

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – West Light, Rathlin**

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## Image of the day

### West Light, Rathlin

The upside down lighthouse. One of the truly great lighthouses. Also a fine seabird colony with puffins and gannets. Rathlin Island, Ballycastle, Co Antrim  
[<https://www.greatlighthouses.com/lighthouses/rathlin-west-light/>]

## People and places



### Freezer Ministry outreach in Portglenone

The smell of freshly cooked dinners wafted from the kitchen in Portglenone Parish Centre on Friday August





**19 as five members of the parish Freezer Ministry Team put their culinary skills to work.**

On the menu was vegetable soup, chicken and leek soup, cottage pie and chicken and potato pie.

Each freshly-cooked dish would be frozen in individual portions for distribution to people in particular need in the course of the following weeks.

Portglenone Parish launched its Freezer Ministry in March 2022, with a core team of volunteers all trained in food hygiene and all with a shared love of cooking.

Parish Reader and Freezer Ministry chef Michael McCullough said this new outreach ministry is a blessing for those involved and for the community as a whole. “It is a

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practical way of showing God's love in a way that people can visualise and see," he said.

## **Trip Advisor award for St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin**

**Rightly pleased they are - "We are so proud to have been recognised by Tripadvisor as a winner of the 2023 Travellers' Choice Award.**

"This coveted award celebrates businesses that have consistently received great traveller reviews over the last 12 months, placing us among the top 10% of all listings on Tripadvisor globally.

"What a fitting acknowledgement of our amazing team for delivering a world class experience to our visitors every day. Well done team and thanks to everyone who took time to leave us a great review."

## **Archbishop leads Irish church delegation in India**

**Church of Ireland archbishop of Dublin the Rev Dr Michael Jackson is currently in India on a 10-day pastoral visit, Billy Kennedy reports.**

The Enniskillen-born prelate is in the Anglican diocese of Chota Nagpur with Canon Dr Maurice Elliott, director of the Church of Ireland theological institute, and the Rev Steve



Brunn, dean of residence and Church of Ireland chaplain at Trinity College, Dublin.

The Church of Ireland visit is organised and funded under the auspices of the Dublin University (Trinity) mission to Chota Nagpur. Archbishop Jackson is co-chair of the Anglican-Oriental-Orthodox international commission and a senior figure in the Anglican Communion worldwide.

On the first day of the visit (Sunday morning August 13), the archbishop preached at an English language service in Chota Nagpur cathedral in Ranch. Elsewhere, Canon Maurice Elliott preached at a Hindi language service. Both services took the theme of Jesus stilling the storm [St Matthew 14.27].



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Later, the clerics visited the Indian tribal areas in the north-west of Ranchi. This is where Anglican missionary work is carried out and where the diocesan catechists are working. The missionary advantage in the region is that workers come from the local areas and speak the local languages.

The visit has been organised and funded by the Dublin University Mission to Chota Nagpur and Archbishop Jackson is travelling with the Revd Steve Brunn, the Church of Ireland's Chaplain at Dublin University (Trinity), Dr Kerry Houston, and Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott, Director of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute. It was part of a 10-day visit to India, including travel to and from the region.

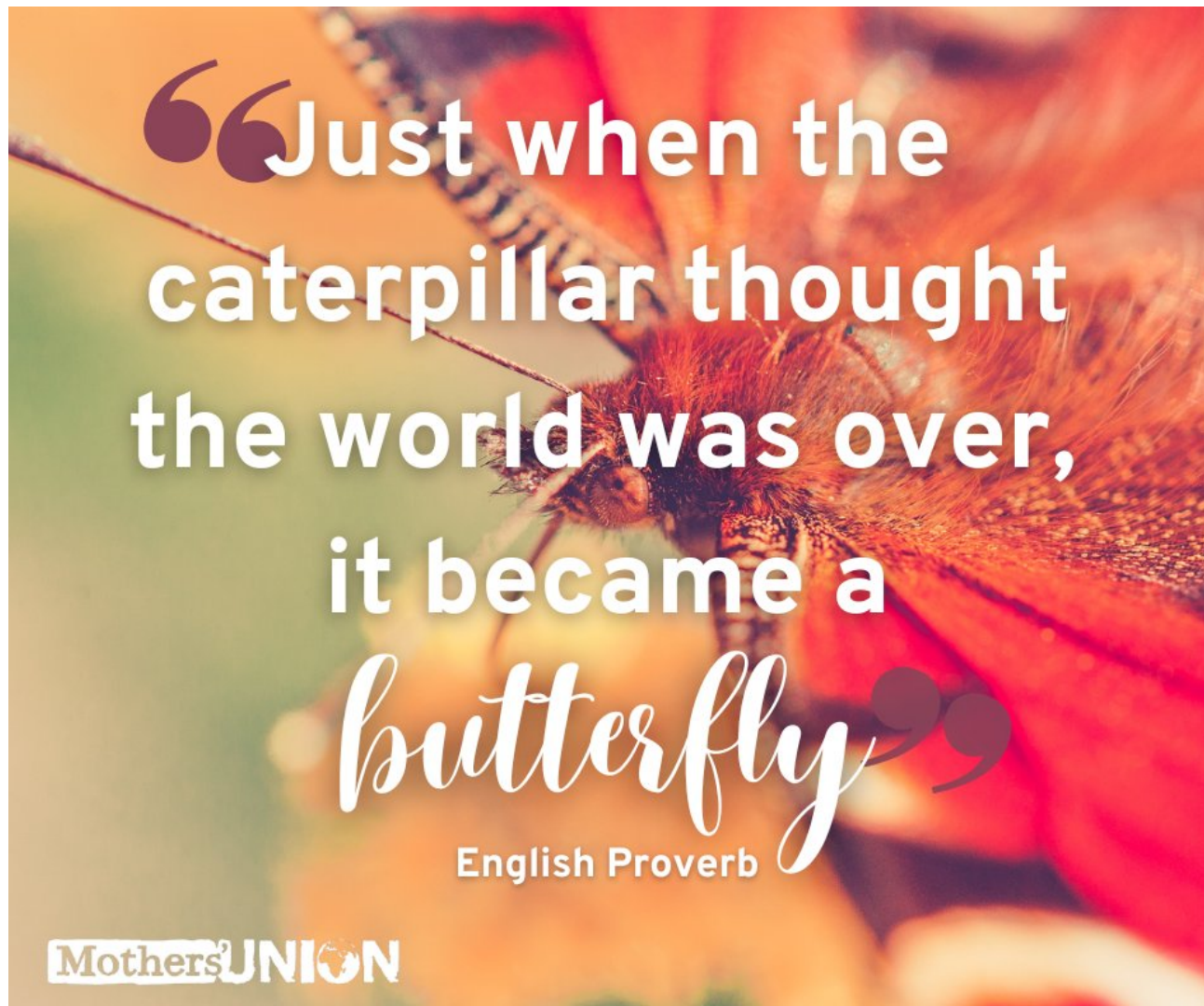
The mission began in the 19th Century. The Church of North India was founded in 1970 and is a united Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian denomination; it is a member of the Anglican Communion and has around 2 million members. Archbishop Jackson is Co-Chair of the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission and is also involved in the Communion's Network for Inter Faith Concerns. He was previously Bishop of Clogher from 2002 to 2011.

## **Watch: The lesser-known history of 1st Armagh Presbyterian's meeting houses**

**f you're taking a stroll through Armagh's picturesque Mall, it won't be long before you eye the magnificent 185 ft tall spire protruding from First Armagh Presbyterian Church, Scott Mann writes in Armagh News I.**

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The unique, High Gothic Church was built in 1879 and has been a constant in the city ever since as the landscape continues to change across the area.



As part of the ongoing 350th anniversary celebrations at the church, the congregation has extended a warm welcome to the public to come and visit the building, and the treasure trove of historical items and artifacts located within.

The building is open to visitors on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, in addition to the Sunday Service, during the

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month of August. It will also be open as part of the European Heritage Open Days Visitor Programme on Saturday, September 9 and Sunday, September 10.

It is reckoned that Presbyterians have worshipped in Armagh since 1673, with this beautiful building actually being the third meeting house occupied by the congregation since then.

Armagh I sat down with church member Ivor Stevenson, who explained the history of the three buildings that the congregation has called home over the years.

He says that the current building is capable of holding around 850 people, and was built at the then-substantial cost of £10,000.

“The building itself wasn’t painted until 1905. Then, also in 1905, an organ was installed, the first one in County Armagh in the Presbyterian Church,” he

explained.

“Before that, hymns were not looked upon favourably in most Presbyterian churches, but in 1895 we were allowed to have an organ in Presbyterian churches. Hymns were then introduced and made their way to the present day.”

The previous building was built in 1722 and still stands today just up the road on Abbey Street.

Ivor said: “It was a large building and had galleries all the way around. Each pew had a little door and you rented your pew. Happily, we’ve done away with pew rents and



everyone, when they come to church, can sit wherever they like.”

The building before Abbey Street was located in the Shambles area, but Ivor admits that the history of that site is a bit more confusing.

“It was also stone-built and was a large church, but we can’t fully verify exactly where it was because the maps of those days were pretty vague and not terribly accurate. In 1760, Rocque’s map shows the old meeting house at the Shambles and the new meeting house in Abbey Street.

“We think it may have had a thatched roof and was a very big building, one of the biggest in the north. There were pews the whole way around but the records are extremely scarce. We only have session minutes from 1707 to 1728, which is after the building was erected.”

Speaking on just some of the 19 ministers that have served the congregation over the years, Ivor says that many had great influence on the life of not just Armagh, but further afield.

He explained: “The first minister that was called to the church was in 1673 and that was Mr Archibald Hamilton, who originated from a congregation in Benburb.

“Part of his reputation was that he met William of Orange when he came over to Ireland to express to him the support of the Presbyterian Society for his campaigns in Ireland. He then fled from Armagh because King James’s army was encamped at Legar Hill and he was fearing for his safety.”

Hamilton, along with several ministers fled to Scotland, not to return until the conflict was over. However, he didn't return to Armagh, instead finishing his ministry in Killinchy.

The next minister, following a long vacancy, was the Rev John Hutcheson, who was responsible for building the new meeting house on Abbey Street. One of his children was Francis Hutcheson, who was involved in the Scottish Enlightenment and was influential in Colonial America.

Ivor added: "The most recent minister that we've had was the Rev Tony Davidson, who we had a wonderful relationship with over the last 29 odd years. He was a great motivator, a great pastor, and we had a very useful and wonderful time with him." Courtesy Armagh I 20/08/2023 You Tube at -  
[<https://www.armaghi.com/news/armagh-news/watch-the-lesser-known-history-of-1st-armagh-presbyterians-meeting-houses/216936>]

## **RTÉ host urges young people to join priesthood over fears of 'priestless' Ireland**

**The semi-retired radio host delivered an address at Knock Basilica in Co Mayo last week on The Gift of Service, Neasa Cumiskey reports in Sunday World.**



RTÉ broadcaster Sean O'Rourke has warned that Ireland risks becoming “priestless” as he urged young people to consider a life of religious vocation.

The semi-retired radio host delivered an address at Knock - Basilica in Co Mayo last week on The Gift of Service in which he expressed regret that Ireland's young people “won't be hearing or heeding the call to become priests” in the future.

“We can all, I'm absolutely certain, think of a priest or priests who have made a positive difference in our family circle, our friends, our community or our schools,” he told the congregation.



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“We all know priests and religious who have done huge amounts of good and offered their lives for others. They need and deserve our support, our gratitude and our prayers, and we need more of them.”

Last year, a study by the Association of Catholic Priests found that fewer than 2.5pc of priests in Ireland are under the age of 40, while the Catholic News Agency reported that more than a third of the priests in the country are aged over 60.

O’Rourke highlighted how the country is nearing the 1,600th anniversary of the introduction of Christianity in Ireland and said it was a shame that there “might not be that many priests around to help with the celebrations.”

“So, it’s not surprising that the bishops have called us to pray for vocations, especially diocesan vocations. Otherwise, we won’t be far away from trying to survive as a priestless church.”

He encouraged young people to “go the extra mile” and consider joining the priesthood.

Speaking on the impact of the clerical abuse scandals, O’Rourke said Catholics were “painfully aware of priests, who by their crimes, and the misguided and irresponsible behaviour of their superiors, had ruined the lives of many”.

“When you are talking about a crisis on a scale perhaps more damaging to the church than anything in history, it needs to be remembered and never forgotten,” he added.

Courtesy Sunday World 20/08/2023

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Also at Irish Central -

[<https://www.irishcentral.com/news/irish-broadcaster-reland-priestless>]

## Next Dean of Tuam announced

**Bishop Michael Burrows has announced that the next Dean of Tuam and Incumbent of Tuam and Omey Group of Parishes in succession to the late Dean Grimason, will be the Reverend Diane Matchett -**

Ms Matchett was ordained in 2005 and is currently rector of Kildress and Altedesert (near Cookstown) in the diocese of Armagh.

The West however is not new to her as for many years as she grew up her family holidayed in Roundstone and she has for some time been contemplating the possibility of a move to our part of Ireland. You will find her to be a person of great warmth, energy and pastoral commitment.

The planned installation date in Tuam Cathedral is the afternoon of Sunday January 14th, 2024 and Diane looks forward to moving to the deanery in Cong along with her husband and young son.

I am very conscious of the length of this vacancy and the demands it has made on parishioners and on all who have sustained the worshipping life of a very large parish. I am grateful to the parochial nominators for their careful work, and to all who are diligently and generously working to

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ensure that the extensive refurbishment of the deanery will be completed on time.

I am also aware that an understanding exists that there should be an assisting priest, perhaps on a part time basis, on the ground in the Omey area. I intend to consult appropriately and to work with the dean – elect regarding this matter over the coming months.

With every warm wish as always and I am glad at last to be sending this good news - Michael, Tuam Limerick and Killaloe.

Rev Matchett is married to Mark who she would say “deserves a medal” – Mark is from Barnsley in South Yorkshire. The couple have a son, Casper.

“We as a family are passionate about many things, and over time, they will become apparent. To highlight a few things, we are very passionate about reducing waste, we are passionate about food and cooking and love to grow most of what we eat – my husband keeps bees and hens, and we have a fantastic black Labrador called Big Ron.

“In ministry, I am passionate about so much, but particularly Pastoral Care, hospitality, and Worship – I love singing and enjoy an eclectic mix of music. My love for people, their stories and their passions are so strong, family just grows with love and commitment to one another.

“One of my abiding influences will always be my beautiful mother. Mummy passed away on 16th February 2021, and her death has left an enormous hole in our lives. Equally,



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our wonderful mother would wish us to serve the Lord and live our best life. My Mummy battled with dementia and our large family, along with a team of excellent carers, cared for her at home – which remains amongst the greatest honours of my life. She was our world, and she loved Jesus and lived for her family.

“We are the beautiful Body of Christ, and I look forward to getting to know you over the next while. I don’t speak Irish – yet – but I look forward to learning as much as possible as the weeks pass.

Go raibh maith agat. Thank you” Diane.

## News reports

### **Event will discuss Black leaders’ contributions in World Council of Church’s history**

**A public online celebration and panel discussion on August 31, “They too were Gathered: Paying homage to Black people’s contributions to 75 years of World Council of Churches,” will uncover the contributions of Black people from different parts of the world in the formation and growth of the WCC.**

The day also coincides with the United Nations International Day for People of African Descent, which the WCC has faithfully marked in the past, including its special mention in the opening ceremony of the WCC 11th Assembly.

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While the participation of white Europeans and possibly North Americans has never been questioned in the history of the formation of the WCC, questions have been asked as to the role played by Black people, as well as people from Africa or in the diaspora in the history of the WCC.

Read the entire article here.

[\[https://www.oikoumene.org/news/celebratory-event-will-discuss-black-leaders-contributions-in-wccs-history\]](https://www.oikoumene.org/news/celebratory-event-will-discuss-black-leaders-contributions-in-wccs-history)

## **Anglican Communion secretary general calls for justice and prayers after Pakistan church attacks**

**In the wake of the violent attacks on churches and Christians in Pakistan, the secretary general of the Anglican Communion, Bishop Anthony Poggo, has called for justice to be served.**

He said, “I am deeply saddened and shocked to hear the news of attacks on Christians and churches in the Faisalabad district in Pakistan. I have been in contact with Bishop Azad and join him in calling for justice and action from law enforcement. Christians and other religious communities are being unjustly persecuted as a result of Pakistan’s blasphemy laws. Pray with me for the safety of all of Pakistan’s citizens.”

The attacks occurred in the town of Jaranwala, which is in the Diocese of Faisalabad. Reports state that six churches, including a Catholic church and Presbyterian church, have been burned and clergy attacked.

## **VTS awarded \$1.25 million grant for Faith-filled Families to help parents teach their children about faith**

**Virginia Theological Seminary's (VTS) Faith-filled Families (FfF) initiative is launching a project to empower parents to teach their children about faith after receiving a \$1.25 million grant.**

FfF, which operates out of Lifelong Learning at VTS, was awarded a \$1 million grant in October 2022 from Lilly Endowment Inc., through its Christian Parenting and Caregiving initiative. More recently, FfF received an additional \$250,000 from the same organization to enhance and expand its work.

The money will fund a five-year action-research project focused on equipping preschools and congregations to support parents in the religious formation of their children. FfF will provide research-based resources and best practices to help parents share their faith and values with their children, while also nurturing their own faith.

Donna Sweeting, Director of FfF, said: "Parents and guardians are the primary architects of their children's spiritual foundation, shaping not just their beliefs but the very essence of their souls. Faith-filled Families is designed to meet parents where they are, honor their strengths, hear their existential longing, and provide them with resources to aid them on their parenting journey. With an increased capacity to inspire, educate and guide, thanks to the



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additional grant funding, our program is poised to reach new heights of influence in fostering faith, values, and a profound spiritual connection within families.”

*Donna Sweeting, Director of Faith-filled Families*



The initiative will work with 15 preschool-congregation sites of different denominations, all within a 100-mile radius of VTS.

Parents will be given physical, digital, and practice resources,

designed by the FfF team, professionals in the field and seminarians enrolled in VTS’ children’s spirituality classes. They will also have access to educational opportunities, and support groups to provide an environment in which they can share their experiences, seek guidance, and offer mutual support in their Christian parenting journey.

Throughout the project, non-invasive methods will be used to identify the specific needs, challenges and preferences of parents and early childhood care providers to ensure resources and support are tailored to meet these needs.

The impact of the initiative on parents’ spiritual growth, as well as their children’s faith development, will also be tracked to understand Christian parenting more fully. The

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project's findings will be published to encourage other sites to strengthen the ecology of children's spiritual formation between parents, congregations and schools.

FfF is focusing on preschools housed in congregations to leverage the support of the broader church community, and to maintain sustained engagement with parents over an extended period, as they navigate different stages of their child's growth and development. FfF believes the development of faith-forming ecosystems that are specific to the cultural environment of the stakeholders will lead to transformative ministries in the home, community of faith, and the community at large.

## In the media



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**Ballygawley bus bomb:** Survivor comforted that dead soldiers are still remembered 35 years after IRA attack

**Service remembers British soldiers killed in IRA attack**

RTE.ie:

<https://www.rte.ie/news/ulster/2023/0820/1400697-ballygawley-service/>

**Foyle Pride: United Christian Witness protestors believe Parades Commission broken new ground in moving 'a Christian witness' due to 'threat of violence'**

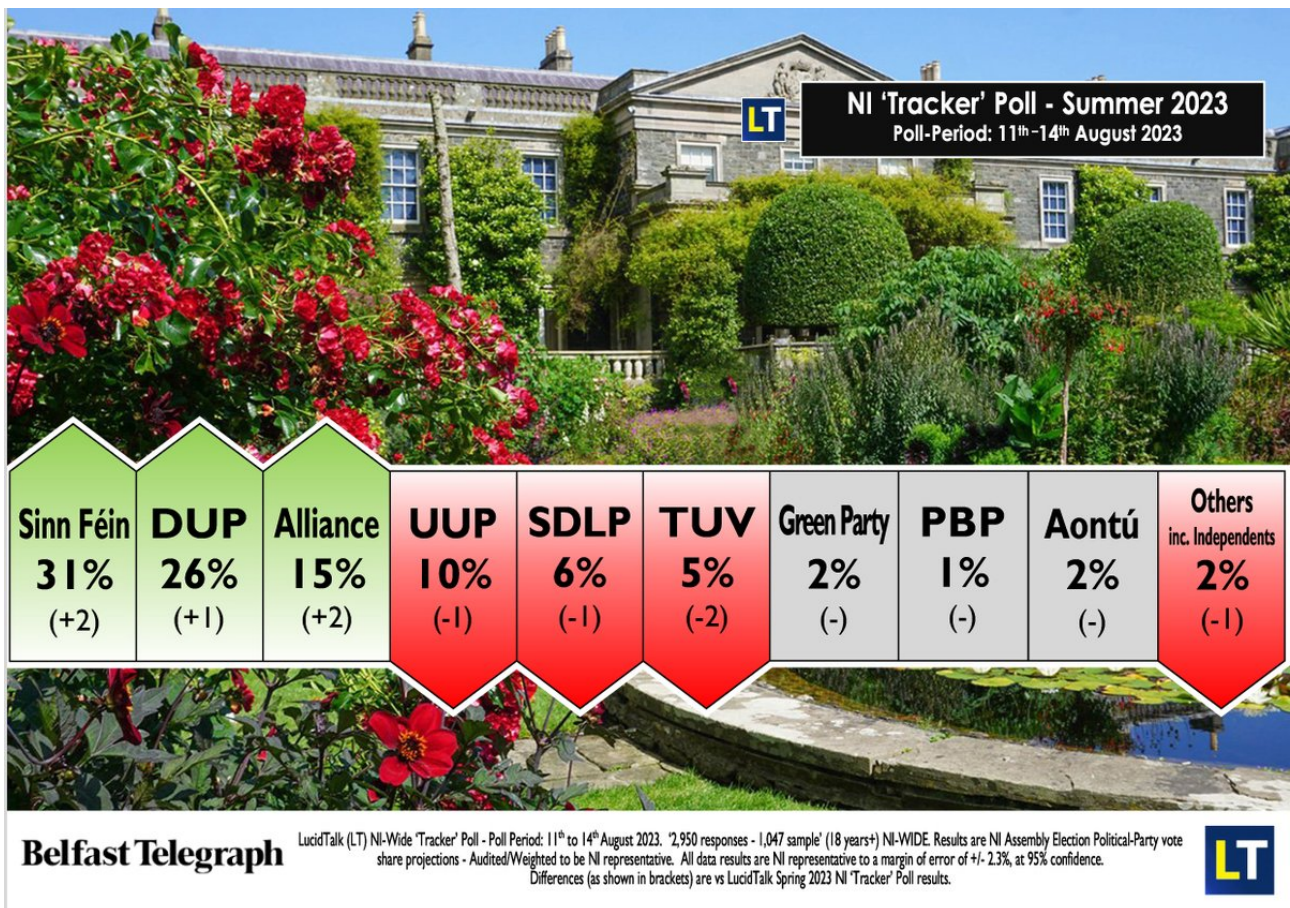
**News Letter - Protestors against the Foyle Pride parade believe the Parades Commission may have broken new ground in moving “a Christian Witness” to a different location due to “the threat of violence”. Philip Bradfield writes**

The commission responded that it had imposed restrictions on a similar protest in Belfast last year - but that the group in question ended up withdrawing its application.

The Parades Commission has imposed conditions on the United Christian Witness group which plans to protest at the Foyle Pride parade in Londonderry on Saturday. More at - [<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/foyle-pride-united-christian-witness-protestors-believe-parades-commission-broken-new-ground-in-moving-a-christian-witness-due-to-threat-of-violence-4262415>]

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## Nolan furore set for court showdown

**Sunday Life - The Stephen Nolan controversy is set to play out in court as the drama rumbles on, Brett Campbell writes.**

The BBC presenter, who has apologised for sending an explicit image of reality star Stephen Bear, is now planning to sue up to four media outlets after what he branded “completely, categorically false” allegations that staff were planted in the audience of his TV show.

It is understood that legal writs are being prepared against publishers and broadcasters across the UK and Ireland. It comes after The Irish News hit back at calls from the director of BBC Northern Ireland to withdraw the allegation and issue an apology.

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Nolan broke his silence live on air to tell listeners of his radio show on Friday that he was “deeply sorry” for sending an image that had been widely available on the internet to “a long-term friend and peer outside of work”

Reports in The Irish News claim it was sent in a group chat to colleagues.

The paper reported that the photograph was of Stephen Bear and that it was sent in 2016 when Nolan was seeking to book the reality TV star as a guest on his BBC One NI show. Excerpt.

## **Hundreds of teaching posts vacant ahead of school term - ASTI**

**RTE News - Irish schools are under strain as hundreds of teaching posts remain vacant ahead of the new school term, teachers have warned.**

The Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI) points to 322 post-primary teaching vacancies advertised at present on the recruitment website educationposts.ie.

Speaking with RTÉ's This Week, Liam Walsh, principal of Coláiste Pobail Setanta college in Clonee, Co Dublin, said that his school is among those struggling to recruit staff - and has been doing so for years.

"Whether it is down to our location in Dublin - because the price of accommodation trying to attract teachers into Dublin for that - or whether it is that a lot of the jobs I'm advertising,

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actually nearly every job I'm advertising, you can't advertise it as a permanent job," Mr Walsh said.

He added that it is difficult for teachers coming up from Co Cork and Co Mayo to take a chance on a job that might not be there in a year, as they are fixed-term contracts. More at

-  
[<https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2023/0820/1400686-teaching-posts/>]

## Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

### Wellbeing Group

**Church's Ministry of Healing: Ireland writes it is delighted to be co-facilitating this Wellbeing Group alongside the Mothers' Union.**

It begins on Monday 28th August at 7.30pm and runs for 12 sessions, each session being 90 minutes.

The group is modelled on the Kintsugi Hope wellbeing group and all the facilitators are trained by Kintsugi Hope. Each week we'll explore a topic such as vulnerability, disappointment, anxiety, shame or self-acceptance.

There are limited spaces so do get in touch if you're interested in being involved and giving yourself the gift of regular nurture and care for a season. We would LOVE to



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have you there. Email Jacqui:  
[muchangingthestory@gmail.com](mailto:muchangingthestory@gmail.com)

## **Synodal Pathway Secretary on You Tube**

**The General Secretary, Julieann Moran, spoke at the Novena to Our Lady of Knock in Knock Shrine.**

Julieann shared how the person and ministry of Jesus Christ should be our guiding example for discerning the will of God in a synodal style. You Tube -

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-hHK80AkFU>]

## **Evangelical Alliance RSE Response Events**

**EA writes - Registration is now open for our RSE Response Events!**

We want to provide you with information about the changes to RSE in Northern Ireland and help you respond in a positive and helpful way.

Details of the event and registration links can be found below!

For more information please email Lisa on:  
[l.curry@eauk.org](mailto:l.curry@eauk.org)

**BELFAST EVENT:**

When? Thursday 14th September at 8pm

Where? Bloomfield Presbyterian Church, BT5 5DW

Register here: <https://www.eauk.org/about-us/nations/northern-ireland/rse-response-events/rse-response-event-belfast>

DUNGANNON EVENT:

When? Thursday 28th September at 8pm

Where? Drumglass Church of Ireland, BT71 6AB

Register here: <https://www.eauk.org/about-us/nations/northern-ireland/rse-response-events/rse-response-event-dungannon>

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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# Church News Ireland

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