



## **Omagh bomb 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary service told victims still suffering**

A service was held yesterday to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Omagh bomb atrocity. The Omagh bombing inflicted the greatest single loss of life of any terror atrocity in the history of the Northern Ireland Troubles. The bomb, which was packed with 225kg of explosives, detonated in a

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vehicle parked in the middle of the main street just after 15:10 BST on 15 August 1998. A warning had been called in 40 minutes earlier but had given the wrong location of the car containing the bomb. The dead included three generations of one family. No-one has been convicted over the bombing. 29 people were killed and 220 people injured.

The memorial service included prayers in both English and Irish as well as a reading in Spanish, the native tongue of two of the victims.



**Michael Gallagher is the chairman of the Omagh Support and Self Help Group that organised the service.**

The event also paid tribute to "all victims of terrorism" around the world.

The car bomb attack was carried out by the dissident republican group the Real IRA, several months after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

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Sunday's ceremony took place in the town's Memorial Garden, where wreaths were laid and the names of all those killed in the attack were read out, one by one.

Representatives of the British, Irish and Spanish governments attended, reflecting the nationalities of the victims.

As well as prayers, speeches and music, a minute's silence was held in remembrance of those who died.

### **'Courageous work'**

The ecumenical service included contributions from the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist and Catholic Churches.

It also heard from council officials who led local government agencies' response in the aftermath of the bombing.

The organisers paid tribute to "those who have suffered and those who are still suffering, as a result of 15th August 1998 atrocity".

"We thank the first responders, the police services, the intelligent services, the fire departments, the first aiders, the paramedics and the medical professionals for the courageous work that they carry out," they said.

The interdenominational service featured the Omagh Community Youth Choir and includes a song specially composed by its musical director, Daryl Simpson.

Michael Gallagher is the chairman of the Omagh Support and Self Help Group that organised the service.

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His 21-year-old son, Aidan, was among those killed in the blast.

Speaking ahead of the event, Mr Gallagher said he had no doubt that the "people of Omagh and beyond" would "come out and show solidarity with the families" on Sunday.



## **Waterford nuns have baked over 150,000 communion wafers for Pope Francis visit**

The communion wafer business is going from strength to strength ahead of the Pope's visit later this month.

These nuns in an enclosed religious order in Waterford have played their part and made 150,000 communion wafers for the Papal visit.

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After receiving a request to provide the wafers for the three-day World Meeting of Families in Dublin, they fired up the ovens last April.

Sr Fiachra Nutty said the sisters of Ireland's only Cistercian monastery for women, based in Lismore in Co Waterford, were delighted to be asked to supply the 150,000 wafers for the RDS Mass.

With the permission of her Abbott, who decides if the nuns can leave or not, she hopes to attend the Pope's final Mass in Phoenix Park.

'It is a pilgrimage...that's how we're looking at it.'

More than half a million people are expected to turn out to see Pope Francis in the Phoenix Park in the first Papal visit to Ireland in over 40 years. - Report courtesy Irish Independent

## **Irish Presbyterian Moderator visits Jordan**

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), Right Rev Dr Charles McMullen arrived in Jordan yesterday (11 August) at the start of a 10-day visit to meet with church leaders, mission partner organisations and those working with them.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has a close association with the region going back many years. More recently in January 2017 Dr Mike Bassous, General Secretary of the Bible Society of Lebanon, spoke at a PCI conference in Belfast, while Dr Noble McNeely visited Egypt as Moderator in the November for a 500th anniversary celebration of the

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Reformation. Earlier this year the immediate past president of Presbyterian Women, Elma Leeburn, visited Lebanon, as did Dr Ivan Patterson on his overseas tour in 2011.



During his visit Dr McMullen and his wife Barbara will be hosted by those connected with the PCI. Speaking before he left Northern Ireland, the Moderator said that it was an exciting opportunity to go and see a country that he hadn't visited in a part of the world that he had heard so much about.

“This is very much an opportunity to build new relationships and strengthen existing ones with longstanding partners in the region. I also want to offer pastoral support and encouragement to those working there, not least those who have connections with Ireland.

“We have a growing association with the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary and I am looking forward to meeting board members, students and graduates there. I am also looking forward to meeting Dr Imad Shehadeh who attended my installation as Moderator last month,” Dr McMullen said.

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During their stay the McMullens will be based in the capital Amman and will travel to a number of refugee projects run by local churches and the Bible Society of Jordan. The refugee population of the country is estimated to be 2 million, with 200-300 refugees living in a Christian town about 30 minutes from the border with Israel, which the Moderator will visit. He will also preach in an Arab evangelical congregation and an international English-speaking church in the capital.

“The Middle East is the very cradle of Christianity. In conferences we have held in Belfast and visitors from the region who have spoken at our General Assembly over the years, we have heard of the challenges our brothers and sisters in Christ face, how God is building his kingdom and the hope that is sustaining the Church in the Middle East. I am really looking forward to hearing about it and witnessing this first hand,” Dr McMullen said.

Rev Uel Marrs, Secretary of PCI’s Council for Global Mission, which has organised the visit said, “The annual overseas visit by the Moderator is an important part of his year and for the Church as a whole. The primary purpose is to contribute to the developing and strengthening of relationships with partner churches and organisations, and to encourage those serving there, seeing their work for God’s kingdom first hand.”

“The remainder of his year in office will provide opportunities for the Moderator to talk about the work God is doing in that part of the world and encourage congregations to consider different ways of getting involved.”

## **130 Donegal parishioners go to sea in spire fund-raiser**

Members of the Donegal group of parishes were 'all at sea' on Saturday evening in their efforts to raise money for their 'Save our Spire' campaign.

More than 130 parishioners and friends defied a less than benign weather forecast and braved the steady, mid-August mizzle for a two-hour cruise onboard the Donegal Bay waterbus.

A few hardy souls donned wet weather gear and went 'up top', onto the upper deck, to admire the passing scenery and catch sight of the occasional, curious seal. The bulk of the passengers remained under cover, though, completing the cruise in style and comfort on the much drier lower deck, with its well-appointed bar and refreshments.

Passengers paid €20 a head for the trip, although if they had known their Rector, the Archdeacon of Raphoe, Ven. David Huss, was going to assume control of the steering briefly, they might have been less inclined to climb aboard.

All proceeds of the Waterbus Fundraiser will go towards the 'Save our Spire' campaign, which is nearing completion. "We haven't raised all the money we need, yet, but we are making tremendous progress, Archdeacon Huss said. "The spire has been completely repointed, now, and the tower has almost finished receiving the same treatment. The restoration should be complete by the end of September or October, at which point we'll have a service of thanksgiving and rededication.



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“The professional cleaning – using a high-temperature, low-pressure system – has brought out the lovely colours of the original Mountcharles sandstone,” the Rector said, “and we’re pleased we’ve been able to source replacement stone to repair the most worn-out sections.” The worst of these is the Church entrance, which is being completely rebuilt. “This will be the last major stage of the work,” the Rector said, “and will bring the Church’s main entrance back to its former glory.”

People will be able to see the progress to date when the Church joins countless other public buildings around the Republic of Ireland in opening their doors on Heritage Open Day on Sunday 26th August.

Donegal Parish Church will be staffed from 2-4pm that Sunday and visitors will be very welcome. There will be no entrance charge but any donations will be received gratefully. Photo album at - <https://www.derryandraphoe.org/news/item/1391-donegal-parishioners-all-at-sea-for-spire-fundraiser>

## **Churches embark on 100 days of prayer in run-up to Armistice Day centenary**

Many churches have begun 100 days of prayer for peace to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War.

“100 Days of Peace and Hope” began on Saturday, marking a similar national day of prayer held on 4 August 1918; 100 days after this, Armistice Day occurred.

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The six presidents of Churches Together in England have called upon congregations to join the days of prayer. The Archbishop of Canterbury, who was one of the six, said: “From 4

August 2018, in churches across this country, let us mark 100 days with prayers for peace, hope, and reconciliation.”



The original National Day of Prayer was called by King George V, who attended a special service in St Margaret’s, Westminster, with members of the Houses of Parliament. The Revd Nims Obunge, Deputy Lord Lieutenant for London and the CEO of the Peace Alliance, welcomed the support of the royal family. He said: “I am delighted that Buckingham Palace is acknowledging this significant anniversary.

“As part of Remembrance 100 we are encouraging communities across the country to organise peace prayer events, community peace talks, peace festivals, peace arts and poetry competitions, peace projects and many more community building activities. In London, we are praying for peace, particularly in the light of rising knife crime.”

Blackburn Cathedral, which is taking part in the initiative, tweeted on Saturday: “#Remembrance100 has started at the cathedral. Come in and light a candle or use our prayer resources over the next 99 days.”

Roy Crowne, HOPE’s executive director, said: “As well as reflecting on loss, this year also gives us the chance to look forward with hope as we mark the end of World War 1.

“We have set up Remembrance 100 in partnership with others, to help churches bring communities together to mark this significant point in our history, to pray, and to look for ways to bring peace and hope.”

Resources have been collated by HOPE:  
[www.remembrance100.co.uk/100-days](http://www.remembrance100.co.uk/100-days).

## **Presbyterian Minister officially opens Pride event**

A Church of Scotland minister made history last week when he became the first to officially open a festival that celebrates LGBT rights.

Rev Scott Burton said it was an "incredible honour" to play a key role in the inaugural Perthshire Pride event in Perth.

He used the opportunity to apologise to the region's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community



on behalf of the Church of Scotland for any "cruelty and injustice" they might have experienced.

Mr Burton's gesture follows a [decision made by the General Assembly in 2017](#) to endorse a call on the Church to take stock of its history of discrimination at different levels against gay people and apologise individually and corporately, while seeking to do better.

Perthshire Pride, which is being held in Perth Concert Hall Plaza, features live music, a licensed bar, charity stalls and other entertainment.

There is also be a space for service providers such as housing agencies, employers, health organisers and local councillors to engage with the Perth and Kinross' LGBT community.

Mr Burton, minister of St Matthew's Church in Perth, said: "I am absolutely over the moon to be invited to open this fabulous occasion, it is an incredible honour.

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"I am taking the opportunity to apologise to members of the LGBT community if they have felt hurt, insulted and ostracised from the Church of Scotland.

"Forgive us for all the pain we have caused you and which we continue to inflict on you".

## **Respectful dialogue**

Mr Burton, who is married to Jill and has two daughters, told festival goers that they will always be welcome in his church.

"I want them to know that my congregation and leadership team at St Matthew's stand with every person here who has been ostracised and criticised by the Church for simply being who they are," he added.

"We stand in solidarity with every person here who has been damned and denounced spiritually, psychologically, emotionally and physically by those who try to make out LGBT people are somehow second class .

"They are not second class and I, and a growing number of people within the Church, believe that they are the people that God has created them to be."

Mr Burton said he respected the sincerely held, but contrary views of other people within the Church and respectful dialogue is the only way forward.

"They, as I, take the Bible seriously," he added.

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"Yet there needs to be, and there is, much respectful dialogue within the church about exactly what these Bible words mean today.

"All of us in this rapidly changing world are needing to rethink our understanding of many things, and in the Church it is a challenge to interpret ancient scriptures for the modern world as well as how these texts may have been understood by the ancients.

"So, I want to acknowledge my respect for the sincerely held, but differing views, from more progressive conclusions, because, just as we are entitled to our views, so those we disagree with are entitled to theirs."

Mr Burton said people must remain open to varying viewpoints in a free society.

"And in a peaceful and civilised society, we do everyone a favour if we learn how to disagree without being disagreeable," he added.

"Love changes the world for the better and I hope and I pray that Perthshire's first ever Pride event is a day of love, not hate," he added.

[In May this year, the Church of Scotland moved a step closer to allowing all ministers and deacons to conduct same-sex marriages should they wish to do so in the future.](#)

The General Assembly voted 345 by 170 to instruct the Legal Questions Committee to prepare legislation with

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safeguards in accordance with Section 9 (1A) of the Marriage Scotland Act.

But commissioners agreed that the committee should only act if, in its opinion, said safeguards “sufficiently protect against the risks they identify”.

The committee will report its findings to the General Assembly of 2020.

Rev Mark Malcolm, minister of Chryston Parish Church in Glasgow, is a member of evangelical Kirk group, Covenant Fellowship Scotland.

Reacting to the vote in May, he said: “From those of us who want to uphold the traditional and orthodox teaching of the Church, it is possibly as good an outcome as we could expect.

“Looking into the future, I think what is likely to happen is instead of the default position of the Church being orthodox and traditional, it will be revisionist .

“And you will have to opt-in to the orthodox position rather than holding that position.”

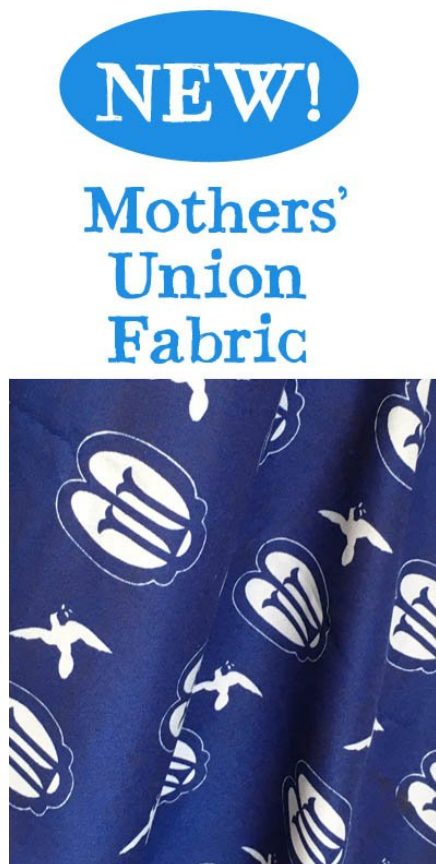
## **News briefs**

**+++West Cork History Festival** - Next Thursday the West Cork History Festival, of which the Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, Dr Paul Colton, is a Patron, will begin in Skibbereen. The programme will include a Dunmanway double bill with the rector, the Revd Cliff Jeffers, screening

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a documentary on the town's community bells, and a talk by Kieran Connolly on one of Dunmanway's most famous sons, Sam Maguire. Dr Andy Bielenberg will speak on 'Disappearances in Co Cork 1920–22 and the case of Mrs Lindsay' and Cal Hyland on 'Considering the Situation of Protestants in West Cork, 1920–22'.

**+++ New Mothers' Union Fabric** - sourced and printed in Kenya! Now available at <http://mueshop.org> in 3 meter bundles <https://mueshop.org/product-category/mu-products/mothers-union-fabric/> ... Proceeds from each sale go to **#charity @MothersUnion**



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**+++Summer Music at Sandford** - continues in Sandford parish church, Ranelagh, on Friday at 1.10pm when there will be a recital by Anna–Louise Costeilo (mezzo–soprano) and Aileen Cahill (piano).



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**+++St Molua remembered** - St Molua's church, Magheracloone celebrated its patronal festival yesterday. The church is part of Carrickmacross union of parishes in the Diocese of Clogher. Drumsnatt (Clogher) and Stormont (Down) are also dedicated to St Molua, a 6th century Irish saint who was a disciple of St Comgall of Bangor.

**+++Visiting choirs** - Yesterday the 11am Eucharist in Christ Church cathedral, Dublin, was sung by the choir of St Brigid's, Stillorgan, and All Saints', Blackrock, directed by Clive Armstrong.



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