



**Image of the day - Manchester Cathedral CoP**

## News Reports

### Sir David Amess: Priest quits social media over MP last rites abuse

**A priest said he felt forced to delete his Twitter account after being accused of not doing enough to administer last rites to Sir David Amess.**

Fr Jeffrey Woolnough said he rushed to the scene on 15 October when he heard the MP - a devout Catholic - had been stabbed in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex.

But the priest said police would not let him enter to deliver the sacrament as it was a crime scene.

Fr Woolnough said criticism he had since received was "hurtful".

"Most people have been so kind with messages of support, others have accused me of capitulating at the scene," he said.

"The police have a job to do. When I say I have to respect it, it doesn't mean I agree with it.

"But I have to respect as a law-abiding citizen that the police would not allow me in and I had to find plan B, and plan B for me was prayer, and I had to pray on the spot, pray on the rosary."



Fr Woolnough is the parish priest at St Peter's Catholic Church, Eastwood, Southend, close to where Sir David was killed.

He said he "foolishly" tried to defend his actions on social media but it "stirred up a hornet's nest" so he deleted his Twitter account.

"I was trying to let people know I had tried my very best but apparently my best wasn't good enough," he said.

Fr Woolnough said he had since had telephone conversations with "some really top priests in the hierarchy" who told him he "did the right thing".

The "Amess amendment" has since been proposed to ensure access for Catholic priests, including at crime scenes.

The intention is to add it to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

The man accused of killing Sir David will face trial next year. Ali Harbi Ali, 25, of Kentish Town in north London, is charged with murder and the preparation of terrorist acts.

An inquest into the death of Sir David is due to be opened by the Essex coroner on Wednesday.

## **Moderator Designate of the Church of Scotland General Assembly 2022-23 named**

**A minister who has a personal view that the possession of drugs should be decriminalised has been named as the next Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.**

Rev Iain Greenshields, who believes addiction should be treated as a public health issue, said he is "honoured" to have been nominated to take up the 12-month ambassador role next May.

The 67-year-old minister of St Margaret's Community Church in Dunfermline, Fife, said locking up people who are often "self-medicating" to cope with psychological challenges and severe life issues did not work and instead they should be treated in high-quality residential rehabilitation centres.





## Rev Iain Greenshields

Speaking purely in a personal capacity, the Moderator Designate believes that the approach would be of personal benefit to the individuals concerned and advantages society as a whole.

He said his views are based on his experiences over many years supporting people through church outreach projects and his role as a prison chaplain as well as work in psychiatric chaplaincy.

There are a great many challenges facing our society today including climate change, poverty, mental health, social isolation, addiction and the Church is active in supporting those in genuine need.

Mr Greenshields, who became a Christian at the age of 22 and was ordained in 1984, said: "I am honoured and

humbled to have been chosen as Moderator Designate and I aim to represent the Church and God in a way that is positive, instructive and hopeful.

"There are a great many challenges facing our society today including climate change, poverty, mental health, social isolation, addiction and the Church is active in supporting those in genuine need.

"Ultimately the greatest need in our society is the spiritual vacuum that exists in the lives of so many."

Mr Greenshields welcomed a recent announcement from Scotland's Lord Advocate, Dorothy Bain QC, that the police will be advised to issue recorded warnings for possession of any illegal substances instead of referring offenders to prosecutors.

"Whilst I have the upmost sympathy for victims of crime who may have been targeted in order for people to get their hands on drugs, this is a positive development," he said.

"I really believe that prison is not the answer for the vast majority of people who are behind bars because of illegal drug issues and we have to find another way to recover their lives.

"When you look into the background of those who take drugs, you realise it is largely about self-medicating to treat some kind of trauma.



## St Margaret's Community Church in Dunfermline, Fife.

"They are in a desperate situation and what is needed is not criminalising them and sending them to prison but ensuring that they get the best rehabilitation support possible.

"This can only be for the betterment of society.

Mr Greenshields spent eight years serving as a chaplain at the former Longriggend Young Offenders' Institution in Airdrie, North Lanarkshire and nearby Shotts Prison.

"My view on decriminalisation is a personal one and it is not the official position of the Church," he said.

"I have come into contact with so many broken lives as a consequence of either abuse or addiction.

"The reality is you are not going to stop people taking drugs and what disturbs me is the sheer junk on the streets which passes off as heroin or cocaine and other substances that people are taking.

"I realise that some people will throw their hands up in horror but I am not saying I support drugs, I am just being realistic and pragmatic about the situation."

Mr Greenshields said St Margaret's Community Church hosts addiction support groups in the building free of charge and employs a dedicated outreach worker, a role currently held by his son, Alistair.

He said the congregation could do much more to help people if additional public funds were available.

A total of 1,339 people died of drug misuse in Scotland last year, with the country seeing a record number of deaths for the seventh year in a row.

Born and brought up in the Drumchapel area of Glasgow, Mr Greenshields is married to Linda, a Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies teacher at Levenmouth Academy in Buckhaven, Fife.

The couple have six children – Alistair, 31, Ross, 30, Caitlin, 27, Eilidh, 18, Siona, 15 and Suisaidh, 10, and a grandson, Oran, who was born in August.

Their three youngest daughters come from different parts of China.



After adopting Eilidh in 2004, he and his wife set up a charity called Hope4China's Children the following year and it has raised £1.2 million to provide education, support, medical care and foster care for around 800 girls in Guangxi Province.

"This has to be at the heart of everything that we do and I think the Church, as a whole, needs to recover and rediscover what it means to be a missionary church otherwise it has no future".

A lifelong fan of Partick Thistle Football Club, Mr Greenshields said he is a fit and active person who enjoys time with the family, learning and personal growth, reading, cycling, badminton and the very occasional game of golf.

The current Moderator of the General Assembly is Lord Wallace of Tankerness.

## **Ex-BBC politics journalist Martina Purdy slams NI parties over abortion**

**Former BBC NI politics correspondent Martina Purdy has hit out at Northern Ireland's liberalised abortion laws, Adam Kula write in the News Letter.**

She made the comments on Twitter on Sunday marking two years since a law was enforced from Westminster, effectively decriminalising abortion in the Province.

The former BBC journalist – who since quitting the industry in 2015 went on to become a Catholic nun – wrote: “The right to self-determination and the devolved process was

traded by Sinn Fein and the SDLP and others, including Alliance and UUP, for cheap and nasty abortion policy.”

Meanwhile the group abolish Abortion NI hit out at last week’s Armagh centenary service, rebuking the churchmen involved for not insisting that the politicians who were worshipping with them “repent” of their pro-choice stance.

In a statement the group said: “During his sermon Reverend Dr Yambasu of the Methodist Church gave a strong denunciation of slavery.

“He described how dehumanisation had enabled this act of evil and how easily it deems people as disposable.

“They were strong words, but they were easy words.

“Rev Dr Yambasu was speaking to people who agreed with him. Indeed, all of society agrees with his view that slavery is evil, but it wasn’t always that way; 250 years ago society supported slavery.”

The statement added that abortion is a similar type of “dehumanisation” and chastised the clergy involved for hosting pro-choice politicians without raising the subject.

“Were they called to repent? No,” it said.

“Were they called to turn from their sin? No.

“Were they called to obey Christ and all that he has commanded? No.”

## People and places

### Drumbeg youngsters call for climate justice ahead of COP26

**Young people in Drumbeg Parish are sending a message to world leaders, demanding ‘climate justice’ for developing countries ahead of make-or-break talks being held in Glasgow next month.**

The six youngsters, all members of St Patrick’s Youth Group, are using their voices to demand action on climate change that takes account of the needs of low-income countries when world leaders meet at the United Nations’ climate conference, COP26.

The young people and their leaders took part in a Christian Aid-organised action, making origami paper boats on which they wrote their hopes and prayers for the summit. The paper boats symbolise that although we are all in the same storm, we aren’t in the same boat when it comes to dealing with the impacts of climate change. Richer countries like the UK and Ireland which have contributed most to the problem of climate change are well-placed to cope with its effects while people in developing countries are already experiencing intense heatwaves, prolonged drought, dangerous cyclones, calamitous flooding and devastating locust swarms. In developing countries, far from being a distant threat, climate change has for many years been destroying crops, homes and livelihoods.



The Drumbeg paper boats will join a Christian Aid ‘flotilla’ of thousands of ‘little boats’ being displayed in a Glasgow cathedral to coincide with the crucial summit, representing growing public demands for urgent action to avert runaway climate change.

Christian Aid and its supporters are making three key demands of negotiators at the summit:

To increase financial support to the world’s poorest countries to confront the climate crisis.

To take action to reduce carbon emissions in order to limit the rise in average global temperatures to 1.5C.

To stop the expansion of fossil fuel energy and invest in clean energy.

Christian Aid Ireland Chief Executive Rosamond Bennett thanked the youngsters for sending a message to political leaders ahead of the Glasgow summit. She said:

“Concerned citizens and climate activists are coming together to demand real, immediate and lasting action to avert a climate catastrophe. When they meet in Glasgow,



world leaders will be hearing their voices and the voices of millions more like them. The seas are rising but so are we.”

To send your message to world leaders meeting next month in Glasgow, follow the instructions in this link:  
[www.caid.ie/cop26](http://www.caid.ie/cop26)

## **Trees and seeds planted in Rathcoole on Climate Sunday**

**Climate Sunday was marked in St Comgall’s, Rathcoole, on October 17 with a special service followed by tree and seed planting.**

Guest preacher at the service was the Rev Dr Ron Elsdon.

Priest-in-Charge, the Rev Arlene Moore, said: “Dr Elsdon gave an inspiring address using his extensive knowledge and expertise to highlight the issues affecting our world, put our responsibilities in their rightful biblical context and not only underline the challenges we face, but also the hope and comfort that is ours if we take God’s Word and the stewardship of God’s world seriously.”

The Rev Dr Ron Elsdon plants the new pear tree.  
The Rev Dr Ron Elsdon plants the new pear tree.

During the service, the congregation was led in a commitment to care for the environment and to take personal responsibility for effecting positive change; and prayers were said for the upcoming COP26 conference in Glasgow.



The Rev Arlene Moore and the Rev Dr Ron Elsdon look on as Alan Jones, Rector's Glebewarden, plants the apple tree on Climate Sunday in Rathcoole.

Afterwards, members of the congregation regathered outside to put their worship and commitment into immediate action

The parish had recently received RCB/diocesan permissions to remove a dead sapling tree from the grounds and in accordance with Church of Ireland policy, two trees were to be planted in its place.

Arlene thanked Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council for its help in sourcing the trees. A pear tree was dedicated in memory of all those who had died in the parish and community during the coronavirus pandemic, and those who

could only have restricted funerals. The tree was planted by Dr Elsdon.

An apple tree, obtained from the Woodland Trust, was also planted as part of Her Majesty the Queen's Green Canopy Initiative to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee in 2022. This was planted by Alan Jones, Rector's Glebewarden. Alan is caretaker for all parish buildings and also maintains the church grounds.

Two children help to plant seeds.

Arlene said: "We love the symbolism that the planting of fruit trees on church grounds represents, coming especially just after the sermon on the Parable of the Sower and the growth of the seeds given by Victoria Jackson [Connor Children's Ministry Development Officer] at our Harvest Service on October 3.

"We were delighted to discover that the apple tree was already bearing some beautiful fruit on arrival and of course we pray that not only the trees but the parish and community will bloom and bear much fruit to God's glory in the future too."

Arlene added: "We also look forward to blessing those who come to our parish activities and events with some nice pear crumble and apple tarts in due course."

As part of the Climate Sunday activities, two children representing Kidz Church also scattered some Remembrance-themed seeds including poppy, cornflower, ox eye daisy, pansy and forget me nots, as well as bee and butterfly friendly wildflower seeds in a special flowerbed as

the congregation prayed for its responsibility to steward God's gifts and pass it on to children and future generations.

## **Discern the call - Derry & Raphoe Fellowship of Vocation**

The Derry & Raphoe Diocesan Fellowship of Vocation will meet in Glendermott Parish Hall at 7.30pm on Tuesday 2nd November to discuss the introduction of Ordained Local Ministry (OLM) in the diocese, which was referred to by Bishop Andrew Forster in his presidential address to the diocesan synod.

The Diocesan Director of Ordinations, Rev Canon Robert Boyd, says the meeting will give those who may be interested in OLM, or in any other form of full- or part-time ministry, an opportunity to find out more and to discern the call of God upon their lives.

## **'The Winding Path' writing workshop at Belfast Cathedral**

**Belfast Cathedral Writer in Residence, Deirdre Cartmill, will be running a second writing workshop in the Cathedral's Chapel of Unity on Saturday November 13 from 11am-1.30pm.**

Everyone is welcome, whether a new writer or a seasoned professional.





[Deirdre Cartmill, Writer in Residence at Belfast Cathedral.](#)

The theme for the workshop is The Winding Path. There will be an opportunity to explore the Cathedral's pathways, whether it's walking among the hidden treasures of the ambulatory, stepping through the labyrinth, following the flow of the stained glass windows, uncovering the journeys beginning and the journeys ending, or the many pilgrims' journeys remembered here. Participants can reflect on how these pathways chime with the path they are currently walking through life, and find out how to write from this deeper place.

There is also the potential for some of the work produced to be shared on the Cathedral's website and across their social media.

The cost is £15/£12 (you decide what you can afford). There is free car parking at the Cathedral for attendees. Places are limited so please book early by emailing [admin@belfastcathedral.org](mailto:admin@belfastcathedral.org) or by calling the Cathedral on 028 9032 8332. Please visit the Cathedral website for Covid safety regulations.

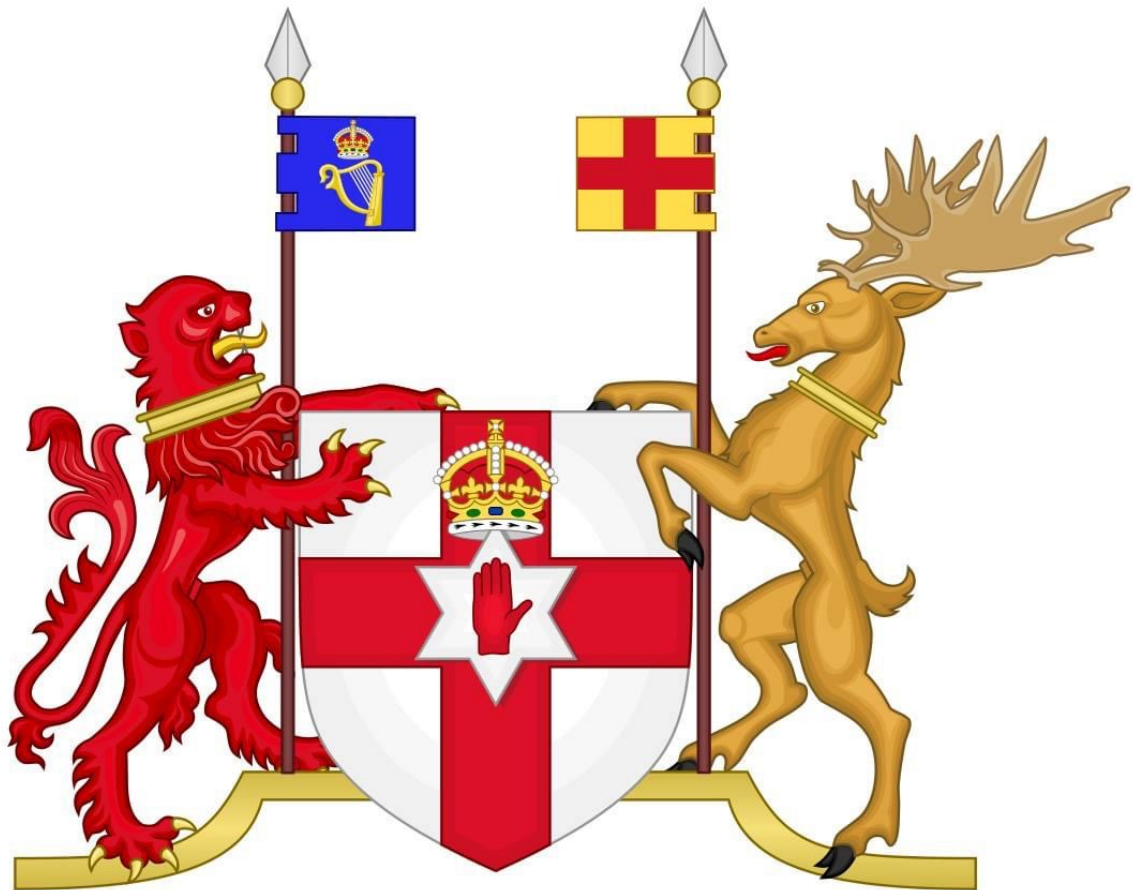
About Deirdre Cartmill - Deirdre Cartmill is an award-winning poet, writer and screenwriter. She has published two poetry collections with Lagan Press, *The Return of the Buffalo* and *Midnight Solo*.

She was Monaghan County Libraries Writer in Residence 2020 and has previously been IWC Roaming Writer in Residence, IWC Community Writer in Residence with Women's Aid, and joint Artist in Residence at the Belfast International Arts Festival. She co-commissioned and curated Ireland's first poetry jukebox which is now a permanent installation in Belfast. She is one of the originating artists on the collaborative project *Bridging the Silence* – a poetic audio walk and installation shown on pedestrian bridges which gives a voice to survivors of abuse and political violence.

## Northern Ireland's coat of arms

**Northern Ireland marked it's centenary. King George V granted the Government of Northern Ireland a coat of arms in 1924.**

The basic design of a red cross is taken from the arms of the De Burgh family, Earls of Ulster in the thirteenth century.



Their arms are displayed on the flag held by the Great Irish Elk on the right. The red hand of Ulster is taken from the arms of the O'Neill family, rulers of much of Ulster in the medieval period. The six pointed white star represents the six counties of Northern Ireland under the crown.

The supporters on either side of the arms are the red Lion Rampant from the Royal Arms of Scotland, to represent the Ulster Scots and the Great Irish Elk to represent those of native Irish descent. The red lion holds a flag with the Royal Arms of Ireland - a gold harp on a blue background.

Blue flax flowers are a more recent addition to the compartment below the shield, representing the historical importance of the linen industry.

## Perspective

# A Future of Grace? Reflections on the Church Leaders' Service

## By Gladys Ganiel

**Irish President Michael D. Higgins' decision to decline his invitation to this week's service of reflection and hope on the centenary of partition and the creation of Northern Ireland was handled gracelessly, with considerable confusion and a stunning lack of communication.**

But the controversy provoked by Higgins meant that far more people on the island were paying attention to what was said and done at the service, which was organized by the Church Leaders' Group and took place at St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral in Armagh.

[The Church Leaders' Group is comprised of the Catholic and Church of Ireland Archbishops of Armagh, the Presbyterian Moderator, the Methodist President, and the President of the Irish Council of Churches.]

There's no doubt the Church Leaders' Group had an enhanced public platform, and to their credit they used it to apologize for the churches' roles in promoting division and violence. Church of Ireland Archbishop John McDowell spoke the strongest words:



Now, as a church leader I am sorry that as disciples of Jesus Christ, we didn't do more to become peacemakers, or at least to speak peace into the situation. Too often we allowed the attitudes around us to shape our faith, rather than the other way around.

Catholic Archbishop Eamon Martin also said:

“I have to face the difficult truth that perhaps we in the churches could have done more to deepen our understanding of each other and to bring healing and peace to our divided and wounded communities.”

I think that Martin should have omitted the word 'perhaps'. But at the same time, Martin is the church leader for whom it must have been most personally difficult to participate in the service.

These confessions build on the Church Leaders' Group's St Patrick's Day Statement. At the time I called it 'the churches most comprehensive confession ever for their historic contributions to division and violence.'

With all its elements taken together, the service of reflection and hope surpasses the St Patrick's Day statement and invites everyone on the island to consider how we can build a better future.

An orientation towards the future was provided through young people's participation in the service. They challenged us not to let the hard-won gains of peace slip away, and to be mindful of challenges that affect us all, like climate change.

Equally powerfully, Methodist President Rev Sahr Yambasu pointed towards the future by invoking a figure from Ireland's ancient past – St Patrick. Given the service's location, it could have been easy for reflections on Patrick to come off as trite or contrived.

Rather, Yambasu told the story of Patrick the slave, reminding us that Patrick's return to Ireland after escaping bondage was an occasion of grace:

Patrick had every reason to hate the Irish and seek for vengeance. But he didn't. Instead, he forgave and was forgiven. Consequently, the history of this place could be summarised in one word: GRACE – unmerited concern for the good of the other.

Yambasu, a native of Sierra Leone who has served for more than two decades in Ireland, said that:

I speak as one whose people were bought, sold, and used for profit; whose continent was partitioned without any reference to or consultation with its inhabitants and owners; and whose colour is seen as sufficient excuse to ignore their equal humanity with others.

He returned to the theme of grace eight times in his address, which was the spoken centrepiece of the event. In the penultimate paragraph, he gave his fullest exposition:

Embracing different others is not about promoting oneself. It is about creating space for each other to flourish. It is not about assimilating them into ourselves. It is about recognizing that there is something of us in the ones we embrace. It is not about ignoring justice. It is about creating

space within ourselves for the perceived wrongdoer in hope of reconciliation. That is what GRACE is. It is choosing relationship over being right. This is what Christianity is and should be about. That is what Christian practice is.

Two years ago, Jamie Yohanis and I published a book called *Considering Grace: Presbyterians and the Troubles*, based on research conducted in partnership with the Presbyterian Church. Its title was taken from the words of Rev Terry Laverty. When he was a teenager, Laverty's brother, who was in the RUC, was killed in an IRA ambush. After describing his own struggle to come to terms with his brother's death, Laverty said he wanted to extend an invitation to 'anybody who is struggling as a result of violence and trauma to consider grace.'

Yambasu's words are challenging and make me wonder if we are ready for the hard work of considering grace, and creating a future that is grace-filled.

The service also raises questions about whether or to what extent the Church Leaders' Group can continue to promote a reconciliation-focused agenda. As Presbyterian Moderator David Bruce noted in a podcast released last week, statements by church leaders are often forgotten. He added that grassroots feedback they had received about the St Patrick's Day statement indicated that it had something of a galvanizing effect, raising hopes for further action.

But even a high-profile event like this service could soon be forgotten, so in some ways that puts the ball back into our court: the people of this island, of all faiths and none. The future is up to us. How will we respond?

Courtesy Sluggerotoole web site.

## Gladys Ganiel

Gladys is a Reader in Sociology at Queen's University Belfast. She also blogs on religion and politics at [www.gladysganiel.com](http://www.gladysganiel.com)

## Poem for today

### Piano by DH Lawrence

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;  
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see  
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling  
strings  
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles  
as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song  
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong  
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside  
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour  
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour  
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast  
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for  
the past.

May God unfold to you the richness of this day,  
and bless the potential of every moment in it.



**+ Please share CNI with your friends**  
**[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)**

