've been leading our dance and our prayer and our worship.

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As part of my curacy, I spent a morning each week in the Church of England Primary School in the parish.

It was a hugely enjoyable and challenging experience. I learnt a lot. Mostly about myself. But also, about how to lead and how to care.

One day, when I was probably about a year into my curacy and had gotten to know the school well and they me, I was leaving at lunchtime - like I always did - and exiting past the headteachers study. Her door was ajar. As she saw me passing, she called out and beckoned me in, though, I heard it as a summons. In fact, being a curate and still in my mid 20s – I'm afraid I'm one of those clergy who's never had a proper job - I felt closer in age, and certainly in attitudes to school, to the children I was teaching rather than the staff I was working alongside.

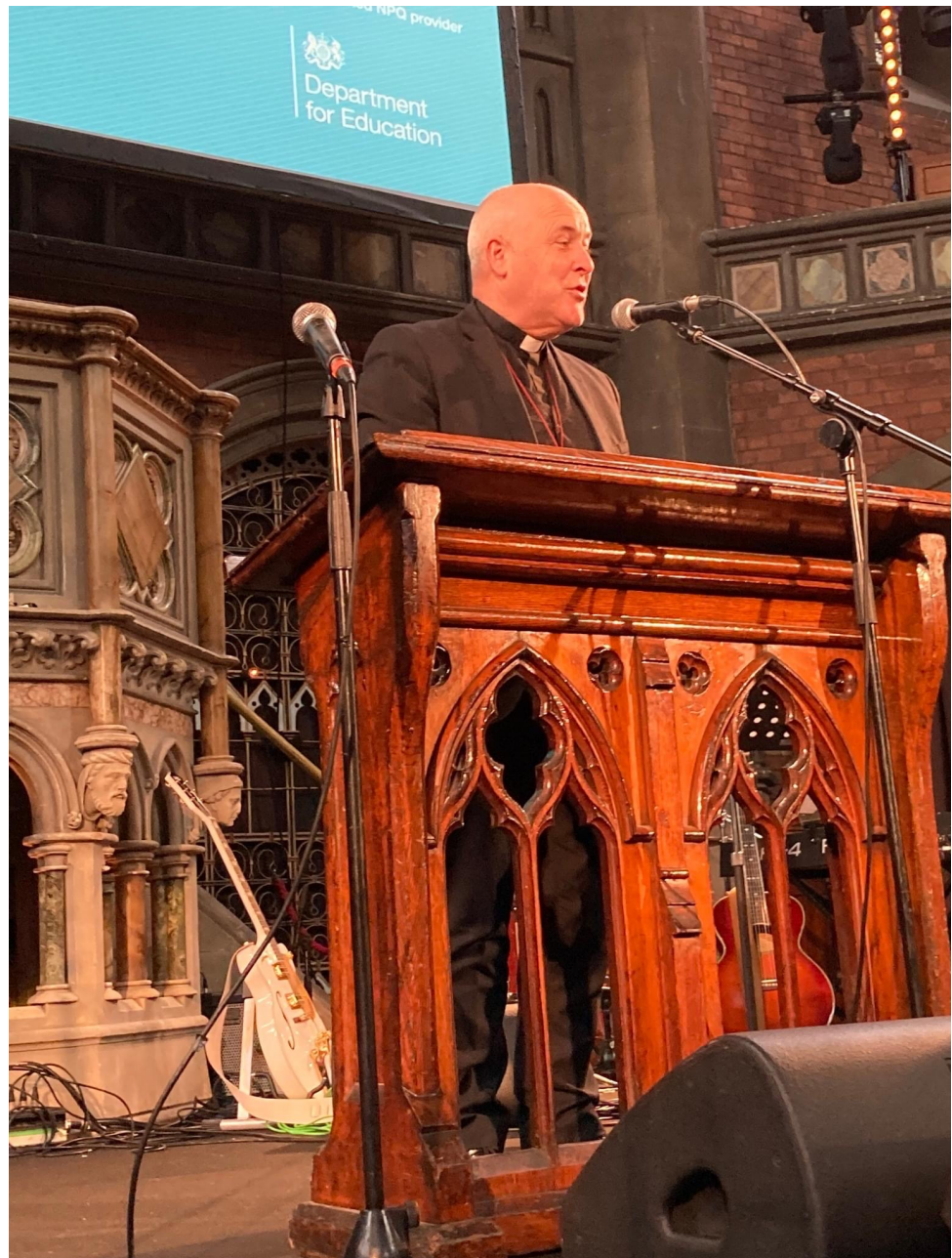
And certainly, the headteacher, who was probably only in her late forties/early fifties, seemed to me at the time - like it is when you're in your 20s - to be an incredibly old person. So when she called me into her study, I suddenly found all my anxiety levels rising. I had obviously done something wrong. I was about to be reprimanded. I felt like a child again.

I went into the study. I sat down. She went and closed the door. My anxiety levels rose higher. My knees knocked. She started to speak. I waited with bated breath to discover what misdemeanour or shortcoming she had identified in me.

But no. Of course not. She spoke to me about the pressures she was under. The demands of leading a staff team. The

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projections and endless suffocating expectations that go with leadership. The isolation. The sleepless nights. The desire to do well. And the reality of failure. The fact that because leadership can be lonely, she didn't really have anyone to talk to, and that was why



she had asked me in. And as she spoke, she started to weep.

She was an absolutely brilliant headteacher.

This was a fantastic school. I loved being part of it and I celebrated the partnership that we had between church and school.

But leadership is hard. And it is demanding.

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She wasn't having a breakdown. It was just a bad day at a bad time, and she need someone to talk to. Because sometimes, for all of us, the pressures get too much.

And what did I do? Well, to be honest I can't really remember. I think I probably just sat and listened. I hope I prayed.

But I did learn something in that moment - about myself, about leadership, and about what it is to be a headteacher. And I realised how important it is, that we support each other in the responsibilities we carry. That we work hard to ensure that people in positions of leadership have spiritual and pastoral as well as professional support. And I realised, perhaps, for the first time, that in order for any of us to lead well, we need to pay attention to our own flourishing and our own replenishing.

So in this little session, paradoxically, we're not talking about how children flourish. But how we flourish in the responsibilities we carry in order that we may build communities, and particularly school communities, where everyone flourishes.

For this to happen, two things are needed in particular.

First, dear sisters and brothers – especially those of you who carry responsibility for the leadership in our schools - we all need spiritual and pastoral support and it is not a sign of weakness to say we that we need help; and it's OK sometimes to cry, it means you care. And what I was called to offer in that moment, led me to reimagine my whole role in that school; that I wasn't just there to do an assembly and

be with the children in the classroom, I had an important pastoral and spiritual role within the whole school, and particularly with the adults who worked there, be it the headteacher, the classroom assistant, or the cook. And, yes, we need people to take on that role as part of their specific responsibilities; and this surely is one of the great joys and advantages of a church school. But we must all be aware of the contribution each of us can make to each other's welfare.

Secondly, it is about taking responsibility for the resources and replenishing each one of us needs. Building our house on the rock, as Jesus put it. So, I'm going to say to you this morning what I say consistently to all the clergy that I serve: the most important thing that I do each day is say my prayers.

I know that in order to function well and live my life well and do the things that I've been called to do, I need resources outside myself. I need a place where I am just Stephen before God, where I can be replenished by the affirmation of God's love for me and by God's purposes for my life. Not only renewing my vocation, but giving me the energy of grace and affirmation of beauty and goodness and knowledge that I am God's beloved, that God is on my side, that God believes in me; that God wants to do wonderful things through me and then in the power of that affirmation, what is best about God fills me and overflows from me into the lives of others.

And I need, over and over and over again to learn the meaning of the first beatitude, which is 'Blessed, are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'. Which

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means, blessed are those who do not take themselves too seriously; blessed are those who know that they need resources outside themselves; blessed are those who are rich in God's replenishing goodness and mercy; who are not self-sufficient but by abiding in God are able to flourish and be fruitful. Dear friends, that is good for everyone and especially a school.

My time's up. You're probably thinking, 'Is that all he's got to say. Is that it? Say your prayers. Pay attention to your own need for rest and refreshment. Love one another. Yeah, that's it. But with these things, we can change the world, starting with our own hearts. Amen.

For more information on the conference - please visit:
<https://www.cefel.org.uk/NC23/>

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site from 3.00 am.

Church News Ireland

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