



Image of the day - Faith leaders meet before COP 26

News Reports

Archbishop McDowell ‘ambivalent’ to NI centenary events

The Primate of the Church of Ireland believes Irish President Michael D Higgins would have “enriched” the NI Centenary service in Armagh last month, but added that it “wasn’t fatal” that some invited guests did not attend, Graeme Cousins reports in the News Letter

Speaking to The Saint Patrick Podcast, Archbishop John McDowell said he was “ambivalent” to events like the centenary because “everything didn’t go well” over the past 100 years in Northern Ireland.

While attended by PM Boris Johnston, Irish Foreign Affairs minister Simon Coveney and NI First Minister Paul Givan, the service was snubbed by the Irish president and SF’s Michelle O’Neill. The Queen was also forced to pull out for health reasons.

The archbishop said he continued to have great respect for President Higgins and declined to speculate about whether the Irish President would have felt at home at the service.

He told podcast hosts Martina Purdy and Elaine Kelly: “It would have been lovely to have him there because he would have enriched the gathering.”



Archbishop John McDowell, centre

He added: “We felt – still feel – that what we were planning as a good thing, that it was a positive thing. The word celebration never entered our heads and never entered our literature.”

The archbishop said the service was simply to acknowledge an historic fact regarding the partition of Ireland and the creation of Northern Ireland. He pointed out that the church leaders used the same language as the advisory body set up in the Republic of Ireland to deal with historical centenaries.

He acknowledged that, for some, these events were an appalling failure and for others, tremendous historical occurrences.

He said: “I suspect for a lot of people – myself included – they are ambivalent events.

“You can’t really look back over the past 100 years and say everything went well because everything didn’t go well and we wanted an opportunity to reflect that.”

The archbishop said that a large part of him just wanted to “move on” but reflecting on the service he said it wasn’t fatal that some people could not come.

He said: “It would have been, you know, good if other people who were invited were able to come but it wasn’t fatal to the whole thing that they weren’t.

“In fact at one stage I can remember Archbishop Eamon Martin and I saying, that if it was just the five of us there, it would still be a good thing.”

- The St Patrick Podcast can be accessed via the Saint Patrick Centre website
[www.saintpatrickcentre.com]

Church to encourage parishes to help with housing after Minister’s request

The Catholic Primate, Archbishop Eamon Martin, has said that dioceses and parishes will be encouraged to take action in response to a Government request that the church identify property it owns which could help

tackle the housing crisis, Cormac McQuinn reports in the Irish Times.

In a letter to Minister for Housing Darragh O'Brien, the archbishop is understood to have offered no specific Catholic Church land or buildings that could be used – pointing out that control of such properties lies with local charitable trusts.

He also raised questions over whether the Government's housing delivery targets would meet demand.

But he told Mr O'Brien the church would continue to “play our part” in alleviating the suffering caused by the crisis.

As a result of the correspondence, The Irish Times understands Mr O'Brien will issue an instruction to local authorities as early as this week to engage with trusts that control church land in a bid to identify properties that could be used for housing.

Property portfolio

The letter from the archbishop to Mr O'Brien comes after the Government request was discussed at the autumn general meeting of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference last month.

Mr O'Brien first wrote to Archbishop Martin in August about “the scope for potential engagement” with the church to address the housing crisis.



Archbishop Eamon Martin

His letter acknowledged the independence of the church in managing its property portfolio as well as how addressing the housing crisis is primarily the State's duty.

But he also noted that some dioceses have been engaging with local authorities in relation to unused land banks and properties and expressed a hope that this “can be replicated on a broader scale to help make a contribution towards addressing the national housing crisis”.

In his response Archbishop Martin is understood to have welcomed the Government's Housing for All plan as an “important step” in efforts to resolve the crisis. However, he also questioned if the target of delivering 33,000 homes per year would meet demand due to a backlog that has built up.

Church lands

Sources with knowledge of the correspondence said the archbishop also set out church efforts to help with housing and homelessness including the work of organisations like Crosscare and the Peter McVerry Trust.

He told the Minister for Housing that, in response to his letter, “discussion and action” would be encouraged at a local level in the church.

He said church property was controlled by local charitable trusts and religious orders had similar arrangements.

The church would “continue to play our part” in helping those suffering from the crisis, he added.

Mr O’Brien responded by acknowledging the invaluable work of church organisations in relation to housing, and welcomed Archbishop Martin’s commitment to encourage local action.

He said he would send instructions to city and county councils to engage with their local church trusts on potential opportunities to work together to provide social and affordable homes. The goal is to open communication between local authorities and the organisations that control church land, but the instruction to the councils would be without prejudice to any decision by trusts on their portfolios.

Quote - Archbishop Welby

It’s been fitting to start this day at COP26 praying with Anglicans from around the Communion who have dedicated themselves to ClimateJustice. Praying for their prophetic voices to be heard and acted upon.



'I will learn to sit with you and I will learn to listen' is now on display at Glasgow Cathedral until November 26.

Art installation launches Glasgow Cathedral's programme of COP26 events

An art installation repurposing old chairs has been unveiled at Glasgow Cathedral to launch the programme of COP26 events which will be taking place at the historic building.

'I will learn to sit with you and I will learn to listen' is now on display at Glasgow Cathedral until November 26.

'I will learn to sit with you and I will learn to listen' is a way for visitors to engage with issues around climate change and to reflect on how we can all try to understand other's perspectives and experiences.

The piece, created by artists Gardner & Gardner, comprises of 122 redundant church chairs, which have been repurposed for the installation.

Rev Peter Gardner, who is the Church's minister to the Visual Arts Communities of Glasgow and is part of the artistic duo behind the work, alongside creative partner and wife Heidi, explained what it represents.

"At first glance the installation, viewed from the doorway of the Blackadder Aisle, appears to be a jumble of chairs but on closer observation it reveals itself as a field of sculptural forms," he said.

"Each form consists of a pair of chairs, symbolising unequal power relationships among individuals, communities and nations, highlighting our communal failure to listen to one another.

"During COP26, we are reweaving one pair of chairs in an alternative material.

"When completed, the chairs will be positioned facing each other, thus enabling a conversation of equals and inviting a renewed commitment to listen to the voices of others in order to bring about change that will allow social justice and climate justice to be realised.

"Our hope is that 'I will learn to sit with you and I will learn to listen' will encourage and enable gentle, honest dialogue around climate change."

November 2, 2021

Glasgow Cathedral will also be hosting other art installations through the COP26 period, including a neon sign by internationally renowned artist James Pfaff, which reads 'Returning and Into Your Arms'.

In addition, I.D Campbell's work 'Protest Art: a Lament in Black Paint', will feature three portraits where the faces are partly obscured by black paint. The paintings represent lives that have been devastated by the climate crisis in countries around the world and will be on display from Saturday 6 until Tuesday 9 November.

Other events taking place at Glasgow Cathedral will include a climate-themed Sunday service on 7

November at 11am, where Lord Wallace, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, will preach the sermon, followed by an ecumenical service later in the day at 4pm.

On Monday 8 November Christian Aid is hosting 'The Time Is Now: Christian Aid and Friends From Glasgow Cathedral,' which will include the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams as one of the guests.

French religious community Taizé will be leading prayers at Glasgow Cathedral at 7pm on Tuesday 8 November.

Rev Mark Johnstone, who is the minister of Glasgow Cathedral, said: "For 1200 years people have come to the site of this cathedral - it is the people's cathedral.

"All are welcome in this place as we continue to communicate the relevancy of the Christian faith today."

'I will learn to sit with you and I will learn to listen' will run from Monday 1 - Friday 26 November but please check opening times and reserve a time slot for free via the Historic Environment Scotland website.

Churches should serve as 'food banks and laundrettes' to avoid risk of closure

Thousands of churches in Britain have been lost in the last decade, it has emerged, as a charity warns that the buildings must not go the way of village pubs, libraries and post offices.

The National Churches Trust has launched a campaign to highlight how churches and chapels are at risk of being sold, demolished or converted into homes unless local communities use them.

39,800

The number of churches of all sects across the UK that are open and being used. The figure was around 42,000 10 years ago

The number of churches of all denominations across the UK that are open and being used has fallen from around 42,000 to 39,800 in the last 10 years, according to research by the Brierley Consultancy.

However, many churches have now diversified, with communities using them in different ways, including as youth clubs, vaccination centres, Alcoholics Anonymous

meeting places or food banks, with one even providing a laundry service.

Ensuring the buildings offer uses other than serving as a place of worship can help ensure they continue to meet the needs of local people, the trust said.

Claire Walker, the trust's chief executive, said many churches had closed in more isolated areas of Scotland and Wales, but also in English inner cities.

"This is a shame, because it is where they are most needed," she said.

"They are the beating heart of villages, towns and cities. But they are also often the only places that are open in some communities where the village pub, shop and library have gone."

Explaining how one church even offered a laundrette service, she added: "You just need a church to be windproof and watertight then you have a brilliant asset for the local community."

Sir Michael Palin, vice president of the trust, pointed out that Covid restrictions had meant there have been fewer worshippers and so less funds raised to help with the upkeep of the buildings.

The 78-year-old former Monty Python star said: "[Churches] remain a vital and much-loved part of the UK's history and heritage, and we can't let them fall into neglect and disuse.

“There is hope. More and more churches are adapting to the modern world and the needs of their communities, providing not just spiritual comforts but a range of valuable services to local people such as food banks and youth clubs.

“We must build on this and encourage people of all sorts and from all backgrounds to find hope and relevance in their local churches.”

A trust spokesman added that funding for the repair and maintenance of church buildings had to be found by congregations because it was not provided by central church authorities.

This was difficult for churches in deprived inner-city areas or for rural churches with few worshippers.

People and places

Staff celebrate Elaine’s 30 years in Church House, Belfast

Staff in Church House gathered on Monday November 1 to mark a significant anniversary – 30 years to the day since Mrs Elaine Wright began working for the dioceses of Connor and Down and Dromore.

Elaine, currently clerical assistant with the Diocese of Connor, started as a telephonist/receptionist in Church House when the offices were based in Talbot Street, now the offices of Belfast Cathedral.

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Prior to that, she had worked in admin with the firm of Stevenson and Turner, later moving to the firm of Stevenson and Reid.

Elaine Wright

When she returned to work after the birth of her daughter, Church House staff had moved into the present office in Donegall Street, and Elaine was part of the administration team. Following

restructuring in 2017, Elaine became an integral part of the Connor team.

Married to Nigel, Elaine is mum to Nicola and Andrew. She is a parishioner of Holy Trinity, Woodburn, Carrickfergus.

At the special coffee morning to celebrate her 30 years of service to Church of Ireland House, the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, said: "We want to say thank

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you – thank you for your faithfulness and dedication over the years and thank you for the friendship we enjoy with you.”

All will be revealed today



Martin & Steve’s Big 60th Birthday Fundraise for Embrace NI...

“The pennies are in... the total is counted...

and the big announcement will be in the Belfast Telegraph online on Tuesday and in print on Wednesday...

you can tell that we were surprised” said the Rev Steve Stockman and Fr Martin Magill.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts and books

Presbyterian Church Climate Sunday videos

To accompany the PCI Climate Sunday initiative, two films have been produced featuring PCI Moderator, Right Rev Dr David Bruce in conversation with Olivia Elwood, an Environmental Management student and member of Bloomfield Presbyterian Church. Dr Bruce and Olivia discuss climate change, why the Church should care and what we can do.



This is the shorter video suitable for sharing in a church service and a longer more indepth conversation for those who would like to learn more. Download from Vimeo to use in your church service:

<https://vimeo.com/589306331>

A Service of Holy Communion for All Saints' Sunday - recording

Worship from Whalley Abbey, Lancashire, for All Saints' Sunday. This Service of Holy Communion is led by the Bishop of Lancaster Jill Duff, with a sermon Rev Nicholas Heale, Priest-in-charge of the North & East Blackburn Benefice. It is available for playback at -
[[<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-church-online/weekly-online-services/service-holy-communion-all-saints?>

A Time of Public Remembrance

Organised by East Belfast Community Development Agency and East Belfast Churches - A Public Time of Remembrance to remember lives lost during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over these past several months life has been very challenging for all, not least for those of us who have lost loved ones to COVID-19 or other illnesses. It has been particularly difficult to celebrate their lives as we would have wanted or wished. As such, East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA) and the East Belfast Churches Network are hosting a Time of Public Remembrance in C.S. Lewis Square. This event will consist of music, readings and a silent time of remembrance.

The aim of this event is to give encouragement and support to all who mourn and also give an opportunity to celebrate the lives of those that we have lost. Numbers are limited and subject to COVID-19 regulations. Registration required. Event subject to Belfast City Council approval

Date and time - Sun, 21 November 2021, 14:00 – 15:00

Location - CS Lewis Square, 402 Newtownards Road
Belfast, BT4 1HH

Book Review: The Rise and Fall of Christian Ireland by Crawford Gribben

Review by Gladys Ganiel -

Crawford Gribben's new book, *The Rise and Fall of Christian Ireland* (Oxford, 2021) is a remarkable read. With a narrative spanning almost two millennia captured in a main text of just 220 pages, Gribben covers a vast amount of ground in a relatively concise text. His achievement is to provide much needed perspective on where Irish Christianity came from and where it may be headed.

The book is published by an academic press and Gribben is a historian at Queen's University Belfast. But it is written in a clear, engaging style and has a £25 price tag, making it accessible for a general audience.

The book includes some details of pre-Christian Ireland. But – as would be expected – it really gets going with the arrival of St Patrick. Though Patrick was not the first Christian missionary to Ireland he is certainly the best known. Gribben helpfully contextualizes Patrick's mission as occurring 'at the end of the world': the disintegration of the Roman empire made Christians feel as if they were living in the last days.

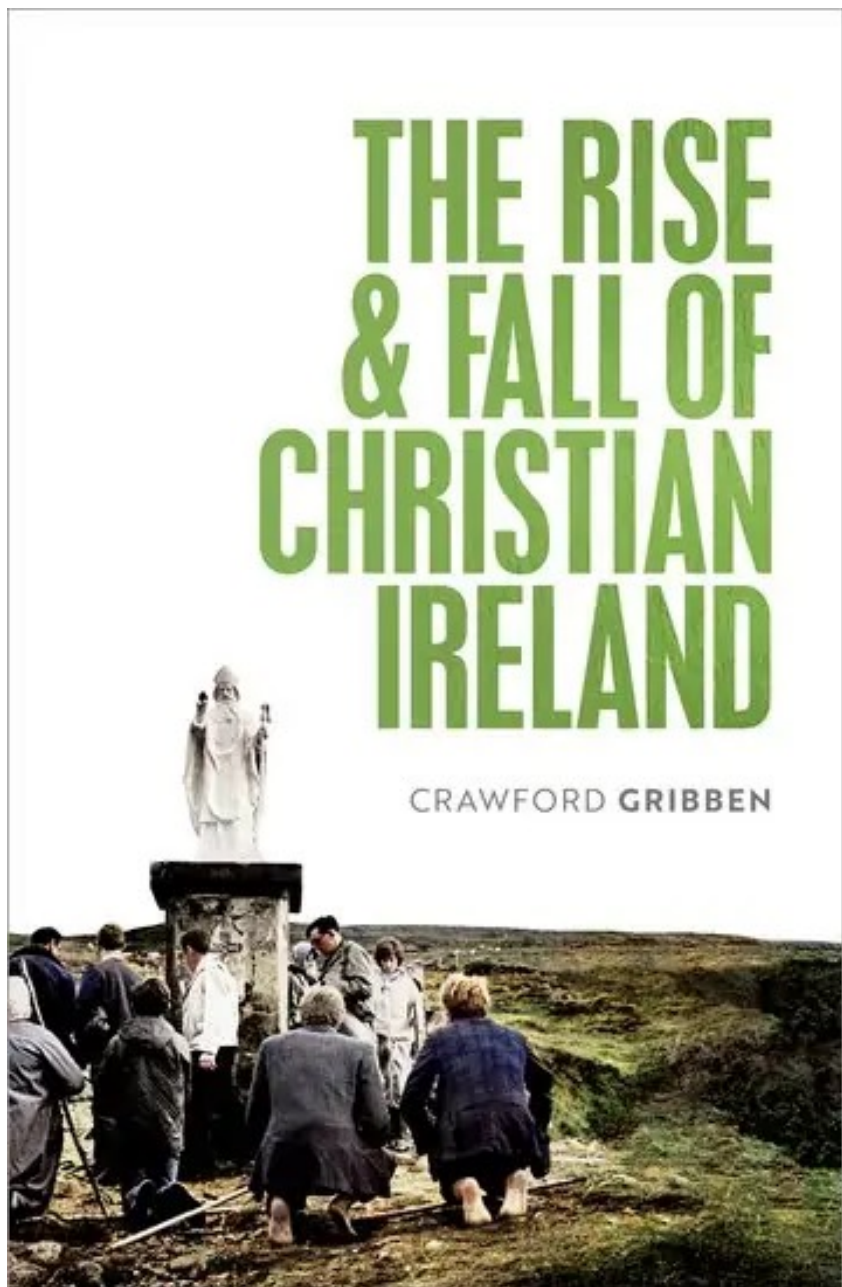
Apocalyptic insecurities arise again and again in Gribben's telling of the story of Christian Ireland (for example, in the development of dispensationalist theology by Church of

Ireland minister John Nelson Darby in the nineteenth century), and remind us of the relationship between religious zeal and times of social, economic and political insecurity.

Gribben covers the best-known highlights of the island's Christian history, including the development of a sophisticated monastic system of church governance; the globally-significant

role of Irish missionaries like Columbanus and Columba (the work of Irish missionaries in more recent centuries is relatively under-examined); and the Catholic 'devotional revolution' and Protestant evangelical revivals of the nineteenth century.

Much attention is paid to the churches' relationships with political power – and rightfully so – given that this is such an important part of the island's story. Gribben also considers the cultures of abuse cultivated in independent 'Catholic



Ireland' as well as Northern Ireland's recent 'Troubles.' He writes of 'sudden onset secularization' in the Republic and a slower, but still seemingly inexorable, process of secularization in Northern Ireland, trends that have become increasingly obvious since the 1990s.

The focus on relationships between religion and politics means that at times details of the social roles of religion, including its importance in people's everyday lives, are under-examined (here, engagement with Tom Inglis's sociological work could have proved helpful). Of course, in a book of this scope and ambition, it is useful to remember that tough decisions about inclusion and exclusion had to be made.

Women's contributions are present – for example, readers meet Lizzie Gillan, a Brethren missionary to China. But overall women are under-represented, especially in recent decades, when we know that women are more likely to practice their religion than men. For example, Gribben rightly identifies former Taoiseach Enda Kenny as a strong moral voice as truth about abuse in the Catholic Church came to light; he equally might have emphasized how former President Mary McAleese or survivor Marie Collins exuded moral authority in these conversations.

The title of the concluding chapter is 'Losing Faith in Ireland?' and in it Gribben considers whether or to what extent Christianity may survive. This makes for fascinating reading. Up to this point in the book, Gribben's historical account should already have alerted readers to the facts that religion is always changing, devotion has peaks and troughs, and religion's socio-political significance waxes and

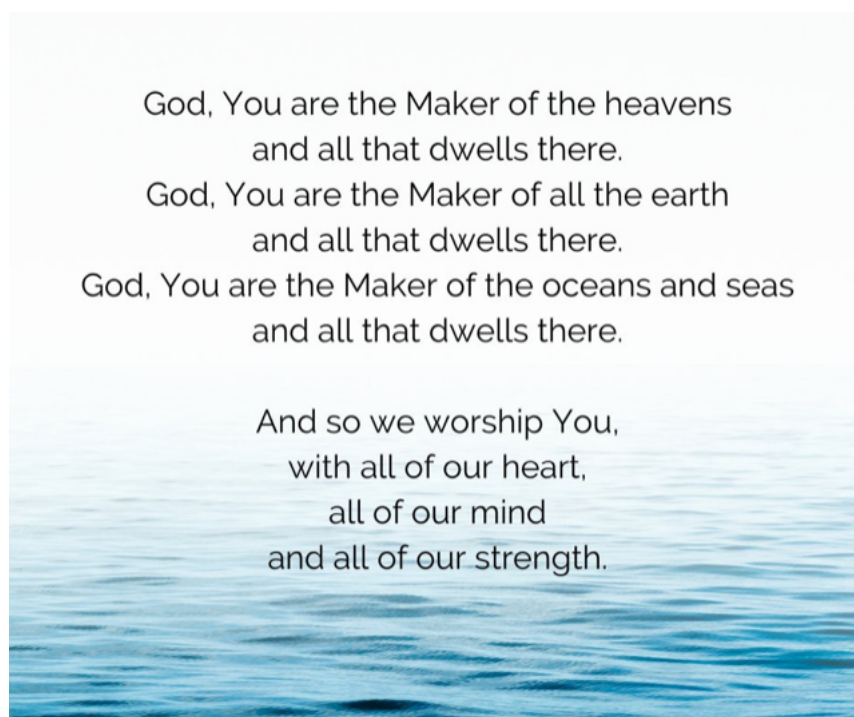
wanes. He pays considerable attention to the activities of more conservative laity, both Catholic and Protestant, seeing in their intentional communities a means by which faith may survive. Less attention is paid to more liberal Christians or clergy trying to reform our historical denominations from within.

But if there is one message to take away from the book, it is that Irish Christianity has risen and fallen many times before. What happens next will be up to the people that Gribben calls the 'new Patricks' – and the decisions they make about how they live their faith today, and tomorrow.

Watch: Crawford Gribben, Andrew Holmes and Gladys Ganiel (yes, that's me) discuss Christianity in Ireland: From Partition to Present for 'Creative Centenaries':

YouTube video link at -

[[] <https://sluggerotoole.com/2021/10/31/book-review-the-rise-and-fall-of-christian-ireland-by-crawford-gribben/>]



Gladys Ganiel

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Poem for today

An October Garden by Christina Rossetti

In my Autumn garden I was fain
To mourn among my scattered roses;
Alas for that last rosebud which uncloses
To Autumn's languid sun and rain
When all the world is on the wane!
Which has not felt the sweet constraint of June,
Nor heard the nightingale in tune.

Broad-faced asters by my garden walk,
You are but coarse compared with roses:
More choice, more dear that rosebud which uncloses,
Faint-scented, pinched, upon its stalk,
That least and last which cold winds balk;
A rose it is though least and last of all,
A rose to me though at the fall.

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