

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Hillsborough Castle gardens

May 10, 2022

Image of the day

Hillsborough Castle gardens

The Royal gardens in County Down are open to the public.

People and places

Newbridge Gospel Choir to celebrate 10th anniversary with special charity concert

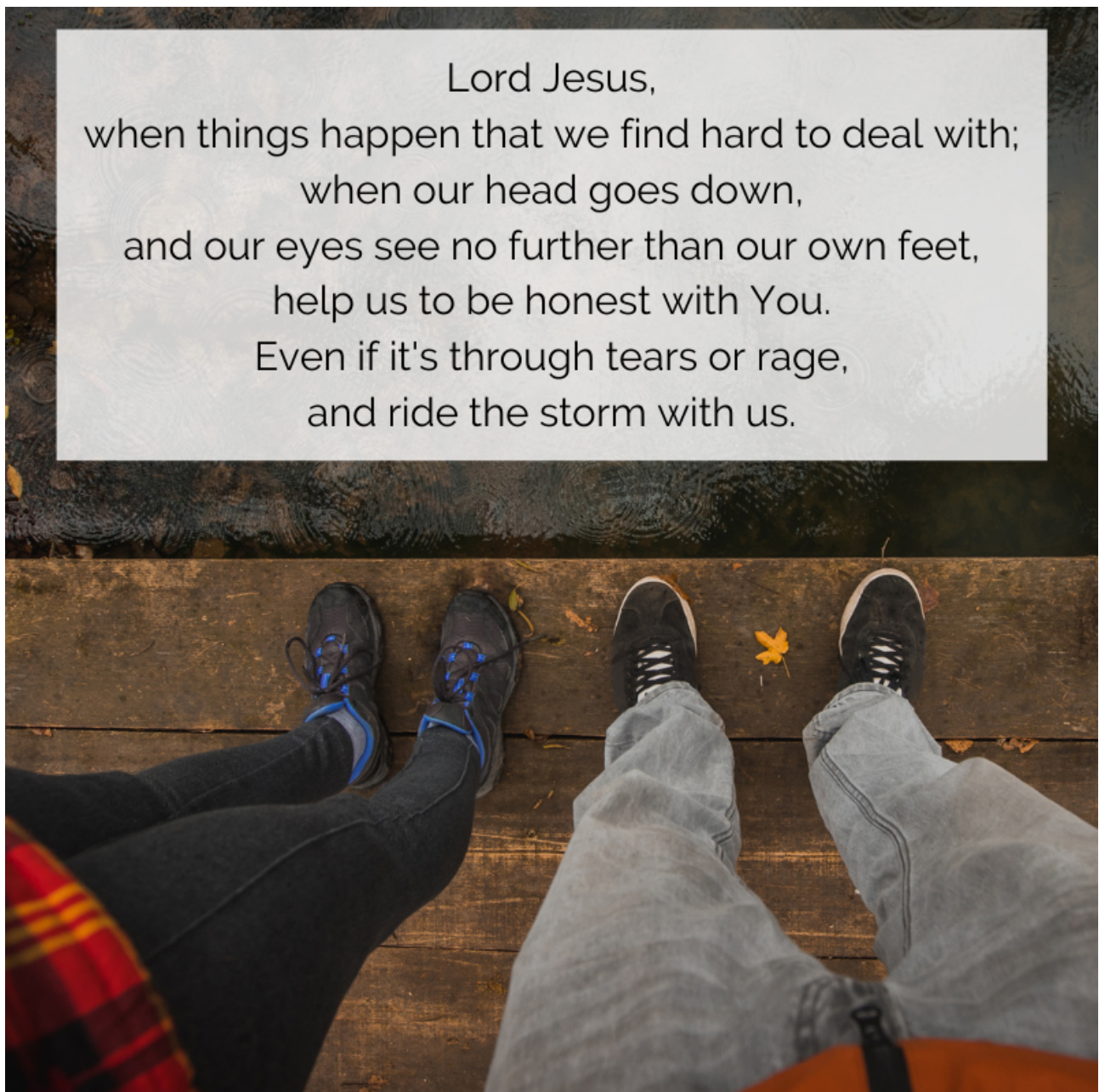


Newbridge Gospel Choir singing at Newbridge Parish Race Day at the Curragh with Fr Ruairi and Bishop Denis Nulty

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Newbridge Gospel Choir is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year and to mark this milestone, it is holding a major concert on Saturday, May 14 at 8pm in Open Arms Church, Newbridge.

"The concert will be in aid of two causes that are very close to our hearts - Relay for Life Kildare's Team Songbirdies and Barretstown's Team Ben for Barretstown. Our goal is to raise €10,000 on our 10th anniversary and we would love to see as many people as possible there on the night to



Lord Jesus,
when things happen that we find hard to deal with;
when our head goes down,
and our eyes see no further than our own feet,
help us to be honest with You.
Even if it's through tears or rage,
and ride the storm with us.

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celebrate with us," said Lisa Nagle, music director of Newbridge Gospel Choir.

"What started as a small group of 20 people rehearsing in the Holy Family Convent in Newbridge has now grown into a massive choir of 100 members that very proudly represents Newbridge Parish all over the county and country. It will be an evening of absolute joy and fun to celebrate 10 years of gospel music. We will be singing lots of our old favourites as well as plenty of new songs too."

For tickets contact Newbridge Gospel Choir on Facebook/Instagram OR email: newbridgegospelchoir@hotmail.com
Courtesy Kildare Live

Evangelical Alliance Public Leadership Programme NI now open for applications

The public leadership programme is a 10 month leadership development journey to help young professionals and emerging leaders in Northern Ireland follow Jesus in every walk of life.

It is primarily aimed at, but not limited to, those in their 20s and 30s. In previous years we have had participants with backgrounds in business, charity, medicine, law, politics, the arts, academia and other spheres (this course is not designed for those whose main area of leadership is within a church or a Christian charity).

The cohort of participants will meet together about 8 – 10 times over the course of 10 months from September 2022 –

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June 2023 including two or three 24 hour residentials at a central location here in NI. We will gather together, usually over meals as we receive teaching and hear stories full of wisdom and personal experience from local public leaders about culture, character and leading as a witness and follower of Jesus in Northern Ireland in these days.

Each year's group will be added to a growing network of alumni who will continue to support each other and build relationships across Northern Ireland and beyond.

So if this is for you or someone you know please do get in touch. You can find out more by emailing David on d.smyth@eauk.org to ask any questions or discuss further.

Four-bedroom former church in Co Down on the market for £275,000

A former church in Co Down which was transformed into a home is currently on the market with an asking price of £275,000.

Former Forkhill Parish Church, 2 Church Road, Forkhill, Newry is a four-



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bedroom
detached
property.

It's in a
rural,
scenic
location,
extends to
around
2,490 sq. ft
and is set
on a plot of around 0.3 acres.



The property was refurbished in 2021 by its current owners whilst maintaining the original period features throughout.

Notable internal features include the original stained-glass windows and the original pulpit, whilst notable external features include the original church bell which is in working condition, and striking gothic church doors.

Estate agents Savills (NI) said: "The Former Forkhill Parish Church was built in 1767 by Richard Jackson, landlord of the Forkhill Estate from 1742 to 1787.

"The church was closed on 23rd September 1990 and deconsecrated 12th November 1991.

"It has since been extensively restored as a private dwelling in keeping with the integrity of the building."

They add that all rooms benefit from an abundance of natural light.

Ministry on the agenda of Presbyterian Church and Church of Ireland

Presbyterianism is seeking to expand its witness. Church planting is to be the focus of an Irish Presbyterian church conference today aimed at enhancing the denomination's long and rich history in establishing new congregations.

The 'Time to Plant' event in Dundalk will bring together church representatives from congregations in both Northern Ireland and the Republic, with a vision to examine opportunities to establish a Presbyterian footprint in new and sustainable locations.

The conference is organised by the Presbyterian council for mission in Ireland, which has specific responsibility for developing PCI's strategic priorities in all-age mission across the island and new church development.

The Rev Dr Martin McNeely, minister of Ballykeel Presbyterian Church in Ballymena, which was itself planted in the early 1970s, is co-convener of PCI's church planting panel.

He will be one of the conference speakers.

"This one-day conference is open to all within PCI who are interested in church planting", says Dr McNeely. "We are



really excited about how God might use today's event, prayerfully, hoping that new expressions of church and Christian witness may take root and those recently established by Presbyterians will flourish."

Those attending the conference will hear from Presbyterians who are currently building new communities of faith. These include Balbriggan in Co Dublin, which began its weekly services in 2020; Central in Belfast, which opened its doors in 2016, and another expression of Christian witness in West Belfast - Grace and Hope community church.

Those involved will talk about their experiences, sense of call, the challenges and the joys of being part of something new.

Dr McNeely adds: “Over the years, society north and south has changed, becoming more secular with fewer people attending church. However, the Biblical mandate to make disciples of all nations, which includes our own, has not gone away. People still need to hear the ‘good news’ of the gospel.

“Across the world, Christ’s church is growing and there is a genuine desire within Irish Presbyterianism to expand and grow too, reaching those in new ways who have yet to hear the Gospel. I hope our conference will inspire those who have this call upon their lives to build new expressions of church, and so introduce new people in new places to a new life in Christ,”

Those attending the conference will also hear keynote speaker Scotty Smith, author and founding pastor of Christ Community Church in Franklin, Tennessee.

Mr Smith is part of the leadership team of West End Community Church in Nashville, which is partnering with Liberty Church in Dublin and its work in the Republic capital’s inner-city. He has written and spoken extensively about church planting.

The General Synod heard last week a proposal for Pioneer Ministry in the Church of Ireland

The Working Group on Pioneer Ministry brought forward proposals for pioneer ministry at General Synod last week. The motion aimed to reach more people outside the Church in a way that complements existing ministry within the Church of Ireland.

Proposing the Motion, Bishop Ferran Glenfield presented the report of the Pioneer Ministry Working Group. He outlined the key proposals which include:

- Establishing a National Leadership structure for Pioneer Ministry

- Engaging with dioceses to promote and prepare pioneer posts

- Partnership with Church Army to deliver training for pioneer ministers.

- Dedicating financial resources from the RCB and dioceses to train and deploy paid pioneer ministers.

He said that Pioneer ministry was not a replacement for pastoral ministry in its current forms but that traditional and new models of church should complement each other offering choice. The report recommendations build on a range of church plants and outreach initiatives already in place in the Church of Ireland, he explained. The proposals draw heavily on the experience of Pioneer Ministry in other Anglican churches in these islands and beyond.

He said that the report had been endorsed by the House of Bishops, the Standing Committee and the Executive Committee of the RCB. It is planned to establish the National Leadership Structure, largely through secondment, by this autumn. Any legislation required for Pioneer Ministry in relation to the Constitution of the Church of Ireland, would come before Standing Committee and General Synod in 2023, the Bishop stated adding that details of the financial resources required for the training and deployment of paid pioneer ministers were being worked through and would be in place when needed. The first pioneer ministers would

start training and deployment in 2024. Over the next decade up to thirty paid pioneer ministers and projects will be in operation, he stated.

The motion was seconded by Archdeacon Terry Scott (Armagh). He talked about the online word game Wordle the key to which, he said, was identifying the right letters and making sure they were in the right place. He said he knew there were many people with particular God given gifts but the pathways that existed within the church did not allow them to be part of the core of the Church.

Speaking to the report Archdeacon Barry Forde (Connor) said he had been involved in the work of the Pioneer Ministry Group for seven years and was encouraged by it. He thanked a number of the bishops for the leadership they had shown. He outlined meetings with diocesan advocates and the IDLE consultation process. They had received a wide range of responses and they found that the appetite was out there for pioneer ministry. He said that the initiative intended to grow as broad a base as possible to seek to reach those with little or no connection to the church.

Archbishop Michael Jackson (Dublin and Glendalough) said that the programme was concrete, coherent and collaborative. He suggested that members of Synod talk about pioneer ministry in their own contexts. He said it was something that was for the totality of the Church of Ireland.

The Revd Chris Matchett (Down) said he was encouraged by the motion before Synod and urged people to bring news of it back to their parishes. He said his parish had planted two community churches within housing estates within the

parish boundaries but from which they had very few members attending church. He spoke of the importance of ministry that takes place alongside parish structures and within parishes. He said there had been consideration given to the relationship between the established church and the new church but it had been an interesting and rewarding journey. He asked the working group to consider the relationship with the parish as any pioneer expression takes place within the parish. He said the church plant leaders valued the parish structures that were in place.

Roy Totten (Connor) emphasised the importance of Church Army. He said that the original research on pioneer ministry was carried out by Church Army which has many years' experience of pioneer ministry and the Church of Ireland would benefit from that experience.

The Revd Rob Jones (Dublin and Glendalough) commended the report. He said he had been involved in pioneer ministry and commended it as an all Ireland movement as opposed to just being a project. The real emphasis of the movement was to empower the laity who had a passion to pioneer in their own setting, he said. He said an important word to mention was 'contextualise'. He explained that for many years the Church of Ireland had looked to other places but contextualising it to our local place meant that it was more than just a project but a movement. He planted a church into a parish and said it was important to have both sides of the church involved with support from the bishops and the RB. He said this would be a movement that would be ordained but mostly it was about mobilising laity in their context.

Archbishop McDowell said they had been on a journey and he wanted to people involved to feel they had the support of Synod.

News reports

Virgin Mary to ‘cleanse’ polluted river

Britain’s rivers are in such dire straits that divine intervention is being called upon.

A Church of England vicar is organising a procession, featuring the Virgin Mary in a canoe, to “cleanse” the polluted River Wye.

Father Richard Williams, of St Mary’s Church, Hay-on-Wye, said the 4ft 6in statue would be placed between two manned canoes and taken down the river from Hay-on-Wye to Monmouth to mark the Feast of the Assumption on Aug 15.

Scientists blame run-off from poultry farms in the area which rear an estimated 20 million chickens.

Charles Watson, chairman of campaign group River Action, said: “Based on how serious the problem is, we need divine intervention.

“I spent two days down there last week – it is absolutely terrible. The river is devoid of any vegetation.”

Oxford dean ‘close to suicide’ after ‘coup’ to oust him

A former Oxford college dean has revealed the “relentless coup” to oust him as head of Christ Church left him at “breaking point” and close to suicide.

After leaving the college in the last week of April, the Very Rev Prof Martyn Percy said he was turned into “public enemy number one” during his four-year battle with Oxford dons.

The Very Rev Percy relinquished his position and departed with a £1.2 million payout from Christ Church, but not before the “Orwellian nightmare” left him “close” to suicide.

He told The Times Magazine: “I really had a pretty serious breakdown with this ... I came close ... We had clergy and victims of abuse who’ve gone through this Orwellian nightmare with church investigations and they’ve taken their own lives and I can understand that.”

The dons had hit him with claims of scandalous behaviour, unsound judgment, mental incapacity and sexual harassment. He said: “I was devastated because I couldn’t think how [trying] to raise awareness about proper process, accountability, [organisation] could be construed as [immoral].”

The Very Rev Percy agreed to step down following a mediation process that concluded in February. Oxford and Christ Church were asked for comment.

Pope Francis in a wheelchair as knee pain continues to limit mobility

Pope Francis has arrived at an audience in a wheelchair as his knee pain continues to limit his mobility.

Francis was wheeled into last Thursday's meeting with nuns and religious superiors from around the world who have gathered in Rome.

It is the first time he has been seen using a wheelchair in public.

Francis, 85, has been suffering from strained ligaments in his right knee for several months.

He recently received some injections to try to relieve the pain but has continued to struggle to walk and stand.

In the media

‘Apologies are cheap ... unless accompanied by action’: In Canada for 6 days, Archbishop of Canterbury re-commits to reconciliation

The Anglican Journal

When Geronimo Henry stood up to speak at a May 3 meeting between Indigenous community leaders, residential



"Will you accept my hand?" Welby asks, reaching out to shake the hand of former Mohawk Institute student Geronimo Henry during his May 3 meeting with Indigenous leaders and residential school survivors in Toronto. Photo: Anglican Video

school survivors and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby in Toronto, he told the story of his 11 years in the Mohawk Institute residential school near Brantford, Ont.

He told those gathered how he and other children had been locked in an empty “play room” for hours at a time, gazing out the single window and wishing to see his mother drive up the laneway to bring him home.

He told them about when the city of Brantford built a dump out behind the school and he and the other boys would

sneak out to rifle through it for food to supplement the school's paltry fare.

And he told them that when Stephen Harper's government issued an official apology for the residential school system in 2008, he used to take a printed copy with him to speaking engagements at universities so that when someone asked what he thought of the apology, he could take it out and rip it up.

"Why did it take the churches and the government so long to bring out this apology? Don't they know the schools closed in 1970?" asked Henry. "That's when they should have come and gathered us all up and said they were sorry. But they never." More at -

[[] <https://anglicanjournal.com/apologies-are-cheap-unless-accompanied-by-action-in-canada-for-6-days-archbishop-of-canterbury-re-commits-to-reconciliation/>]

Methodist Church leader calls on Northern Ireland parties to put aside 'constitutional grandstanding' and form an Executive

Belfast Telegraph

The President of the Methodist Church in Ireland has called on Northern Ireland political leaders to get to work.

In a statement, Rev. Dr. Sahr Yambasu, said it was no time for tribalism or "constitutional grandstanding".

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“I congratulate all those who have been elected to serve as MLAs in the Stormont Assembly and wish them well as they embark on their new mandate. I would also like to commiserated with those who were unsuccessful in the election,” he said.

“At a time when the people of Northern Ireland are impacted by the fallout of Brexit, Covid and a massive cost of living crisis, I urge all parties to abide by the results of the election and enter into government in whatever position the d’Hondt system offers them and work together for the good of the everyday lives of the electorate, not in pursuit of tribal loyalties or constitutional grandstanding.”

With Sinn Fein making history by finishing as the first nationalist party to become the largest in Northern Ireland, it now remains uncertain whether the DUP will participate fully in the new mandate.

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/methodist-church-leader-calls-on-northern-ireland-parties-to-put-aside-constitutional-grandstanding-and-form-an-executive-41628222.html>]

Church News Ireland

Perspective

Unionists remain the real power at Stormont

The hysterical reaction to Sinn Féin coming top in elections ignores the truth about the party's 'triumph' writes Graham Gudgin

Sinn Féin's victory in becoming Northern Ireland's largest party is being greeted by some in the UK and international media as a sea-change in one of the Western world's potential flashpoints. The BBC in particular has proclaimed that it is a political shift of historical proportions.

After 100 years of continuous unionist majorities, the prospect of an ex-paramilitary republican party coming out on top has a powerful symbolism – but no more than that. Far from gaining ground, Sinn Féin has stagnated. It is true that the party's popular vote did not fall back, as some inaccurate polls suggested, but it has not risen either.

Sinn Féin's 29 per cent share of first-preference votes last week is actually lower than its 29.4 per cent in the 2017 general election and only marginally higher than the 27.9 per cent it received in the last Assembly election.

It should also be noted that the nationalist vote remains smaller than the unionist vote. Small parties and independents make the calculation difficult, but it appears that unionist candidates gained 42.2 per cent of first-preference votes against the nationalists' 40.9 per cent.

Much of what happened was a shuffling of votes between parties within the respective blocs.

With the complex count now completed, Sinn Féin has 27 seats to the DUP's 25. But this is not the end of the story. In the Assembly, parties must designate as unionist, nationalist or other. The results show unionists as the largest bloc with 37 seats while the nationalists have 35 and others have 18. Under the rules of the Good Friday Agreement this would have provided a unionist first minister. It was only a change in these rules under the 2006 St Andrews Agreement which allowed the largest single party to claim this post.

Much of the commentary has also ignored that gaining the position of first minister gives Sinn Féin no more power than it has had for years as deputy first minister. The two posts are essentially a joint first ministership and may as well be labelled as such. All major decisions are made together, and in my time as special adviser to first minister David Trimble, every executive meeting was preceded by last-minute bargaining on outstanding differences of policy and practice.

That Northern Ireland's centrist bloc has got a little larger, with the Alliance party achieving 13.5 per cent of first preferences – up four points on 2017 – gives liberals some heart that the zero-sum game of Ulster politics is melting. There is something in this, as young professionals on both sides get fed up with the main parties banging on about the Union or Irish unity. Fundamentally, however, the Alliance cannot wish away the zero-sum reality of Northern Ireland identity politics.

Indeed, it is the supposed imminence of a border poll on Irish unity that is the major point of discussion now. But the excitement surrounding this too is misplaced. The polls put support for Irish unity at between 25 and 45 per cent, with the probable truth being somewhere around 30 per cent. This would mean a two-to-one victory for remaining in the Union in the unlikely event of a border poll being called. Like the SNP in Scotland, Sinn Féin will huff and puff about a border poll to keep the issue alive but cannot risk an actual referendum without clear polling support for their position.

Then there is the fact that there will be no Assembly or first minister unless the Northern Ireland Protocol is replaced, as the unionists demand. By securing second place in the polls, the DUP can prevent the Assembly meeting – and they seem increasingly likely to take that course of action, since the EU looks implacably opposed to replacement. The Protocol may have wrecked the Good Friday Agreement's institutions but Brussels is in no mood to recognise this.

Downing Street has suggested that it will unilaterally override the Protocol if a final attempt at mediation with Brussels fails. Unionists will believe this when they see it, but Sir Jeffrey Donaldson's statement that "you can have the Good Friday Agreement or the Protocol but not both" provides a powerful incentive for the UK Government to take action.

Dr Graham Gudgin was special adviser to first minister David Trimble in the NI Assembly 1998-2002

Courtesy The Daily Telegraph 09 May 2022

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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