

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Tractor Rector's tour of the north

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Tractor Rector's tour of the north

The Rev. William Orr with a representative of Burkes of Cornascriebe who provided the New Holland T7.210 for the fund-raising project - see report below.

People and places

‘Rector in a Tractor’ visiting all 438 Church of Ireland buildings in 12 days

‘Rector in a Tractor’ Rev. William Orr set off yesterday (Sunday) afternoon in a New Holland T7.210 to visit all 438 Church of Ireland buildings in Northern Ireland.

Rev Orr, the Rector of St. Mark's church in Portadown, is taking on the tractor driving challenge to raise awareness and funds for the charity Sands.

Sands Northern Ireland is a volunteer-led group that provides support to bereaved parents.

They provide direct peer support to bereaved parents, work with local healthcare professionals to promote their access to Sands' materials and training, and they raise awareness

about stillbirth and neo-natal death to help break the silence about this tragedy.

Sands support all bereaved parents who have lost their babies, before, during or shortly after birth.

One of Rev. Orr's parishioners, Steven Guy, is the network co-ordinator for Sands in Northern Ireland, which prompted the rector to raise awareness of the group.

The 'Rector in a Tractor' challenge is just one of many being completed by members of St. Mark's in the run up to the 200th anniversary of the church in 2026.

Rev. Orr is no stranger to tractors, coming from a farming background.

His family run a dairy farm in Rathfriland where he lends a helping hand whenever he can.

"We use New Hollands on the farm," Rev. Orr said. "So, I went along to Burkes of Cornascriebe to ask if they would be able to help us out."

Burkes very kindly agreed to supply Rev. Orr with a New Holland T7.210 for his tractor driving challenge across the province.

Rev. Orr has "driven tractors for years" and is hopeful the journey will be a relatively comfortable one!

“It’s a bit like putting slurry out, returning every half hour to refill. I’ll be stopping at each of the churches I come to, not just driving constantly.

“I will be stopping at every place to take a picture so I will get my legs stretched and some fresh air. It shouldn’t be too bad.”

The rector will be covering the length and breadth of Northern Ireland in 12 days, visiting Armagh, Newry and Warrenpoint during the first leg of his journey on Sunday.

At night, he will be staying in B&Bs or with some of the kind-hearted parishioners who have offered to put him up along the way.

He hopes to finish the journey in Rathfriland on Friday 3 June.

“The money I am raising will be divided, with half going to Sands and half going to St. Mark’s.

“I will be collecting on my way round. I’ve had a sign made with a QR code on it for people to find out more and with information on how to donate if they would like to.

“Of course, I will stop if I see anyone along the way who

He continued: “I want to say a big thanks to Burkes, and to Patricia who has devised the whole route for me.

“It wouldn’t be possible without Steven, Sands, Burkes and Patricia.”

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Members of the church have been extremely supportive and excitement has been building ahead of Sunday's departure.

They had a special family service in St. Mark's, followed by burgers, before waving Rev. Orr off on his mammoth journey in the New Holland.

Parishioners and volunteers from the local Sands groups aim to meet Rev. Orr at as many churches as possible for a quick selfie, which will then be shared on the Sands Northern Ireland Facebook page.

Report courtesy of Farming Life

First Diocesan Family Fun Day since the start of the Covid pandemic

There was a very pleasant surprise in store for the scores of families and friends who descended on picturesque Oakfield Park, near Raphoe, on Saturday morning for the first Diocesan Family Fun Day since the start of the Covid pandemic.

The all-aged gathering was blessed with warm and dry conditions, allowing umbrellas and raincoats to remain out of sight.

The fun day had been organised jointly by SEEDS Children's Ministry and the Diocesan Mothers' Union whose hearts must have been buoyed by the sight of dozens of children using the playground, family groups picnicking in the award-winning gardens, and chattering groups waving



and laughing as they were transported round the park – past the castle and around the reeded lake – on a busy miniature





train.

There was, of course, a significant spiritual element to the day. Proceedings began with prayers, just after arrival, led by our Diocesan Children's Officer Kirsty McCartney, with music provided by Rev Johnny McFarland. Bishop Andrew Forster was there, to share a few words of welcome. These were followed by a joyful and comedic rendition of "the whole Bible story" by the drama duo 'Play It by Ear', which enthralled and amused both young and 'young at heart'.

The park's 'Fairy Tree' was transformed for the day into a prayer tree, upon which parishioners of all vintages were invited to hang prayers which they had been encouraged to write and then commit to God.

More photos at -

[\[https://www.derryandrathoe.org/sun-kissed-family-fun-day-at-oakfield-park/\]](https://www.derryandrathoe.org/sun-kissed-family-fun-day-at-oakfield-park/)



Service of Choral Evensong marks reopening of St. Macartin's Cathedral

The official reopening service for St. Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen has taken place, following extensive renovation works including the replacement of the Cathedral roof, complete internal redecoration, the refurbishment of the organ, and work in the grounds.

A special service of Choral Evensong was held on Sunday, 15 May when the Bishop of Clogher, the Rt Rev Dr Ian Ellis, officially reopened the Cathedral.

Among those in attendance were parishioners and friends of the Cathedral as well as many from across the community.

The Dean, the Very Revd Kenneth Hall introduced the service and expressed his thanks on behalf of the people and clergy of the Cathedral to the Project Management Team, including Mr Sam Morrow (Honorary Secretary), Mrs Hope Kerr (Honorary Treasurer), and the Cathedral's two Glebewardens, Mr George Irvine and Mr Noel Johnston. He thanked all those who gave of their help and time over the project, those who contributed towards the costs incurred

Music in Calary new series

The first live concert of the 2022 Music in Calary series will be at 8pm on Thursday in Calary church, Co. Wicklow.

Yue Tang (cello) and Sylvie Scerbaviciute (flute) will play a programme which includes music by J.S. Bach, Beethoven, Villa-Lobos: and Piazzola. Tickets may be had by contacting Derek Neilson at derekneilson@eircom.net or derekneilson11@gmail.com or ringing John on (01) 282 8146.

Armagh City Summer Walking Tours

Visiting Armagh this summer? Then don't miss one of the best ways to discover the city - an Armagh City Summer Walking Tour.

This guided tour will take you through the city centre at a leisurely pace, stopping off at various locations on a route of approx 1 km. You'll learn about the story of this city and its

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citizens from the pre-Christian era up to modern time with entertaining facts and anecdotes.

Tours take place Thursday - Saturday at 11am and Sunday at 2pm each week from 16th June – 11th September. Tickets cost £5 each, suitable for age 6+.

Book 🖱️ visitarmagh.com/trails/armagh-city-walking-tour/

Remembrance of Sister Paschal

Sr Paschal McMeel, who for 55 years was a sister & abbess at the Poor Clare monastery on the Cliftonville Road until its closure in 2012, went home to God in the Poor Clare Carlow monastery on 8th May 2022.

The month's mind Mass for Sr. Paschal will be celebrated in the Sacred Heart Church, Oldpark Road, Belfast at 12 noon on Saturday 4th June. Celebrant will be Bishop Donal McKeown.

Sr Paschal was much loved and respected in Belfast and beyond. Blessed with a wonderful personality, she made numerous friends throughout her life taking all their worries and anxieties to the Lord in prayer.

May she enjoy the peace and happiness of heaven.

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News reports

Three African primates boycotting Lambeth

The primates of three of Africa's largest Anglican churches, who claim to represent nearly half of the Anglican Communion's global membership, issued an open letter May 6 explaining that their decision not to participate in the March Primates' Meeting or the July Lambeth Conference is rooted in the unwillingness of the Communion's leaders to take decisive action to affirm traditional teaching about human sexuality.

The Most Rev. Henry Ndukuba, primate of the Church of Nigeria; the Most Rev. Laurent Mbanda, primate of the Church of Rwanda; and the Most Rev. Stephen Kaziimba, primate of the Church of Uganda also criticized the proposed agenda for this summer's Lambeth Conference, claiming that it focuses on "peripheral matters about the environment and difficulties experienced by disadvantaged communities" while "evad[ing] the crucial issue of human sexuality."

The communique issued by the Primates' Meeting specifically mentioned the three primates, whose provinces have not participated in the Canterbury-based Instruments of Communion since 2008: "We continue to lament the absence from our meetings of three primates who choose to

stay away. Our reflections, deliberations and fellowship are diminished by their absence.”

At the meeting’s press conference, Canadian primate Linda Nicholls encouraged the three primates to attend the Lambeth Conference, while Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said of them, in answer to a reporter’s question, “They don’t want to be in the room with those who have changed their teaching on marriage and the nature of human identity.”

The three primates’ letter referenced the events of 2008, which included the first major boycott of Anglican Communion gatherings and the issuing of The Jerusalem Declaration by the then-nascent GAFCON Movement. The Nigerian, Rwandan, and Ugandan churches have come to treat the movement as a traditionalist alternative to the Anglican Communion’s unifying structures (a view not shared by all who participate in GAFCON).

“The grounds upon which faithful GAFCON Provinces boycotted the 2008 Lambeth are still valid,” the primates said, “as nothing has really changed about the issues in contention, which broke the fabric of the Communion in the first instance. Rather, things are getting worse as the culprits are becoming more daring and persistent in their errors and rebellion.”

The presenting issue in the Anglican Communion’s “crisis of unity, faith, and ethics” has been homosexuality, but this, they say, is rooted in a deeper issue of “Biblical revisionism, arising from the adoption of secular culture within the Church.”

“The Anglican Church in the West,” they allege, “is in rebellion; having rejected fundamental beliefs in the authority of the Holy Bible, sound Biblical ethics, uniqueness, and Lordship of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is a form of apostasy, which Jesus Christ warned against in Matthew 16:11.

“It is becoming more apparent that Canterbury, which ought to moderate, mitigate, and ensure resolution of the crisis, is becoming too tolerant and complicit in the arrogance and errors of the revisionist Anglican Churches in the West,” they added. “For faithful Anglicans, Anglicanism is a way of life of total commitment to Biblical Truth that has no room for any revisionist agenda.”

The three primates note that the wide-ranging communique issued by the March Primates’ Meeting does not mention human sexuality, and further allege that “the conclusions reached by the Primates suggest that the subject of human sexuality is not on the agenda at the next Lambeth Conference, as if the problems generated by the admission of homosexuality as a normal way of life as opposed to Resolution 1.10 of the Lambeth Conference of 1998 could be swept under the carpet.”

At the Primates’ Meeting press conference, Archbishop Justin Welby did say, “It is certainly one of the agreed aims of the primates – I think, by everyone – that we do not have the whole Lambeth Conference spent talking about issues of human sexuality, but we look at those things that are destroying tens and hundreds of millions of human lives, and will do even more around the world.”

But there has been no indication from Lambeth Conference organizers that differences over human sexuality will be excluded from the agenda or that the bishops would not be asked to engage with Lambeth Resolution 1.10, as they did at the last Lambeth Conference in 2008 (while not taking a vote).

The primates' claim that their three provinces "represent about 30 million of the estimated 70 million Anglicans worldwide" is also contested. The World Christian Database last estimated (in 2015) that the Anglican Communion had a combined membership of 90,771,000. The Rev. Dr. David Goodhew, a longtime Covenant contributor who has written many columns on membership statistics, said the database "is widely regarded as the best quality data on world Christianity."

While the Anglican churches in Nigeria, Rwanda, and Uganda have grown rapidly in recent decades, some demographers seriously question the accuracy of their membership statistics. In a 2020 peer-reviewed article in *The Journal of Anglican Studies*, Andrew McKinnon, a sociologist at the University of Aberdeen, asserted that "the evidence from representative surveys finds that the claims often made of the Church of Nigeria consisting of 'over 18 million' exceedingly unlikely; the best statistical estimate is that under 8 million Nigerians identify as Anglican."

Comparisons between large church memberships are notoriously unreliable, because of self-reporting and varying definitions of "membership," among other reasons. Perhaps the best-known and most accessible database of Anglican Communion membership is on Wikipedia. The list there

relies on a variety of sources, and echoes the contested 18 million figure for Nigeria. According to the data collected there, the Anglican churches in Nigeria and Uganda (reported as 8 million) are the second and third largest provinces in the Communion, behind the Church of England (26 million, also a contested number). The Church of Rwanda is much smaller, at a reported 1 million, ranking 13th among the 41 autonomous provinces.

In the media

Churches to embrace Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations

The main church leaders in Northern Ireland have been invited to attend the official service of thanksgiving in St Paul's cathedral, London on Friday June 3 to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Billy Kennedy writes in The News Letter

It is hoped Her Majesty will be present at the service, which will also be attended by senior members of the royal family and government representatives, as, over a four-day period (Friday to Monday), the nation will celebrate 70 years of outstanding service by an iconic monarch for the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth.

The Queen, a deeply devout Christian, is head of the Church of England and her inspirational faith qualities have won admiration from people of all faiths across the UK and the Commonwealth.

The Platinum Jubilee theme will impact on services in the Protestant denominations in Northern Ireland over coming Sundays, with supporting community and social events organised at congregational and parish levels.

Presbyterian moderator the Rev Dr David Bruce said it will be an honour and privilege to represent Irish Presbyterians at the service in St Paul's cathedral.

“As The Queen celebrates this landmark anniversary, I know that some of our churches will be holding their own services of thanksgiving. For many people this will be a special time. For Christians we are called to pray for those in authority, which, of course, includes the Queen, as she has been a constant in a changing social and political landscape.”

Dr Bruce added: “Few people in Northern Ireland now can remember a time when The Queen was not part of the very fabric of national life. Queen Elizabeth has always been willing to talk about her personal faith in Jesus Christ. This witness has greatly encouraged many down the years.”

St Paul's cathedral, aside from the service of thanksgiving, is the setting for a special exhibition – ‘Jubilee: St Paul's, the Monarch and the Changing World’. This graphically explores the history of Jubilee celebrations at St Paul's cathedral across three centuries and examines the jubilee celebrations for past monarchs – King George III, King George V, Queen Victoria and the silver, golden and diamond jubilees of our present Queen.

Using objects from St Paul's extensive ‘Archive and Collections’, the exhibition displays beautifully embroidered

and ornate copes (or ceremonial cloaks) worn by clergy during special services; scrap books collected by staff and volunteers through the years, pictures and paintings from each memorable day.

The Dean of St Paul's, the Rev Dr David Ison confirms: "It is an honour to hold a service of thanksgiving for the reign of Her Majesty The Queen and to celebrate her 70 years of service to the UK and the Commonwealth. Our historic cathedral holds a very special place in royal ceremonial occasions".

A Queen's Platinum Jubilee service of thanksgiving will be held in St Patrick's Church of Ireland cathedral, Armagh on Thursday evening June 2 (8pm). The service is open to all members of the community to attend.

The Church of Ireland has published a set of resources for use in parishes at services celebrating the platinum jubilee. The material, which includes prayers, suggested readings and eucharistic propers, is intended to assist clergy, readers and other worship leaders as they prepare services to mark this significant national event.

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Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Updated edition of Divided States: Irish Independence and its Aftermath

An updated edition of *Divided States: Irish Independence and its Aftermath 1918–1923*, a reading list produced by the Church of Ireland's Historical Centenaries Working Group, has been published online. It sets out to guide all those who wish to study further an era in Irish history where, in both parts of the island, there are very different narratives and interpretations.

Divided States firstly covers the wider context of Irish history. It goes on to explore a number of more specialised topics: nationalism and unionism, events in Ireland in the crucial decade of 1913–1923, local studies, the Anglo–Irish Treaty, the Civil War, Partition and the development of Northern Ireland, the Southern Protestant community, and the role of women in the revolutionary era, alongside a number of personal perspectives.

It opens with a foreword by the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Revd John McDowell, and an introductory essay by his predecessor as Primate, Dr Richard Clarke. The working group, which is chaired by the Bishop of Cork, Cloyne

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& Ross, Dr Paul Colton, is grateful to Mr George Woodman for his work in compiling and updating a representative selection of the historical literature of this period.

Divided States was first published in April 2019, and both the first edition and this new edition are available to read and download at www.ireland.anglican.org/divided-states

Archbishop Robinson's legacy

The lecture series relating to Archbishop Robinson's collection of over 4,000 16th–18th century prints, continues at lunchtime on Tuesday via Zoom at 1–2pm.

This week's lecture will be on 'Archbishop Richard Robinson and his Prints Collection at Armagh Robinson Library'. Free places may be booked online –

at <http://armagh-robinson-library.arttickets.org.uk> - or by email to admin@armaghrobinsonlibrary.co.uk or by telephoning 028/048 3752 3142.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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