

Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – the first Catholic Church in Belfast
Enabled by Presbyterian and Church of Ireland
generosity**

Image of the day

Building St Mary's Church

The Census in 1782 showed that there were 365 Catholics living in Belfast. At that time, there was no Catholic Church in the City. The Presbyterian and Church of Ireland communities took up a special collection at their services – the Handsome Collection – and made a gift of the monies donated to build the first Catholic Church in Belfast – St Mary's Chapel Lane. The generosity of the Presbyterian and Church of Ireland people of Belfast demonstrates the unprecedented religious tolerance of that time. It was on Sunday, 30th May 1784 that Mass was celebrated for the first time in the new church of St. Mary's for the first time by Father Hugh O'Donnell, first Parish Priest of Belfast.

People and places

Choral Celebration of St Patrick in Armagh

Celebrate St Patrick's life and legacy in this unique place. As part of The Home of St Patrick



Festival, choral music is at the heart of a special evening of

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words, music and dance. While the world marks this most popular of Saints and Saints' Days, only Armagh can claim the site of his first church as the traditional and classical, ancient and modern, the reflective and exuberant, sacred and secular, all combine to make this a joyous occasion in St Patrick's honour.

A strictly limited number of audience tickets are available for this special event

Click to book 🖱️ bit.ly/3sCYwQN



Walled City Passion in Derry

‘Walled City Passion’ is a live performance festival that reimagines the Easter story for a modern audience.

This unique event – on April 14th ,15th and 16th – features promenade performances on Derry Londonderry’s historic

walls, at 12.30 pm and 4.30 pm each day. It is broadcast on 'big screens' in Guildhall Square, with a host of family-friendly activities available daily from 11.30 am to 6.30 pm.

Walled City Passion will be live streamed by RTÉ and BBC on Good Friday. RTÉ One television will broadcast the event on Easter Sunday night at 10.30 pm. Join in the fun and even become part of the story!

C of I Parishes encouraged to reflect on pandemic

On Sunday, 20th March C of I Parishes are being encouraged to hold “A Service for the Day of Remembrance and Recognition.”

The Liturgical Advisory Committee (LAC) of the Church of Ireland is encouraging parishes to make time in their services on Sunday, 20th March, to reflect on the Covid-19 pandemic, pray for those whose lives continue to be impacted, and remember those whose lives were lost. This date is suggested to coincide with the additional bank holiday on Friday, 18th March, which was announced by the Irish Government in January as a national commemoration of those who have lost their lives to Covid and to recognise frontline workers.

The LAC has prepared a Service for the Day of Remembrance and Recognition to enable parishes to mark this significant weekend, which will include a National Commemoration Event in the Garden of Remembrance in Islandbridge on Sunday, 20th March.

The Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, Archbishop of Dublin and Chair of the LAC, said: 'The Covid-19 pandemic has proven a long and painful experience for people in Ireland and across the world. The Government's decision to create an additional bank holiday to commemorate those who lost their lives to the pandemic and honour those who continue to make sacrifices is one which I warmly welcome.

'On behalf of the Liturgical Advisory Committee, I am glad to be able to commend these resources, which have been developed during the past two years. I would encourage as many parishes as are able to consider using the Service for the Day of Remembrance and Recognition on Sunday, 20th March, or during the weekend preceding it. Parishes might consider using this act of worship as part of their main Sunday service or as a separate service, inviting members of other Christian traditions and the wider community to attend.'

The Service is available to download at www.ireland.anglican.org/prayer-worship/worship-resources

Ukraine major focus of Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

Members of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference gathered in-person this week for their Spring 2022 General Meeting at Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth. The President of the Conference is Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh and the Vice-President is Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin.

The main issues discussed by the bishops during their Spring General Meeting included: Praying for the people of Ukraine and for peace and relief from the humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion; Synodal Pathway; New Lay Ministries of Lector, Acolyte and Catechist; Welcoming a return to full public worship; Trócaire's Lenten appeal in support of impoverished people in Zimbabwe; Safeguarding children in the Catholic Church; Reconfiguration of patronage at primary-school level; Lent and preparation for Holy Week and Easter; International Women's Day and Appointments.



Ukraine

Bishops prayed for the people of Ukraine and all those impacted by the horrific bombardment, death, displacement

and destruction in their country. Bishops heard reports on the outpouring of solidarity and support from individuals, parishes and communities to the people of Ukraine living here, and in their homeland. Bishops made an appeal to all Christians, including Patriarch Kirill and the Russian Orthodox Church, to join in daily spiritual and practical efforts in support of a ceasefire, humanitarian outreach and the immediate laying down of weapons.

The bishops stated: "At this time of trial, we want to stand in prayerful and practical solidarity with the Ukrainian community here in Ireland and also to acknowledge the many Russians in our midst who bear no responsibility for this tragic situation. What we are witnessing during these days impels us again to appeal for diplomacy and dialogue - to work for a genuine human fraternity - as the only way to resolve differences and conflicts. As tens of thousands of refugees arrive in Ireland in the near future, there is no doubt that the Gospel is calling on us to open our hearts and our homes. We welcome the waiving of visa requirements for Ukrainians seeking refuge in Ireland and in other EU countries. The Northern Bishops, in particular, also call upon the UK Government to prioritise the rights and dignity of all Ukrainians who seek refuge in Northern Ireland. In order to help Ukrainians recover from the trauma and violent displacement that they have experienced, we encourage everyone to welcome refugees in a sensitive and compassionate manner. We ask all parish communities to give serious consideration to ways in which refugees can be accommodated and integrated while with us."

During its meeting, the Bishops' Conference made contact with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability,

Integration and Youth, to seek advice on how dioceses and parishes may best pledge support for the Government's plan to accommodate refugees fleeing Ukraine.

Charitable outreach including a national collection. Already millions of people have been forced to flee their homes as refugees. It is a source of inspiration that people all over Ireland are responding with customary generosity to support humanitarian efforts in this crisis. Many parish communities have already established links with charitable projects to support refugees and those remaining in Ukraine.

Recognising these urgent needs, the bishops are asking that a special collection be taken up at all Masses on the weekend of Sunday 27 March. People are also invited to support the charitable initiatives of Aid to the Church in Need, the Jesuit Refugee Service, and Trócaire. Trócaire is currently responding to the crisis through its partners Caritas Ukraine and Caritas Poland which have a strong presence in the region and can use resources strategically to the greatest effect.

The bishops stated: "This invasion and aggression reminds us of the fragility of peace, even in Europe, a place that has experienced peace for much of the past seven decades. It is we as the people of Europe, together with the wider world, who must shape history at this crucial moment in time. The inspiration that informed the foundation of the various European institutions and organisations after World War II was peace and the development of economic, social and cultural ties. There is a crying need for the renewal of the 'soul of Europe' which must be based on the spiritual sources and roots which inspired those post-war developments."

The bishops expressed support for the many prayer initiatives for peace in recent days. Given the importance of the national feast of Saint Patrick, they invited parishes to reach out on that day in a special way to the Ukrainian people living in Ireland and around the world, sending greetings of prayer and solidarity to them in this time of anguish. At the 'sign of peace' at Mass on that day, and for the remainder of Lent, bishops ask priests to call for peace in the world and especially in Ukraine and, after a moment of silence, to invite everyone to offer a gesture or greeting of peace (without the handshake), holding in prayer all who are caught up in this conflict.

LINK

Irish Catholic Bishops Conference: www.catholicbishops.ie

Mothers' Union All Ireland Festival Service

On Sunday 27th February 2022, the Dean of Armagh, the Very Rev. Shane Forster welcomed members and friends of the Mothers' Union to Armagh Cathedral for an All Ireland Festival Service of Thanksgiving and Commissioning.

It was a beautiful sunny afternoon as people filled the cathedral from all parts of the island to celebrate and give thanks together.

A number of people were commissioned by Archbishop John McDowell: Mrs June Butler, for her second term as All Ireland President of the Mothers' Union, along with the All

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Ireland Trustees, Joy Gordon, Hazel Speares, Margaret Jacob, Clare Stewart, Mavis Thompson, Ada Lawson and Ann Howard. In addition there was an 'official welcome' for the Rev. Ken Rue, the All Ireland treasurer and Mrs Iris Suitor, the newly elected Zonal Trustee for Ireland.

The Mothers' Union theme for 2022 is "Transformation – Now!" and the Gospel reading at the service was about Zacchaeus, who climbed a sycamore tree so

that he would be able to see Jesus. Archbishop McDowell spoke of how Jesus always welcomed people in, how he invited himself to the house of Zacchaeus, and how Jesus' attitude of welcome, love and acceptance transformed lives. The challenge for us all is to also be truly welcoming to those we meet.



News reports

A National Church planting overview – new research

Commissioned by the National Church Planting Network, this looks at how to be more strategic in encouraging churches to work together.

New research, partially funded by Churches Together England (CTE), has been launched by an informal group called the National Church Planting Network (NCPN). The research draws on voices from both within CTE's membership and from a wider sphere of independent churches and other networks.

It was conducted to ascertain how the NCPN might be more strategic in encouraging and mobilising churches to work in closer cooperation with each other in the future.

The research, conducted by Caroline Millar and Laura Treneer from Chalk lab, synthesised answers from nineteen interviews and drew out themes and areas for further reflection around how the churches thought about the following:

Plans: strategy, history, metrics

Process: models and definition of church

Pounds: self-funding and scale of initial investment

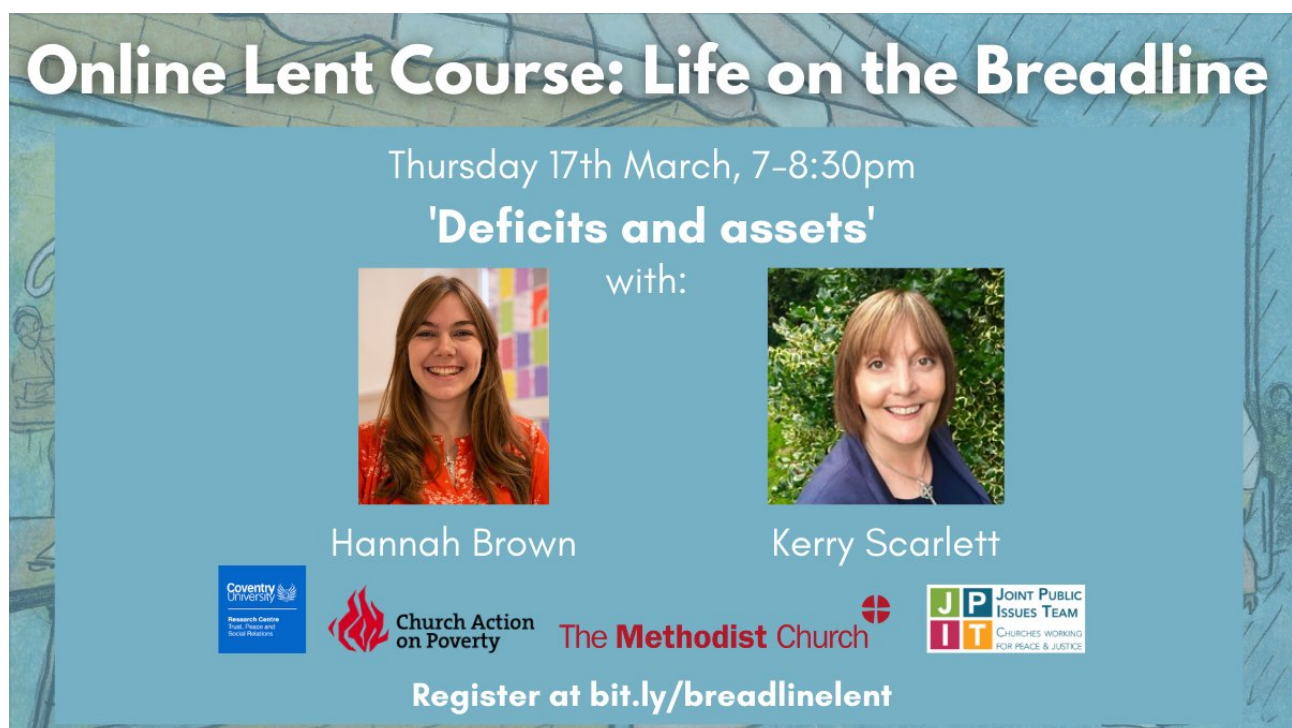
Place: geographical focus/mapping

People: demographic groups, identifying and training leaders

Partnership: local research, ecumenical perspectives

The insights into how churches think about their church planting strategy and the way they deploy resources both human and financial is helpful ecumenically. Whilst the idea of planting churches together ecumenically was not a strong outcome of the research there is increasingly mutuality and recognition that encouraging each other in the work was vital.

The research reveals the different type of language that denominations and networks use to describe their planting activity and suggests very helpfully that “It is subtleties in language which leads conversation around new churches towards either collaboration or suspicion. Therefore, there is a need to clearly identify the vocabulary in this area which is contested (i.e. used with different meanings and implications by different groups); vocabulary which is used to communicate ‘tribal’ identity; and vocabulary where we can all agree and meet.”




Online Lent Course: Life on the Breadline


Thursday 17th March, 7-8:30pm

'Deficits and assets'





with:



Hannah Brown



Kerry Scarlett

Register at bit.ly/breadlineent

The report also maps out a journey of collaboration from “practitioner to co-missioner” which may be useful for churches at local to discern their level of growing trust in working together.

LINKS

Read the executive summary.

Read the full version of the report.

For more information on the National Church Planting Network and other research around mission and evangelism please contact Rev Dr Ben Aldous our Principal Officer for Mission and Evangelism.

Explore the ecumenical roots of the new Pathfinder church in Northstowe, Cambridgeshire.

[[] <https://cte.org.uk/ncpn-research/>]

Episcopal Church releases ‘Jesus in America’ study; polling data shows wide-ranging faith views

Most Americans see Jesus as an important spiritual figure. More than 30% of Americans have decreased their participation in religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

And only one in 10 thinks those who attacked the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, were associated with organized religion, David Paulsen editor of Episcopal News Service writes

Those are some of the findings of a national study commissioned by The Episcopal Church and conducted by the polling firm Ipsos. The results of the “Jesus in America” study, released March 9, highlight the wide-ranging faith perspectives of a diverse cross section of Americans, including those who identify as nonreligious.

Episcopal leaders say the study points to both the popularity of Jesus’ teachings and the ways Christians are often perceived as failing to live up to those teachings.

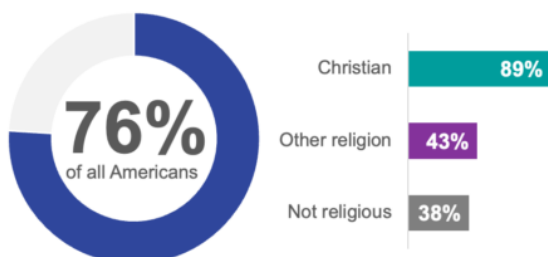
“We are encouraged that the research shows Americans still find Jesus compelling, but we also see that the behavior of many of his followers is a problem, and it’s not just certain Christians: it’s all Christians,” Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said in a press release announcing the study. “This is a wake-up call for us, and based on what we have learned, we are refocusing our efforts on being a church that looks and acts like Jesus and models its behavior on his teachings. In this process, we hope to ignite a revival of love that encourages all Americans to do a better job of loving their neighbors.”

To conduct the study, global market researcher Ipsos polled 3,119 Americans, ages 18 and older, from Nov. 22 to Dec. 2 in English and Spanish, with a margin of error of 2%. The results will be used by Episcopal leaders to help plan for the post-pandemic church.

Most Americans believe Jesus was an important spiritual figure, although, some question His historical existence

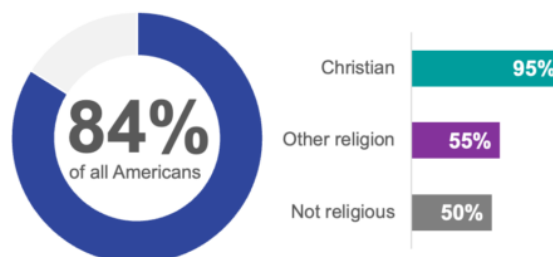
Do you believe in the historical existence of Jesus Christ or Jesus of Nazareth?

% Yes



Do you believe Jesus was an important spiritual figure?

% Yes



Q10. Do you believe in the historical existence of Jesus Christ or Jesus of Nazareth?
Q11. Do you believe Jesus was an important spiritual figure?

Base = All respondents (Total n=3119, Christian n=2113, Other Religion n=503, Not Religious n=503)



“The goal of the ‘Jesus in America’ research project was to identify the most compelling themes and narratives about Americans’ attitudes and perceptions of who Jesus is, his enduring importance and impact on society, how the pandemic has shaped how people pursue and find spiritual and religious fulfillment, and how Christians are currently perceived by non-Christians,” Amanda Skofstad, the church’s public affairs officer, told Episcopal News Service in a written statement.

Christopher Moessner, who oversaw the study’s Ipsos research team, emphasized in an interview with ENS that the large nationwide pool of respondents is representative of a wide range of faith backgrounds.

“We did not want to limit our audience to only Christians or only Americans who held a particular view. We wanted to survey all Americans, regardless of their religious beliefs or

no religious beliefs,” said Moessner, senior vice president of public opinion polling at Ipsos.

That approach helped the study more clearly examine common perceptions of Christianity and Christians in the United States. One question asked respondents what they thought was Jesus’ most important teaching. More than a third said “love your neighbor,” including nearly a fourth of respondents who reported no religion. About 20% of all respondents answered with “not judging others, without first judging yourself,” and those with no religion gave that answer at about the same rate.

“Not many polls get into what do you really believe Jesus was about,” Moessner said. “This poll also sought to understand where the intersection was between all faiths. Where’s the common ground?”

He pointed to questions about what activities offered by religious organizations would most interest respondents. Some of those results were similar across all faiths, with respondents generally emphasizing outdoor activities and helping others.

Another question asked what characteristics respondents associate with Christians. The words most chosen by the Christian respondents were “giving,” “compassionate,” “loving” and “respectful,” while non-Christians associated Christians most with “hypocritical,” “judgmental,” “self-righteous” and “arrogant.”

That disconnect underscores a central reason the church commissioned the study. Episcopal leaders hope that by

better understanding public perceptions of Christianity, the church can more effectively spread its message of Jesus' love and compassion in contrast to what they see as distortions of the faith by some Christian and political leaders.

Curry has taken up that cause prominently since 2018 when he joined an ecumenical group of Christian leaders in launching the Reclaiming Jesus initiative. Spearheaded with the Rev. Jim Wallis of Sojourners, it sought to address “a dangerous crisis of moral and political leadership at the highest levels of our government and in our churches” and to affirm what it means to be followers of Jesus in today's world.

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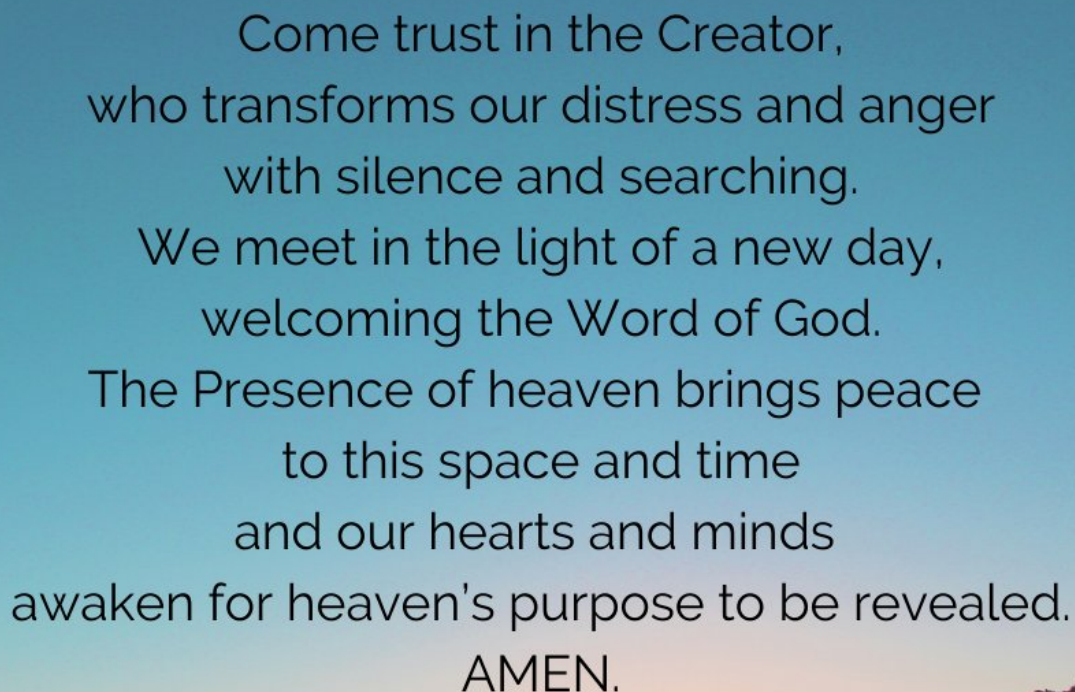
Such efforts gained urgency after riotous supporters of then President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, seeking to block the certification of Joe Biden's election as president. Five people died, including a Capitol Police officer.

At the time, Episcopal leaders lamented that some attackers had displayed crosses and other Christian symbols on their flags, banners, signs and clothing – suggesting that Christian identity was “being put to violent use by people who want to establish a nation in which power and privilege is held exclusively by white Christians,” the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, president of the House of Deputies, said at the January 2021 Executive Council meeting. “This violent and exclusionary movement is on the rise in the United States. ... We have a special responsibility to stand against it.”

For the “Jesus in America” study, pollsters asked: “Do you think the events at the U.S. Capitol Building on Jan. 6 are associated with organized religion?” Overall, 11% said yes, with wide variation among respondent groups. The study found 24% of non-religious respondents answered that way.

When the 11% of respondents who said yes were asked a follow-up question, 63% said they associated the attack more specifically with evangelical or Protestant Christians.

The study also produced data on how the pandemic has disrupted churchgoing over the past two years. When asked about their “ability to participate in organized religious or spiritual activities,” 37% of mainline Protestants said their

The background image shows a bright sun setting behind a dark, silhouetted hill. The sky is a gradient of blue and orange. The text is centered and reads:

Come trust in the Creator,
who transforms our distress and anger
with silence and searching.
We meet in the light of a new day,
welcoming the Word of God.
The Presence of heaven brings peace
to this space and time
and our hearts and minds
awaken for heaven's purpose to be revealed.
AMEN.

participation had decreased, while 55% reported no change in participation.

“Lent is a time of intentional reflection and action,” Curry said in a press release, “and we are especially mindful of our resolve to continue building meaningful and inclusive communities in our post-pandemic world that encourage all Americans to listen without judgment and celebrate differences.”

– David Paulsen is an editor and reporter for Episcopal News Service. He can be reached at dpaulsen@episcopalchurch.org.

In the media

Ireland's only Moravian village seeks UNESCO status

Superb well-illustrated article by Vincent Kearney, Northern Editor of RTE News who writes -

A unique village in Co Antrim has cleared the first hurdle in a bid to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Gracehill is the only Moravian settlement on the island of Ireland, with its own Bishop and original buildings and burial ground dating back more than 260 years.



"Moravians always chose beautiful names for their settlements. This village was built on a hill, a hill of grace," says church member Sallyann Johnson.

What is known today as the Moravian church was one of the very early Protestant churches and dates back to 1457, when it was established in the regions of Moravia and Bohemia, which later became the Czech republic, now called Czechia.

"Moravian is a bit like a nickname in a sense from the place where the church started," says Bishop Sarah Groves.

More at -

[[] <https://www.rte.ie/news/regional/2022/0308/1285052-gracehill/>]

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Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Celebrate a History of Irish Hymns with Keith & Kristyn Getty!

Keith & Kristyn write -
We're less than a week from the official livestream of the Gettys' first-ever St. Patrick's tour, broadcast live from TBN Music City in Nashville!



Join us online this Saturday, March 12th at 7:30 PM EST for a vibrant celebration of 1,500 years of Irish hymn-writing heritage—from the days of St. Patrick to the great Celtic hymns like “Be Thou My Vision” and beyond!

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Register now and experience foot-stomping reels and jigs, cultural Irish dance, sacred Celtic songs and melodies, and congregational singing through some of the Gettys' best-known hymns as we join together online with Christians around the world to celebrate the Irish hymns that continue to call us to the ancient paths. Plus, everyone who registers will receive a free digital copy of the 'Irish Roots' hymnal filled with songs from the tour, including new songs from the 'Confessio' album!

Tickets at -

[[] https://events.tbn.org/?utm_medium=partner&utm_source=getty&utm_campaign=getty-maestro&mc_cid=c9880c07ee&mc_eid=33d184a477]

Moncrieff with The RTÉ Concert Orchestra & Dublin Gospel Choir

Moncrieff with The RTÉ Concert Orchestra & Dublin Gospel Choir - Leader - Bróna Cahill Conductor & arranger Cormac McCarthy.

[[] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ee5XPSIVAHg>]

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
