

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Renewing Ireland Chile link

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Renewing Ireland Chile link

A significant event took place in Temuco, Chile on Sunday, December 10th, 2023

Over 600 people gathered to honour and celebrate the consecration of Bishop Joel Millanguir as the new Bishop for Araucania.

The wonderful service at Cholchol was attended by provincial bishops and representatives from neighbouring regions, Argentina, and Peru, extending warm wishes and prayers for Bishop Joel's new journey as bishop. His vision for fostering connections within the diocese received enthusiastic support.

SAMS Ireland was represented by Mission Director Rev Stephen McElhinney. The occasion was marked by encouraging greetings, signifying the start of this new chapter in Bishop Joel's ministry.

People and places

Scratch Nativity in Garrison Group

In Slavin there was a 'Scratch Nativity' last Sunday with children and adults coming dressed to participate in the service.



Rev Rebecca (Right above) was the Narrator and as the



story was unfolded, shepherds, wise men and angels all indicated their presence. The choir members all dressed as angels sang the carol, 'The angel Gabriel from heaven came.' The congregation participated in the other carols, 'Little Donkey,' 'Away in a manger,' 'See Him lying in a bed of straw,' 'We three Kings of

Orient are' and the final Carol was, 'Silent Night.'

Aughrim hosts "A Winter Window's Tale"

Fourteen parishioners - both adults and children - rose to the challenge to decorate the windows of the church in a Winter Christmas theme.

Using crafts, recycled materials, lights, lanterns, miniature buildings, toys, wreaths and floral arrangements, the church was transformed into a fantastic array of gorgeous creative winter displays.



Over 70 people from the parishes and the local area came to see the windows and enjoyed refreshments. There were many lovely compliments about the windows and the church itself.



The Church of St John the Evangelist in Aughrim hosted “A Winter Window’s Tale” recently.

The Rector, the Revd Suzanne Harris, paid tribute to all who helped with the decorating, technical support and artistic design and thanked to all who visited the beautiful church showing real Christmas Spirit in Aughrim.

Farewell to Church Army colleague

Staff at Connor Diocesan Office said farewell to their Church Army colleague, Pioneer Evangelist Stephen Whitten. Stephen, who has worked with Connect Base, Connor’s North Belfast Centre of Mission, since early 2015, is leaving to focus on a career as a tree surgeon. Stephen and his family were wished every blessing in this next chapter in their lives.

In the media

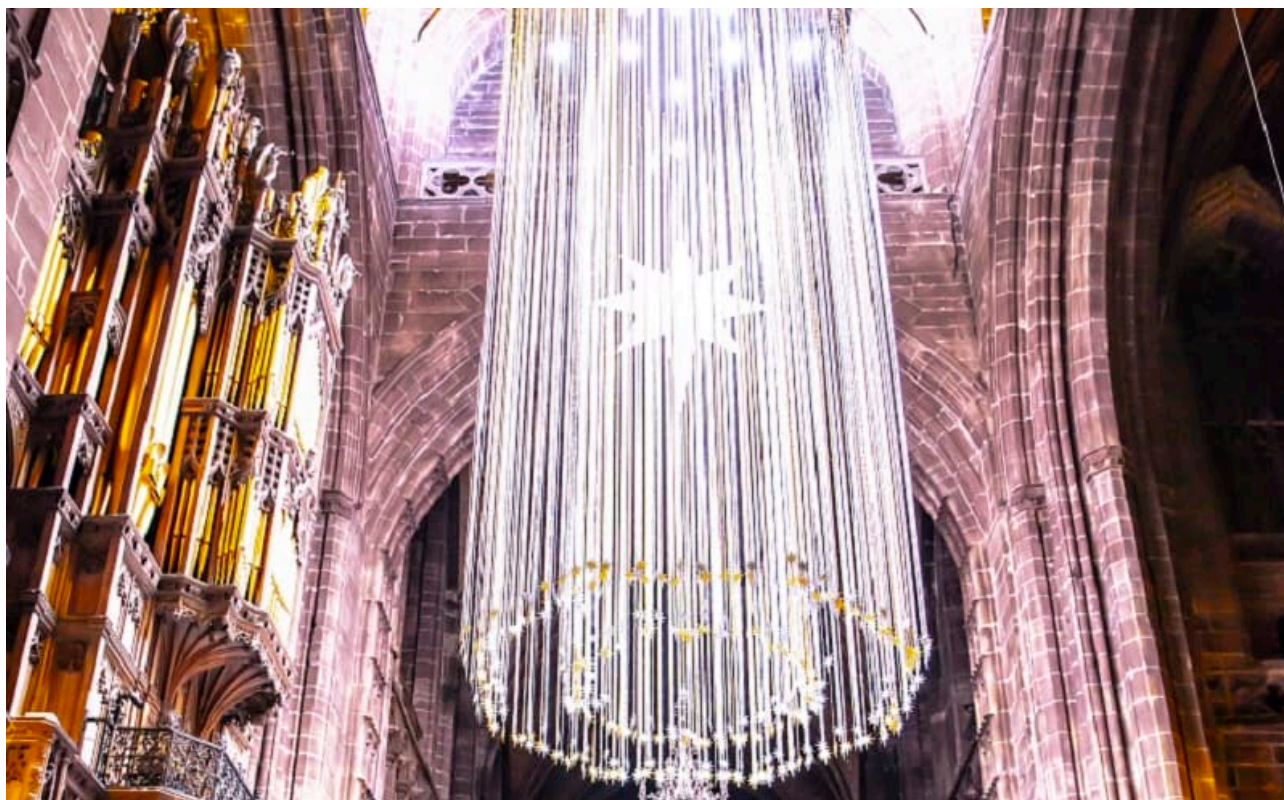
Light shines on the artists illuminating cathedrals - RMC

Light is a crucial element in every religion and artists are now using it to create images and experiences that inspire people of all ages and faiths, Angela Youngman writes for Religious Media Centre

It is a style of art ideal for cathedrals, vast edifices imbued with centuries of prayer. These are locations that generations of people have used for inspiration, reflection and comfort. And this Advent, many of them are bathed in lights, outside and in.

Many of the Advent light shows are created by Peter Walker of Luxmuralis. “What we are doing is unprecedented,” he says. “This is more than a son et lumière. We use fine art like Renaissance painters to create modern, contemporary ways of talking about the world. It is connecting people, views and ideas.

“Such subjects as science, renaissance, life and space are placed in the context of the greater universe. We explore how these interweave with the history of the sacred space, always creating a match between the subject and the site. We put the building centre stage — crypt, aisles, nave — to take people in a pilgrimage around the building.”



[Starry starry night, Chester Cathedral. Image provided by Lux Muralis](#)

Bristol Cathedral hosted Force of Nature at the beginning of November, which explored the four elements in relationship to religion, mythology and art history. Visitors discovered the flaming power of volcanos, before being immersed in sky and air.

Frances Rosewell, the cathedral's visitor director, said: "We hoped it would inspire people to feel in touch with the world. The installation entirely transformed the space, and used every available inch of our home to create a show-stopping experience for many."

None of the sessions is designed to teach or provide a specific interpretation of a concept. Instead, they appeal to emotions, and evoke a spiritual response.

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“We have had people sitting on the floor of the nave for 30 to 40 minutes at a time watching. People are mesmerised by the light,” Mr Walker says. “There have been people who come in at 6.30pm and stay until the end, totally absorbed. The feedback comment we often hear is, ‘It moved me, it was spiritual, it connected me with the cathedral’.

“Even though we live in a secular world, people are spiritual beings. Some people may not have been in a cathedral before. It is inclusive. Over the past 10 years this type of



light art has opened cathedrals to people who don't know about them, or have just started a journey, or haven't been able to express feelings.

“It can open people to faith. It may be the one time that they encounter the building, giving them a reason to come through the door and can encourage them to come back.”

Sustainability and cost-effectiveness are crucial to every event, which can last from a few days to a few weeks.

Luxmuralis is a team of two: Mr Walker and musician David Harper. When on site, they are backed by a small group of technical and production specialists. Additional costs and the carbon footprint involved are minimal because Luxmuralis owns most of the equipment. Energy costs are far lower than the power used to illuminate the exterior of a building at night.

“We repurpose and rework themes wherever possible to maximise the number of people who can see it,” Mr Walker adds. “It is important to bear in mind that it is a sacred site, and these installations have to resonate with the building, the life of the people in it and the links with the wider society around it. This is not art for the sake of art. Light art should not be seen as an art gallery or a festival. It is something different.”

Tickets help to pay for the upkeep of the building, and the numbers of people attracted into the area often provide additional income for local businesses, shops and cafés.

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Cathedrals certainly approve, and many rebook light events year after year. St Albans Cathedral has hosted annual events since 2018 covering poppy fields, space, and renaissance. Sarum Lights at Salisbury Cathedral focused on heaven and earth in 2021, renaissance for 2022.

Visitors certainly approve, too. Events sell out. Once inside, people can stay as long as they want. Depending on the

A festive poster for the Christmas Tree Festival at Saint Columb's Cathedral. The background features a large, decorated Christmas tree on the left, a star at the top left, and a view of the cathedral's spire and an ornate archway on the right. The text is centered and lists the schedule for three days: Wednesday 13th, Thursday 14th, and Saturday 16th December. At the bottom right, there is a logo for Derry City & Strabane District Council and the text 'Derry City & Strabane District Council' and 'Derry Cille & Strábane Districc Cooncil'.

size of the building, visitor numbers can be vast, with 3,000 or more each evening.

“There is a risk of oversaturation,” Mr Walker admits. “Light art can be too commercial and oversaturated within the market, as can be seen in terms of the Van Gogh experience, Monet experience etc. These are just ways of making money from well-known artists and can easily become repetitive.

“Light art in a cathedral or church setting is different from that of a commercial art gallery. The type of event that Luxmuralis does is part of movement towards a more spiritual community and this will continue to develop since it is art for a diverse, varied community. This is art that is like nothing else people have seen before.”

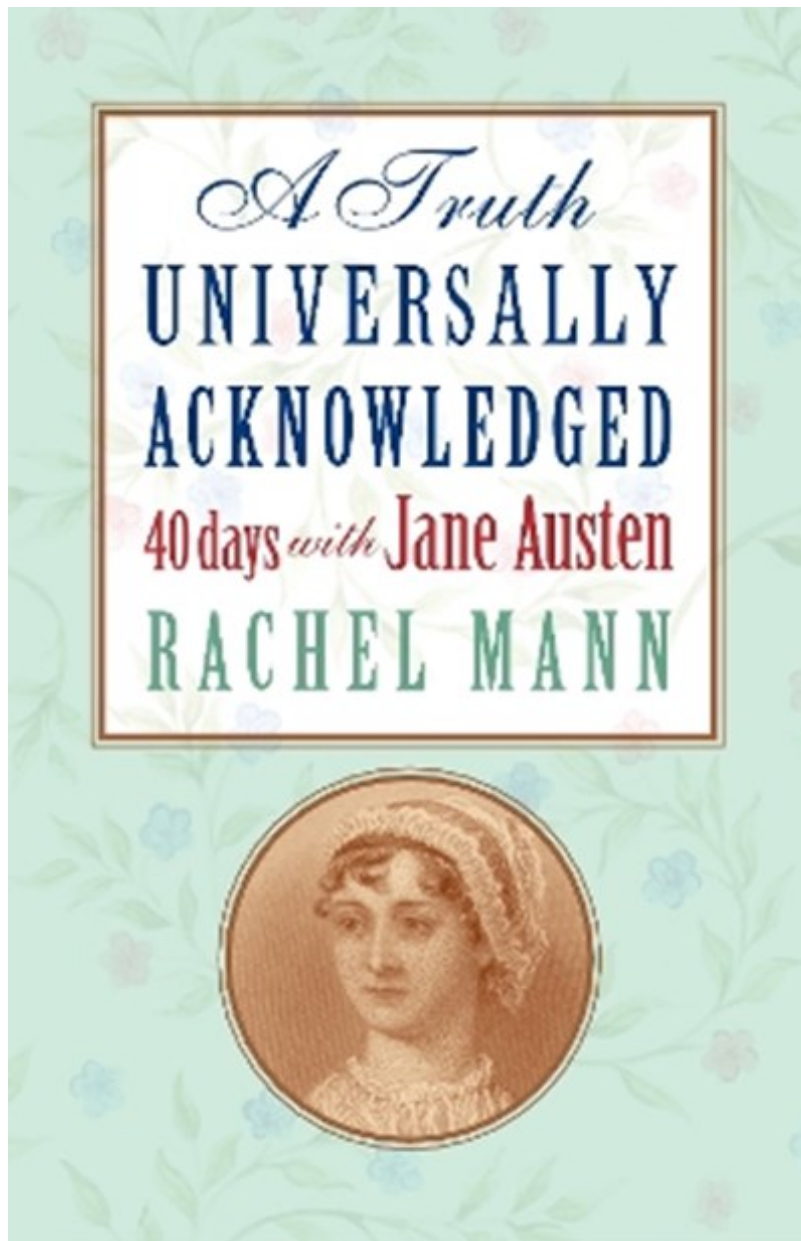
Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Unison in Ballymena

An invitation - “Please do Join us on Sunday 17th of December at 6:30pm for our 9 Lessons and Carol Service With the Choirs of St Patricks Church Ballymena & Our Lady Queen of Peace Glenravel under the Direction of Mr Adrian Poston Organist and Choirmaster. There will be Congregational Carols as well as Choral Pieces by John

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Rutter, Cyril Diplock, Reginald Jacques and Richard Loyd.
You will be most welcome”.



A Truth Universally Acknowledged - 40 Days with Jane Austen. By Rachel Mann

Jane Austen – novelist, forthright letter writer, daughter and sister of Anglican clergy – had a rarely-matched insight into human character.

Like Lent itself, she exposes frailty, caprice and pomposity without losing a profound and compassionate understanding of human nature. Her life was profoundly shaped by the church and Christian spirituality, making her writings an ideal accompaniment for the 40 days of Lent.

Rachel Mann introduces Jane Austen, her world and her ideas, and, for each day of Lent, offers commentary on a short excerpt from her writing to explore how her faith can illuminate ours. She brings Jane's novels into conversation with biblical and spiritual ideas and also with today's questions about class, sexuality and race.

Themes explored include: The Triumph of Love, Learning Wisdom, Seeing Beyond the Surface to the Truth, Knowing Where Your Treasure Lies, The Temptation to be Proud and Prejudiced, The Pomposity of Religion, Privilege and its Limitations, Duty and Good Manners, and much more.

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9781786225030 12.99

[<https://chbookshop.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781786225030/a-truth-universally-acknowledged>]

Choral Events

11.12.23 – Gloria - The Goethe Choir Christmas Celebration, Main Stage, National Concert Hall, Dublin

12.12.23 – Christmas with Laetare, St Andrew's Church, Westland Row, Dublin

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14.12.23 – Dolce presents ‘A Magical Musical Christmas’,
Raheny Parish Church

14.12.23 – The Guinness Choir presents: Dreamweaver
Christmas Concert, St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin 8

14.12.23 – Jubilo - Christmas Concert, St Ann’s Church
Dawson Street

15.12.23 – Ascolta: In Dulci Jubilo, Newman University
Church, Dublin

15.12.23 – Seeing the Star I Chamber Choir Ireland &
Andrew Synnott, Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin

15.12.23 – A Child Is Born, Wesley House, Leeson Park,
Dublin

16.12.23 – Festival of Nine Readings & Carols with
MusiCórum conducted by Geoff Spratt, Holy Cross Church,
Kenmare, Co. Kerry

16.12.23 – Cappella Caeciliana: The Magic of Christmas,
The Portico of Ards

16.12.23 – Annual Christmas Concert, Church of the
Immaculate Heart of Mary (Rowlagh Church)

16.12.23 – A Dublin Gospel Christmas, Draíocht,
Blanchardstown

16.12.23 – Setanta Choir, An Táin Arts Centre, Dundalk

16.12.23 – Handel’s Messiah, The Lough Church

16.12.23 – Christmas with Cuore, St Andrew’s Church,
Westland Row, Dublin

17.12.23 – A Festival of Nine Readings & Carols with
MusiCórum conducted by Geoff Spratt, Honan Chapel,
UCC, Cork

Perspective

Leo Varadkar will have to live with Sinn Fein in power – just as he tells us we must do in Northern Ireland

A letter from Canon Alan Irwin in the. News Letter, December 10

If Sinn Fein is ‘unsuitable’ for government in Dublin, even though they sit as TDs in the Dáil, then it follows that they are also unsuitable for the Northern Ireland Assembly (‘Varadkar says SF are unsuitable for government – as he accuses the party of ignoring IRA war crimes,’ December 7). This is the reality Leo Varadkar and others need to understand, the double speak must end.

Mr Varadkar suggests that the very thought of Sinn Fein being in senior government roles “repulses” him. He has said that they are “unsuitable to be Taoiseach, to be minister of justice, or defence minister in the next Irish government or any government”.

He argues that this is because they have failed to acknowledge ‘war crimes’ perpetrated by the Provisional IRA as being wrong.

He states that Sinn Fein’s failure to admit the murder of Irish public servants, or that of Enniskillen or many other

atrocities carried out by the IRA were wrong and were criminal acts.

If it is unacceptable for a Dublin government then it is unacceptable for a NI Executive.

Yet, Mr Varadkar has consistently joined the chorus of voices calling for the restoration of the NI Executive and Assembly with members of Sinn Fein holding senior positions – the same party who he apparently finds unsuitable to hold certain positions in the south.

Why is it acceptable for Northern Ireland to have unrepentant terrorists, eulogisers and those who glorify terrorism as ministers, or sitting on the policing board? The powers that be will quickly tell you that Sinn Fein have a mandate and that the people voted for the Belfast Agreement and that this is its outworking.

If Sinn Fein secure a mandate in the south to form a government then Mr Varadkar and others will just have to live with it and accept the consequences, as they have expected unionists and others to do so in Northern Ireland.

The Taoiseach needs to end the hypocrisy and double speak, it's not good enough to consign the 'nordies' to this fate whilst portraying a doomsday scenario in the Republic, it doesn't wash and Mr Varadkar needs to finally show some consistency on these matters, and that includes opening up his state to scrutiny for their role in facilitating terrorism and the broader 'Troubles.'

Poem for today

The House of Christmas

by GK Chesterton

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

For men are homesick in their homes,
And strangers under the sun,
And they lay on their heads in a foreign land
Whenever the day is done.
Here we have battle and blazing eyes,
And chance and honour and high surprise,
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the yule tale was begun.

A Child in a foul stable,
Where the beasts feed and foam;
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home;
We have hands that fashion and heads that know,
But our hearts we lost - how long ago!
In a place no chart nor ship can show
Under the sky's dome.

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This world is wild as an old wives' tale,
And strange the plain things are,
The earth is enough and the air is enough
For our wonder and our war;
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings
And our peace is put in impossible things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all men are at home.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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