



Image of the day
St David's Cathedral, Wales

March 1, 2021

Armagh Library online treasures

This week,
the Armagh
Robinson Library
begins an online
lunchtime lecture
series.

An Ogam stone

This will connect
with treasures in
what is Northern
Ireland's oldest
public library, as well as Irish Language Week (Seachtain na Gaeilge) and International Women's Day at the start of March.

On Monday, Damian McManus, Professor of Early Irish at Trinity College, Dublin, will give a talk on 'Ogam: Ireland's oldest alphabet'. This illustrated talk will touch upon the origin of the Ogam alphabet, its nature, the Ogam inscriptions, their language, distribution, and date. A selection of photographs of Ogam monuments from Ireland and Britain will be shown along with illustrations from medieval Irish manuscripts.



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Dr Daniel P. McCarthy, a Fellow Emeritus of Trinity College, Dublin, will speak on the Annals of Clonmacnoise on Tuesday. Also known as ‘Mageoghagan’s Book’, these annals are an early 17th-century Early English translation of a lost Irish chronicle, which covered events in Ireland from pre-history to 1408. The earliest known surviving manuscript copy of the Annals is held in Armagh Robinson Library.

On Wednesday, Marc Caball, an Associate Professor in the School of History at University College, Dublin, will speak about the roles of Uilliam Ó Domhnaill (William Daniel) and William Bedell in translating the Bible into Irish.

The speaker on Thursday will be Professor James Kelly, Head of the School of History and Geography at Dublin City University, who will speak on the topic, ‘Protestants, Print and the Irish Language in the Eighteenth Century’.

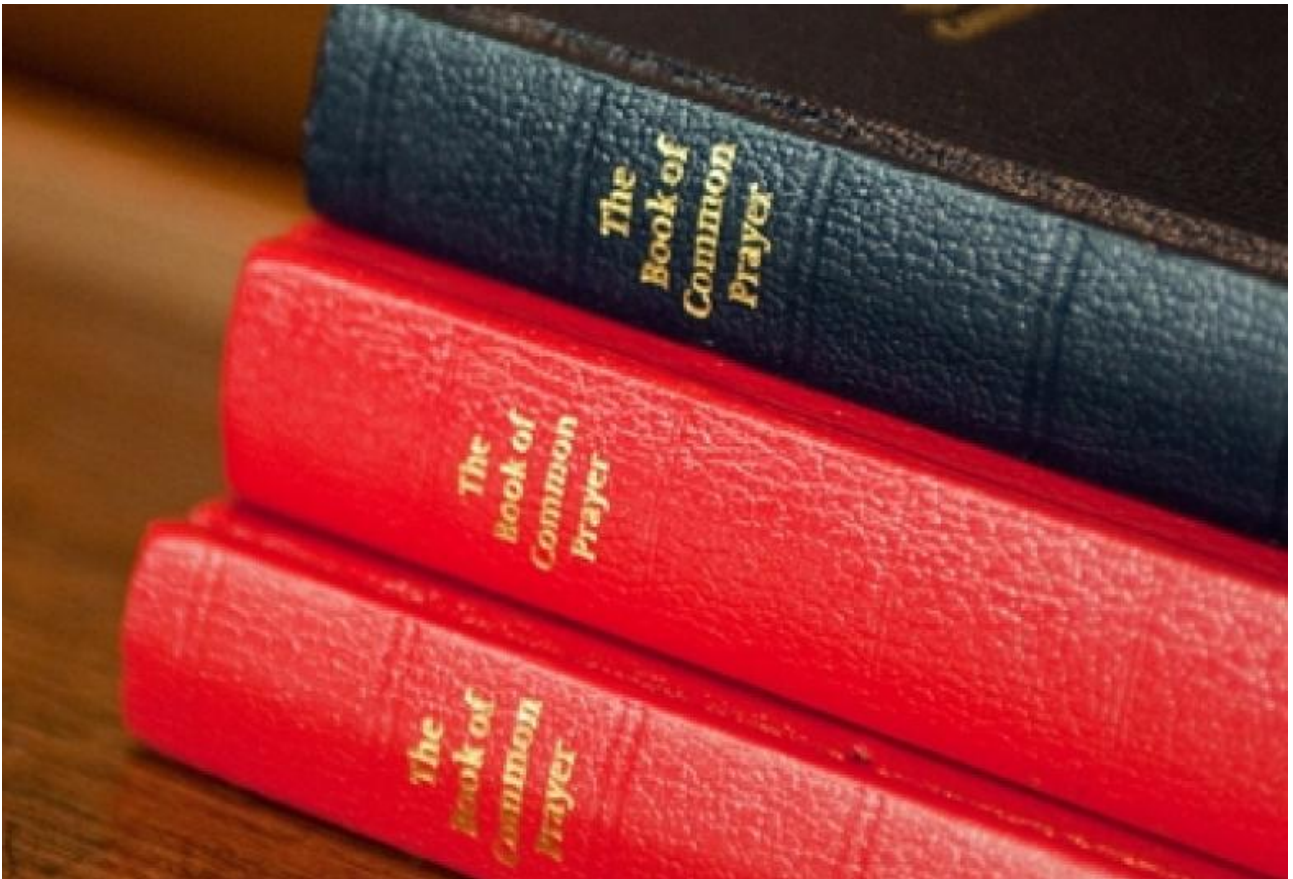
Finally, on Friday, Professor Regina Uí Chollatáin, Head of the School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore at University College, Dublin, will speak on ‘Women of the Glens’ about a group of women of various creeds and their role in the Irish Revival.

All talks will begin at 1pm and will be delivered on Zoom. There will be time for questions at the end of each talk. To book a place, please email

director@armaghrobinsonlibrary.co.uk.

This series of lectures is funded by the Northern Ireland Department for Communities.

<https://armaghrobinsonlibrary.co.uk/>



Book of Common Prayer services in C of E see huge numbers tuning in amid pandemic lockdowns

One church, which usually sees such services attended by as few as five people, has reported online attendance in the hundreds for their services based on the text dating back to 1662.

Badminton Benefice, which is a group of 10 rural churches in the Diocese of Gloucester, began offering online services in the first lockdown. It has since had more than 8,500 views for its services which attempt to draw together liturgical and musical traditions as well as the beauty of art and buildings.

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Chris Andrew, a Reader in the Diocese and an Archbishops' Evangelist, explained: "There is uncertainty, doubt, and insecurity and what we offer is stability, consistency, and changelessness. It is the calm on the stormy seas of lockdown."

The traditions of the Prayer Book have helped attracted people tuning in throughout a Sunday – including from the US and across Europe.

Ben Humphries, director of the church's music, is responsible for the videography.

"I am keen on capturing a moment of history in our Church's history – not just the big churches and the Cathedrals," he said.

[Window in Ballyholme Parish Church, Bangor](#)



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“Our videos will become the permanent record of how parishes coped during this pandemic.”

Chris Andrew added: “Others can do this too. It’s a really easy way of connecting with your local congregation and we’ve shown it’s wanted – the increase from our in-person services to our online services is 1,500 per cent.”

The success of the Common Prayer services has been replicated across the country.

Historic parishes, like the Temple Church in London, are also nurturing a large online community while using the Book of Common Prayer. During the first lockdown Communion and Mattins were shared online. It also now offers regular livestreamed Evening Prayer services based on the Book of Common Prayer.

The Revd Robin Griffith-Jones, Master of the Temple, said: “We are now reaching more people virtually than ever before in person, and on both sides of the Atlantic.

“For some services, the number of congregants has increased by five-fold.

“Indeed, the response generally has been so positive and encouraging that we are investing in better quality equipment.

“We hope this will endure for everyone’s benefit after the pandemic has subsided and we resume normal public worship.”

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Bradley Smith, Chairman of the Prayer Book Society, said: “Churches are seeing the long-term value in this ministry with Prayer Book services attracting new, online congregations in many parishes.

“The Prayer Book speaks with fresh clarity and authority in these uncertain times, and many people - some new or returning to faith - are finding real peace and comfort in its time-honoured rhythms.”

10 years after quake, Christ Church Cathedral finally rising

After years of debate over whether to restore the building or start from scratch, it's being rebuilt to look much like the original that was finished in 1904.

The Christ Church Cathedral was arguably New Zealand's most iconic building before much of it crumbled in an earthquake 10 years ago. The years of debate that followed over whether the ruins should be rebuilt or demolished came to symbolize the paralysis that has sometimes afflicted the broader rebuild of Christchurch.

As the city last week marked one decade since the quake struck, killing 185 people and upending countless more lives, there are finally signs of progress on the cathedral.

It's being rebuilt to look much like the original that was finished in 1904, only with modern-day improvements to make it warmer and safer, even to add extra much-needed bathrooms. But first, workers must stabilize the remains.



Peter Carrell, the Anglican bishop of Christchurch, outside the 2011 earthquake damaged Christ Church Cathedral in central Christchurch, New Zealand, Wednesday, Feb 11, 2021. The Christ Church Cathedral was arguably New Zealand's most iconic building before much of it crumbled during an earthquake 10 years ago. The years of debate that followed over whether the ruins should be rebuilt or demolished came to symbolize the paralysis that has sometimes afflicted the broader rebuild of Christchurch. But as the city on Monday marks one decade since the quake struck, killing 185 people and upending countless more lives, there are finally signs of progress on the cathedral. It's being rebuilt to look much like the original that was finished in 1904, only with modern-day improvements to make it warmer and safer.

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Peter Carrell, the Anglican bishop of Christchurch, said reopening it will represent a key milestone.

“I think it will be hugely significant, because it will be one of the final pieces in the jigsaw of putting Christchurch back together,” Carrell said. “It will be a healing of the heart of Christchurch after the earthquake.”

Still, the doors aren't expected to open for another six years. Preserving what's left is more costly and time-consuming than demolishing and starting again. And so far, the mix of funds from insurance, church, council and government sources adds up to only about two-thirds of the 154 million New Zealand dollar (\$111 million) price tag.

Keith Paterson, the project director, said the aim is for a fundraising team to raise the rest of the money from both local and international donors.

“We're very confident we'll get the money in by the time the project is finished,” said Carrell. “We've got plenty of money to start with.”

Elsewhere in the city, shiny new buildings are popping up, along with innovative playgrounds and parks. But where some buildings once stood there are now just empty parking lots, and the migration of shops and businesses to the suburbs that happened after the quake hasn't yet fully reversed.

There also remains a disparity in neighbourhoods. Parts of the city to the west look much as they did before the quake.

But in the east, where the ground was prone to liquefaction, entire suburbs have been razed.

Authorities have deemed the land too unstable for rebuilding. Some suburbs now look like giant parks, with a few fruit trees and power lines the only sign that homes were once there.

Richard Cosgrove's house by the Avon River in the suburb of Dallington was one of those torn down. The communications adviser recalls the enormous forces at play during the quake.

"The whole area sunk massively," he said. "We had a wooden villa built in 1922. Basically, the four corners went in separate directions."

Cosgrove said the strong community bonds that formed as neighbors tried to salvage their homes and worked on improving the area ended when the government declared it unsafe for rebuilding.

"That broke the community apart," he said.

Cosgrove and his wife now live outside the city on a small farm.

"We thought if we moved anywhere else in the city it would remind us of what we lost, so we decided to build a new life in the country," he said.

But he remains upbeat about Christchurch and its future. He said the adversity people have suffered has brought the community together and made it stronger and more resilient,

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and that many of the foreign workers who came to help rebuild have been so impressed they have stayed.

“We’ve got a really great city,” Cosgrove said. “It’s quite an impressive rebuild that’s gone on. I think of all the great things they have done.”

Still, he says, it would have been nice if it had all happened a little sooner.

Stop housing asylum-seekers in military barracks, say bishops

Thirteen Church of England bishops have added their names to an open letter demanding that the Government stop housing asylum-seekers in military barracks.

Asylum-seekers have been placed in Ministry of Defence sites, most notably Napier Barracks, in Folkestone, since last summer.

Activists and refugees have long complained, however, that the conditions are poor. There have been outbreaks of Covid-19, as well as a fire that, last month, reportedly cut off electricity, heating, and water for the hundreds of asylum-seekers living at the former army barracks.

In the open letter, signed by dozens of Christian leaders, the bishops urge an “immediate end” to the practice of using barracks to house asylum-seekers. “After such a traumatic journey, having had to often spend time behind wire fences



Napier Barracks, in Folkestone

in refugee camps, it is simply insensitive to house people in such environments,” the letter argues.

“In a global pandemic it is nothing short of irresponsible and risks the lives of residents and staff alike. Even as a temporary measure, ex-military barracks are unfit for purpose and entirely inappropriate.”

The Church of England bishops who have signed the letter are those of London, Durham, Oxford, Bristol, Gloucester, Southwark, Worcester, Leeds, Croydon, Reading, Bradwell, Dover, and Loughborough.

They are joined by the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Vincent Nichols; the General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Bob Fyfe; the Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church,

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Derek Estill; the President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Richard Teal; and leaders of other denominations.

“Our shared faith as signatories to this letter, leads us to view all human beings as equal and deserving of respect, dignity and welcome,” the letter continues. “When asylum seekers are housed within communities, it allows for better integration and access to support services. Asylum seekers are often no longer seen as ‘other’ but as neighbours and friends.”

The signatories ask the Government to set out a timeline to move all asylum-seekers currently in barracks into accommodation in the community, and to pledge not to expand the use of military sites in the asylum system.

[Black Head, County Antrim](#)



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The letter came one day after an inspection of Napier Barracks was announced by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, assisted by HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

The inspection was due to take place this week, and would include interviews with residents, assessment of the premises and facilities, and a survey of the staff working at the barracks. A report of the findings will be sent to the Home Secretary and published “in due course”.

Waterford school choir featuring music star releasing new charity single next week

Waterford City's Mount Sion Choir featuring Ronan Keating is releasing its version of the single **This is Your Song** on March 5 to raise vital funds for the Marie Keating Foundation's national cancer support and survivorship services.

This performance of the song was recorded as part of the televised spectacular Concert4Cancer, which aired in August last year and went on to raise more than half a million euro for cancer services.

This is Your Song was co-written by Ronan Keating and award-winning producer Steve Mac, following the death of Keating's mother Marie to breast cancer in 1998. Marie died at the very young age of just 51.

Ronan and his siblings were devastated at losing their mother and felt they had to do something to prevent other



Mount Sion Choir

families going through what they went through. They set up the Marie Keating Foundation in her memory to ensure that families around Ireland would have access to free information and support.

The Mount Sion Choir was set up eight years ago in Mount Sion CBS, a culturally diverse school in Waterford City, where many students were innately gifted at music. Unfortunately, music was not available as a subject, so the students set up as a lunchtime club, which went on to become known as the Mount Sion Choir.

Over the last number of years, the choir has gathered a dedicated following and has performed at some incredible locations and for some great causes.

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Due to the pandemic, the choir's planned trip to sing in Carnegie Hall, New York was cancelled. However, it did not take long for them to brush themselves off and look into their community to see where they could help and so got behind the Concert4Cancer. The choir is hugely grateful to all the remarkable people they met along this phenomenal journey.

The proceeds from this single are being donated to help support the vital work of the Marie Keating Foundation in supporting cancer patients through the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

You can donate to further support the cause at www.mariekeating.ie/donate.

Courtesy waterfordlive.ie

Opinion - Border poll can't happen without unionists on board: Irish senator

Fianna Fail's NI spokesman calls for an approach based on respect and inclusion, Steven Alexander reports in the Belfast Telegraph

A referendum on a united Ireland cannot happen without unionists on board, a senior Fianna Fail politician has said. Senator Niall Blaney said “we cannot impose a border poll that excludes the wishes and concern of the Protestant communities of this island”.

Mr Blaney — Fianna Fail's spokesman on Northern Ireland, and party lead on the Irish Government's Committee on the

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Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement — said unionists should not be coerced into a united Ireland.

The Donegal politician was speaking in the wake of a presentation last week to the Committee by Professor Colin Harvey, of Queen's University's School of Law, and Northern Ireland barrister Mark Bassett BL, based on their 2019 report *The EU and Irish Unity: Planning and Preparing for Constitutional Change*.

Both strongly urged the Irish government to do more to prepare for a referendum on Irish unity, particularly in the new post-Brexit context, but neither could confirm that they had engaged with unionists in the preparation of their report. No unionists attended the session

Despite the report authors calling for increased dialogue over Ireland's future, Mr Bassett said: “In terms of reconciliation and unionist engagement with this issue — they're very important but they are not absolute prerequisites in the Good Friday Agreement to the triggering of these referendums.”

The only consideration is “an assumption” of whether a majority in Northern Ireland support a united Ireland, he argued.

Afterwards, Mr Blaney told the *Belfast Telegraph*: “I believe all our political parties need to pull back a bit and start a new approach based on respect and inclusion. We cannot impose a border poll that excludes the wishes and concern of the Protestant communities of this island.

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“The only positive indication of progress on our past was achieved through agreeing the Good Friday Agreement. We need to fully implement all elements of the Good Friday Agreement through the institutions, North and South.

“The less we try to push ideas by coercive means and without engagement, the quicker we will kickstart the process. Only then will we realise the extent of our shared future.

“Peace has been hard-won on this island and coercion will play no positive role in our future. On the other hand, patience, respect and openness will give us all a chance to create greater outcomes and standards on a shared island basis.”

This appears to be a reference to the Shared Island Unit, one of Taoiseach Micheal Martin's flagship policies.

During the Oireachtas committee meeting, Mr Blaney argued the report advocating a border poll actually made achieving a united Ireland more difficult.

“We haven't had the dialogue necessary to bring unionists with us and create trust,” he said.

“The idea of a shared island is to try and create that trust and start working with them.”

But the Northern Ireland Protocol had upset the relationship, he argued.

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An effort comparable to that which led to the Good Friday Agreement is needed, but “the more we talk up a united Ireland, the less chance we have of getting unionists to the table”.

Believing a referendum is the solution to the creation of a united Ireland is “simplistic”, Mr Blaney said.

“There is much more dialogue that has to be held with unionist politicians, and without them on board, I don't see this happening,” he said.

“My fear is that if there is a referendum tomorrow, it wouldn't be won on either side of the border.

“So there's an awful lot of work to be done here.”

Report courtesy of the Belfast Telegraph

Note - CNI in presenting “Opinion” is not endorsing views expressed. Rather, the reader is being invited to consider the opinion reported and to make their own evaluation.

Pointers for prayer

Today we pray for countries unable to access vaccines. The UN secretary general has criticised the unfair distribution of Covid vaccines, identifying that 130 countries have yet to receive a single dose.

Pray for the launches of new Church Army centres of mission in Rochdale, Gwent Valley, North Sutton and Ipswich; that these will launch as planned and new staff will



**MORNING HAS
BROKEN LIKE THE
FIRST MORNING,
BLACKBIRD HAS
SPOKEN LIKE THE
FIRST BIRD. PRAISE
FOR THE SINGING!
PRAISE FOR THE
MORNING! PRAISE
FOR THEM SPRINGING
FRESH FROM THE
WORD! ~ Eleanor Farjeon**

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

find ways to engage with their communities when they are appointed.

Pray for all teachers and parents involved with students or their children. We ask for stamina and creativity as they seek to educate in less than ideal circumstances.

It has been announced that on Ascension Day - 13 May 2021, Bishop Hosam Naoum will be installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, bearing the title Archbishop. Please pray for Bishop Naoum, his family and the Diocese.

We think today of families who are struggling to cope with the ongoing restrictions to normal life, especially those who live in small homes with no outside space. We pray for an abundance of tolerance to help ease their less than ideal circumstances.

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Today we give thanks for young climate activists. A UN survey shows that demand for green business and jobs is particularly high among young people, who have been a driving force behind getting the issue onto the political agenda.

We remember with thanks the numerous Mothers' Union members who, over the years, have used their God-given gifts to change the world. We pray that, in our day, we'll also be willing to use our gifts to help transform lives and communities

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.

Speaking to the Soul

Faith in the tough times: Facing up to unexpected answers

Continuing his Lent reflections, the Rt Rev George Davison, the Church of Ireland Bishop of Connor, asks if we are ready when God gives unexpected answers to our questions

Have you ever found your life taking an unexpected direction? In our current circumstances that's a question that hardly needs answering.

A year or so ago, I don't imagine that any of us could have anticipated the way that our lives would unfold over these last months as the result of, what was then, a little-known virus.

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Such situations undoubtedly result in us asking questions and trying to make sense of what is going on.

For the person of faith, that will often mean asking what God is doing in and through our lives.

We might wonder why a God who is in control of the world allows difficult things to happen in the first place.

Perhaps we may pray and ask him to act to change the circumstances that challenge us. But are we ready to consider that God's answers to our prayers might take us in unexpected directions?

The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk felt helpless in the face of the lawlessness that had arisen in Israel in his day and had complained honestly and directly to God about it.

Did God not care? Why wasn't he doing something about it?

Habakkuk got an answer to his prayers, but the first part of the answer that God gave was to warn him that he was in for something of a shock.

God was acting to make a difference in the life of his people, to restore them and return them to a life-giving relationship with Him, but not at all in the way that anyone might have expected.

God's answers may not always come in the shape that we expect...

He was making the kingdom of Babylon strong in order to teach Israel the value of being His chosen people.

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In the Bible, from beginning to end, Babylon symbolises what it is to be a people who reject God's way and live a life without reference to Him.

And yet God's almost unbelievable message to Habakkuk is that He will use Babylon to help bring Israel to their senses.

What Israel would experience as a result of what God was doing would be life-changing - it would challenge, chastise and restore them. His love for his people meant that he would not let them go.

When we ask questions of God about our own experiences in life, are we ready to listen for his answers? They may not always come in the shape that we expect.

In challenging times, God is still active in the world and the person of faith will be ready to look round about and ask, "Lord, what would you have me learn today?"

Bishop George Davison's Lent reflections series can also be found on the Connor diocesan Facebook site.

