

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Churches raising issues at Cop27

Archbishop Julio Murray speaks on behalf of faith communities represented at COP27, after many hundreds of people from a variety of civil society organizations and faith communities across the globe march through the venue of the United Nations climate change conference COP27, calling for climate justice and urgent action, November 2022, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert.



Image of the day

Churches raising issues at Cop27

The Communion Forest, launched at the Lambeth Conference, is an important initiative in Anglican climate crisis response. Today, Anglicans are at COP27 representing how Anglicans are working for climate change around the

world.

Read about their aims here: bit.ly/3OcwvbP

News reports

Focus on Music

Music for Advent and Christmas in Portaferry this Saturday

November 16, 2022

USOC - Ulster Society of Organists and Choirmasters - invite you to join them this Saturday for the 'society's last event of 2022. featuring organ and and choral music for Advent and Christmas, performed by Andrew Harrison and Renaissance Chamber Choir, directed by Simon Neill. Venue: Portico of Ards, Portaferry. Time: 3:00 PM

Director of Music at St John's College

Christopher Gray has been named as the new Director of Music at St John's College.

Christopher is currently Director of

Music at Truro Cathedral, where he has led the choir since 2008. We look forward to welcoming you next year!



Christopher said: "I have long been an admirer of St John's College and the Chapel Choir whose performances have such intense power to move listeners. I feel a real affinity with the distinctive ethos of St John's and look forward to working with the extremely talented organists and singers who are the current custodians of its celebrated choral

tradition, as well as with the Headmaster and staff at St John's College School.”

Read more: bit.ly/christophergraydom

Irish Music Society of Oxford

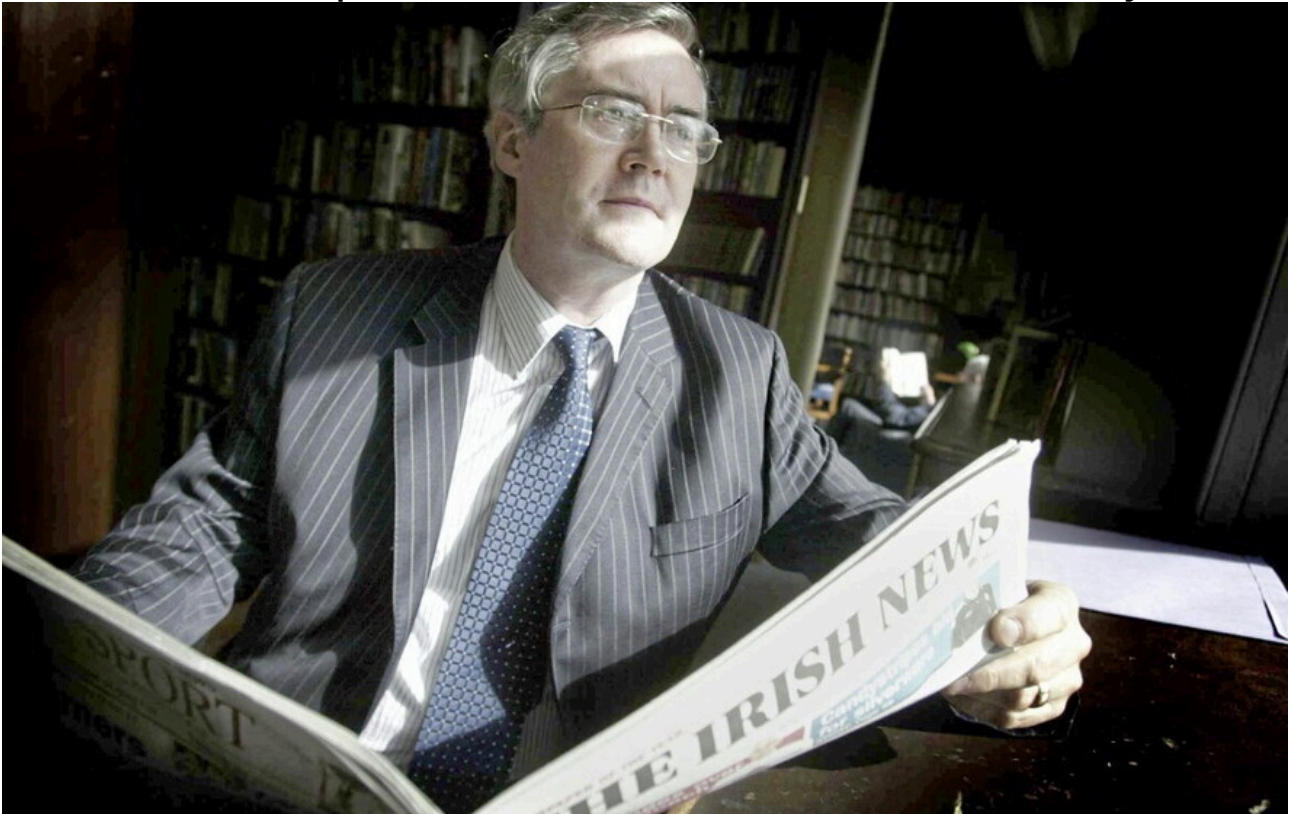
The Irish Music Society of Oxford (IMSO) states it “is dedicated to the study, performance, and promotion of Irish music in Oxford. Through concerts, recordings, and seminars, we offer a platform for the music of composers from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and to other composers associated with Ireland.

“Admission to the society is free and open to all students and alumni of the University of Oxford. We welcome both performers and non-performers, and we are interested in both historic and contemporary works. Our principal focus is the classical music of Ireland, though other genres are not excluded. We also offer support to Irish performers and scholars who are working with non-Irish music.”

QUB Chaplaincy tribute to Professor Eamon Phoenix

The Catholic Chaplaincy in a message says it “mourns the loss of a dear friend, Eamon Phoenix, who was married to his beloved wife Alice in the University Chapel over four decades ago. In recent times, the renowned historian and author gave the inaugural Macaulay Lecture in honour of the life and learning of our esteemed former Chaplain, the late Monsignor Ambrose Macaulay. On that occasion, current

Chaplain, Fr Dominic McGrattan, introduced the lecture with the words of Pope Francis: ‘for there to be true history, there



must be memory.’ Throughout a distinguished academic career, Eamon encouraged us to own rather than deny our history, so that we might better know and understand ourselves. May he rest in peace.”

Tributes to Mission Africa leader

Tributes have been paid to Presbyterian minister and missionary Rev Dr Paul Bailie who died suddenly just days after celebrating his 54th birthday.

Belfast Bible College expressed “profound sadness” after learning of the passing of “our esteemed friend and colleague”.



“As CEO of Mission Africa, Paul had an incredible influence for mission both at home and overseas,” it posted on social media.

“His passion and commitment to Africa were indefatigable and his drive and enthusiasm for the Gospel news of Jesus undiminished by illnesses, bandit raids in Kenya (and scars) and other challenges.”

The college said Dr Bailie first lectured as a part-time associate at the Dunmurry campus in 1996 and went on to teach at Union Theological College in Belfast.

Paul visited the college only last Thursday to speak to students about plans for a short-term overseas mission trip to Kenya in the summer of 2024.

"He was engaging, powerful and at times terribly funny.

"Afterwards over lunch, we reminisced about our long friendship and that crazy three-night journey down lake Nyasa, Malawi with only street sellers' oranges and warmish bottles of Coca Cola to live on, and that dodgy fish soup in Nigeria which incapacitated both of us for several days in the sweltering heat.

"We always enjoyed a good laugh."

Belfast Bible College said Dr Bailie's "greatest gift was his friendship" and said everyone at the campus offers thoughts and prayers to Dr Bailie's wife Anne, brother Mark and the rest of the family.

Broadcaster William Crawley paid an emotional tribute to his "best friend".

"It breaks my heart to speak of Paul Bailie in the past tense," he wrote on Twitter.

"He was the best friend life could afford; every encounter with him was a joy, an immeasurable blessing.

"I loved him like a brother and would have trusted him with my life.

"To his wife, my dear friend Anne, much love x".

The Reverend Steve Stockman posted on Facebook -
"Beyond sad... Thank you Paul for how you carried your

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convictions with such gentle grace... I will ever remember your inspirational discipleship and your laughter!”

Rev Dr Paul Bailie was ordained as a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) in January 1995.

His first post was in Greenwell Street Presbyterian Church in Newtownards under the Very Reverend Rodney Sterritt.

Dr Bailie and his wife, Dr Anne Bailie, went on to serve as missionaries with PCI in Africa.

He initially took up a role as deputy director of theological education by extension in Kenya later becoming Old Testament lecturer and academic Dean of the Presbyterian College.



In 2005 he was appointed to work with Mission Africa formerly known as the Qua Iboe Fellowship which is one of the oldest interdenominational evangelical missions in the UK.

The organisation said “it is with a heavy heart we wish to inform you of the sudden passing of our beloved Mission Africa Chief Executive, Paul Bailie.”

As a mark of respect its Belfast mission office will open on Thursday and Friday from 12pm-2pm to allow “friends and supporters who knew and loved him so dearly to gather together”.

Tea and coffee will be served downstairs where people can chat and reflect.

“Please come, so we can give thanks for Paul’s life and the example he left us,” a post on social media reads.

His work as Chief Executive of Mission Africa brought him regularly to Nigeria and other African nations to promote evangelism, theological education, medical projects and compassionate work.

His work was recognised by the PCI General Assembly which regarded him as a minister in Recognised Service.

The clergyman also served as Students Convener for Ards Presbytery and was an active member of the PCI Council for Ministerial Training.

The distinguished academic held a BA in Biblical Studies, Bachelor of Divinity, MPhil focusing on The King and The Levites in Chronicles and a PhD focused on The Abrahamic Covenant in Chronicles all obtained from Queen's University Belfast.

Dr Bailie, who also made time to pursue his hobbies of photography and shooting, also held a Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching and was a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

The Union Theological College website states "he maintains a strict and unyielding disinterest in rugby and football" and adds "he is not as old or as bad as he looks".

"Paul teaches various aspects of OT in Union College , across all 3 levels and occasionally helps with Masters and PhD supervision," it continues.

"Although he is primarily interested in Old Testament, he also studies African Church History and various aspects of military and police history."

His other memberships and interests included The Westminster Fellowship of PCI, Tyndale Fellowship, The Royal African Society and the Military Historical Society. He also served as a Chaplain with the Army Cadet Corps.

Acknowledgments - Belfast Telegraph and Mission Africa

CNI

Environmentalists block Pope's Christmas tree from being felled

The traditional Vatican Christmas tree in St Peter's Square may be missing this year

The Pope's Christmas tree is under threat this year after forestry protesters prevented it from being felled.

A huge 200-year-old fir tree intended as the focus of the Vatican's Christmas celebrations in St Peter's Square was not cut down after environmentalists opposed it. They argued that the 100ft fir tree grows in a protected reserve and must not be logged.

Dubbed by Italy's national news agency yesterday as "the tree of discord", the spruce fir grows in a forest on the border between the mountainous regions of Abruzzo and Molise.

It had been earmarked for the Vatican by the town of Rosello in Abruzzo but the felling was blocked by the forestry corporation after a protest launched by Dario Rapino, a naturalist and photographer.

He wrote to Pope Francis beseeching him not to allow the fir to be cut down and transported to Rome, quoting *Laudato Si'*, a 2015 encyclical by the Pope himself in which he stressed the need to protect the environment.

Mr Rapino said: “I asked him to intervene so that a centuries-old tree should not be cut down given its importance to the local ecosystem.”

The phrase *Laudato Si'*, which means “may you be praised”, was taken from a quote by St Francis of Assisi in which he called on humanity to respect the natural world.

Authorities have found that the tree in fact grows just across the border in Molise, meaning that the town of Rosello does not have the right to send it as a gift to the Pope because it does not come under the jurisdiction of Abruzzo.

The felling has now been suspended as the regions decide whether to try to identify another tree to cut.

The tradition of placing a Christmas tree in St Peter's Square in the weeks leading up to Christmas was established by Pope John Paul II in 1982.

Each year, a tree is donated by one of Italy's 20 regions or another European country. Past trees have been sent by Germany, Slovenia, Austria and Poland.

In 1989, Austrian environmentalists objected to one of their trees being donated and there was a similar debate over a tree in the forests of Calabria, in southern Italy, in 2006.



Scientists change their tune and disown Covid choir ban

The ban imposed on choirs during the pandemic was based on flawed evidence, scientists have concluded after finding that an outbreak at a church in America early in the crisis was not caused by a superspreader.

On March 10 2020, a rehearsal of the Skagit Valley Chorale in Mount Vernon, Washington, led to 52 of the 61 attendees being infected with coronavirus, and two deaths. An investigation by Skagit County public health officials laid the blame on a single chorister who turned up with symptoms and later tested positive for the virus.

Its findings were cited by countries that banned choirs and church gatherings on the grounds that indoor singing could spread the virus. The paper was quoted in 772 papers and downloaded or viewed 618,000 times.

But a review of the case by Nottingham Trent University, Brunel University and the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, concluded that many of the choristers' symptoms started too early to have been caused by the rehearsal. It appears the majority of people had been infected two to four days beforehand and that coronavirus was rife in the community.

Prof Robert Dingwall, of Nottingham Trent University, one of the review's authors, said: "There have been a lot of papers saying that choirs are dangerous, and citing this paper,

without actually questioning the findings. It was one of the first reports so it was very influential. But we looked at it and thought the speed with which people were getting infected and displaying symptoms was not very plausible. It didn't fit the epidemic curve.

“This was a building designed for 120, with quite a high ceiling and doors opening and constant air movement, it doesn't make sense to imagine that there are these clouds of aerosols drifting around and being inhaled. It is plausible there are risks in packed indoor spaces, but the risks of ordinary supermarkets, shops or church gatherings have probably been exaggerated.”

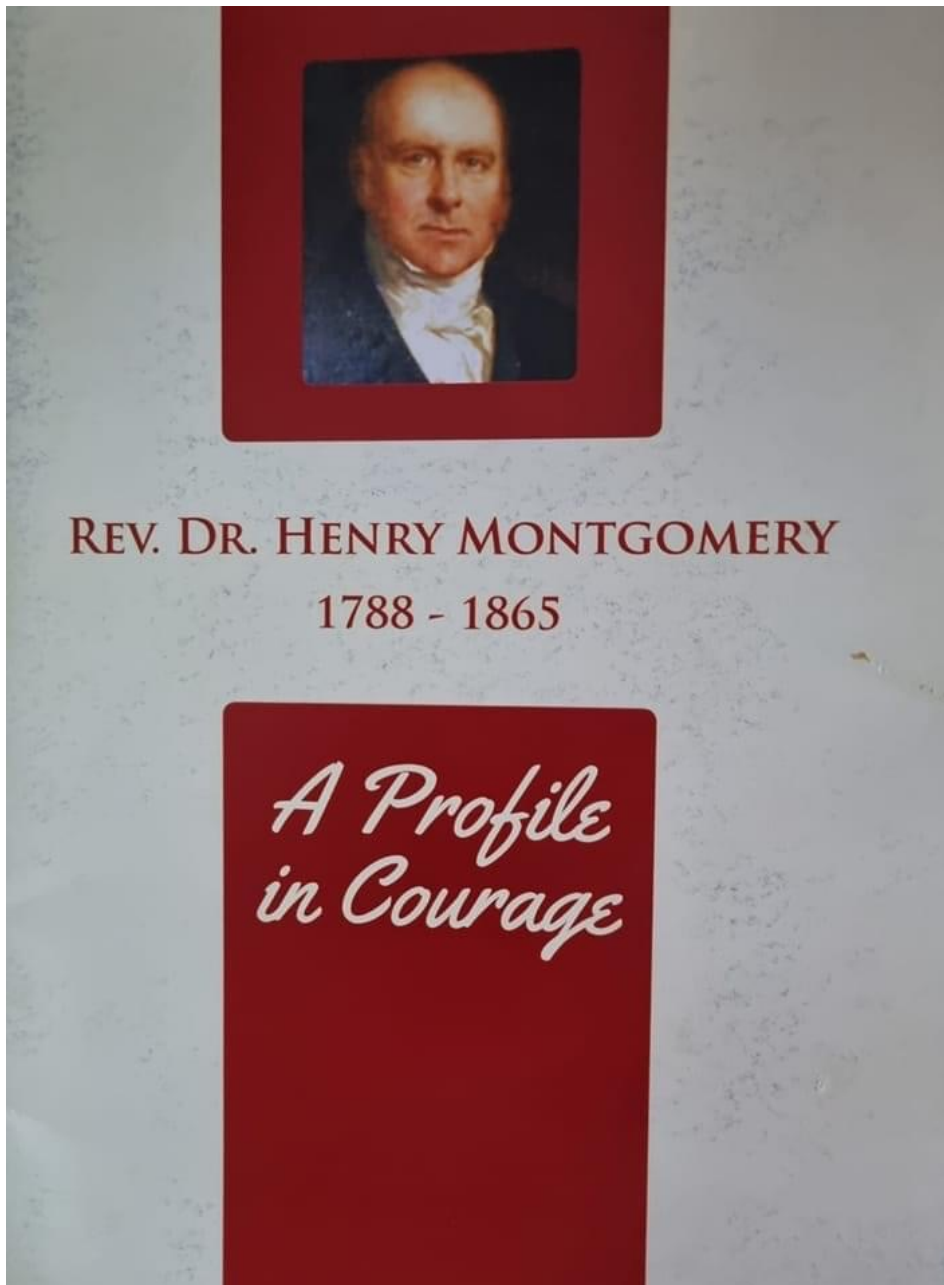
Although evidence emerged questioning airborne spread in well ventilated buildings, the incident was used to back indoor restrictions.

Prof Dingwall added: “Even in human challenge trials, where people have had the virus shoved up their noses, only about half get infected.”

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Insight on Non-subscription

"Suppose you pass your declaration and I refuse my assent or signature, which as an honest man I must refuse, you will probably say to me 'we can no longer give you the right hand of fellowship,' but if I subscribe to your creed, though



you know I do not believe it, then you will receive me as a brother in the Lord. How revolting then is this project. You will spurn the hand which is pure as the mountain snow, whilst you clasp, with the grasp of friendship, that which is black with the chains of perjury."

- Excerpt from the 1827 speech on 'Christian Liberty' given by Rev Henry Montgomery in Strabane Meeting House.

Read more about the 'founder of non-subscription' in the book, 'A Profile in Courage' by the late Rt Rev William McMillan.

Perspective

The splendid poet, Malcolm Guite, discovers another splendid writer...

On a visit to Northern Ireland, Malcolm Guite savours the work of C. S. Lewis

I have been spending a day or two amid the beauties of Northern Ireland, along the Antrim coast, with its Giant's Causeway and tantalising glimpses of Scotland across the water, and also, a little inland, in Coleraine, on the banks of the beautiful river Bann, where I was speaking at a C. S. Lewis conference put on by the University of Ulster.

It was a fitting place to celebrate and explore Lewis's works; for he was, and often affirmed himself to be, an Irishman, and, within that broader identity, more specifically, an Ulsterman.

Of course, when Lewis was born in Belfast in 1898, and, indeed, for the first 23 years of his life, Ireland was still united. When, as a teenager, he wrote enthusiastically to his Belfast friend Arthur Greeves about having discovered the poetry of Yeats, he said: "Here is a poet who really loves our mythology."

But, even after partition, Lewis still referred to himself simply as "Irish". When he was recording the talks that became 'The Four Loves' for an American audience, one of the producers queried his breathing and intonation. Lewis

replied: “I’m Irish, not English. Did you ever know an Irishman who did not puff and blow?”

More seriously, and with more particular nuance, he once disagreed with an Oxford student’s praise of Cromwell, because he shared the collective folk memory of the massacre Cromwell perpetrated at Drogheda, saying: “You see, I’m an Irishman. Yes, Northern Irish, but that makes it worse; the offenders you can’t forgive are the ones on your own side.”

The conference in Coleraine was very much alive to the nuances and particularities of Lewis’s Irish identity — not just politically (Lewis was a “Home Ruler” and quarrelled with his father, who was a Unionist), but also, and perhaps more importantly for Lewis, the influence of those mutually enfolded miracles of language and landscape.

Lewis loved the Irish landscape, particularly the beauties of Donegal (for which he invented the special word “Donegality”), but also the Carlingford Mountains in County Louth, especially where those mountains overlooked Carlingford Loch, a landscape that, Lewis once said, “most resembled Narnia”. Indeed, his hand-drawn map of Narnia, made to guide his illustrator Pauline Baynes, resembles quite closely the county and coastline of Louth, with Cair Paravel sited where Louth has its 12th-century King John’s Castle, a place where the first drafts of Magna Carta were begun.

There were linguistic experts at the conference, delighting us with some of the felicities of “Ulster Scots” as a dialect, and also, a wonderful surprise, we heard a reading from

'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe', as it has been translated into Irish, and not just generic Irish, but its specifically Ulster variants. The reader of that translation told us that the common term for a large wardrobe in those parts, in both languages, was a linen press; indeed, if you were to retranslate that book back out of Ulster Irish into English, its title would read 'The Lion, the Witch and the Linen Press'.

The day after the conference, I made my own pilgrimage to another special site — for me, at least: the magnificent Bushmills Distillery. On the tour, they explained how the distinct and subtle flavours of the whiskey were acquired over many years, from the particular woods of the barrels that they matured in. I, for one, will now feel more able to savour the distinctive flavours of the Irish landscape and language in which Lewis was steeped for so many years. Courtesy Church Times

Poem for today

On Seeing Brendan Kennelly Looking in the Window of Hodges Figgis By Joseph O'Connor

I think of you, Brendan, in hushed Dublin streets,
Walking at dawn past a shuttered store
Or pausing a moment to look at the statues
Of Goldsmith, Grattan, Connolly, Moore.
Grey gulls over Christchurch, the city still sleeping;
The burger bars closed and a rumour of snow.

Little to hear but the dawn alleluia
Of a Garda-car siren on Merrion Row.

Your mind rhyming melody, street-cry and humour,
Passionate memory, heart-aching loss;
Your heroes the ordinary; quiet Dublin widows
Hurrying in for early Mass
Past ghosts outside pubs in the hunger of morning,
Five-o-clock shadowmen, shook by the fates;
Cromwells and Judases, waiting for openings;
The people unnoticed by cold-eyed Yeats.

I think of you, Brendan, walking The Liberties,
Meath Street and Francis Street, down towards The
Coombe,
Watching the city in all of her vagaries
Wandering back to her lonely room.
Loving her streelings and early-hour homecomings,
The whip of her wit, and her dirty-faced talk,
You and the spirit of James Clarence Mangan
Sharing a coffee on Bachelors Walk.

I think of you, Brendan, drifting through Trinity,
Cobbles of history moistened by mist,
Head full of stanzas and jostling images,
Lovers you kissed by the rivers of Kerry.
The ferry from Tarbert traversing your memory;
Carrigafoyle in the dawn of the day,
The stream of your poetry flowing in eddies
From Béal Átha Longfoirt to Baile Áth Cliath.

Your shy smile by Bewleys, your handshake on Duke Street
One evening when August had glittered the town

And the windows all shining in mischievous cadence
With your stubble-cheeked grin, and your radiant frown
As you looked at the flower-sellers, told me a story
Told you in boyhood one Christmas night
By an old seanchaí with a hatful of characters;
Advent budded on Grafton Street.

Dawn-walker, teacher, lover of Dublin,
Leopold Bloom with the glistening eyes
Of a man who has seen all the ice-floes of folly
Drift down the Liffey and out towards the bay.
You pause on the bridges named for our poets.
I see you there, Brendan. You always knew
That words are a bridge on uncrossable rivers.
Beir bua, my brother. This bridge is for you

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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