

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – Oscar winner helps Shine a Light at Corrymeela**

## Image of the day



## Oscar winner helps Shine a Light at Corrymeela

**Kiran Wimberley writes - “We sang with an Oscar winner last night! It was a joy to meet James Martin, star of An Irish Goodbye and neighbour up the road, at the Shine a Light Christmas event at Corrymeela.**

“We heard the story of this organisation’s quiet but steady work of peacebuilding over the past 60 years and sang carols with all gathered.

“We didn’t do any Psalms, but we did sing a few carols that might end up on our next album... Celtic Psalms and Carols for Advent and Christmas! Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays everyone”.

# People and places

## Christmas support for prison chaplaincy



**Each Christmas since 2015 we have been blessed to have been able to give selection boxes to all the men in Maghaberry Prison.**

Over the next few days we will be working alongside prison chaplaincy to distribute over 1,200 gifts throughout the prison. Will you join with us in prayer?

That each man would personally know the true love and hope of Christ this Christmas.

”“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a

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drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’ “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’”

Matthew 25:34-40



## Heaney in Greece

**This was an extraordinarily inspirational evening spent in the company of the poet's daughter Catherine Heaney, the Ulster Orchestra, and Hellas Ensemble in the magnificent Spiritual Oasis that is Carlisle Road Methodist Church.**

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Well done North West District Superintendent Stephen Skuce and team. Great event, great venue, and great company - Helena Ewing.

A poster for the Christmas Dinner Project. The background is a light beige color with a decorative border of green pine branches and yellow starburst ornaments. The title "Christmas Dinner Project" is written in a large, bold, red, cursive font. Below the title, the text "This Christmas we are helping to provide Christmas dinners and food parcels to those who are in need at this time" is written in a green, sans-serif font. To the right of this text is the SAMS IRELAND logo, which consists of the word "SAMS" in white above "IRELAND" in white, both on a green curved background. Below the text, three donation options are listed in a green, italicized font: "£5 = 1 meal", "£10 = meal for a family", and "£20 = meal & parcel for a family". At the bottom, the text "To make a contribution follow the link to our website or contact us at office@samsireland.com or 028 3831 0144" is written in a black, italicized font.

## **SAMS Ireland Christmas Dinner Project**

Growing on the very positive response from last year, SAMS Ireland are launching the Christmas Dinner Project for 2023. San Lucas Church in Santiago, Chile will once again be

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providing those in need in the community with Christmas dinners and food parcels over the Christmas period. When delivering the food they will also have the opportunity to talk with the families receiving them and share the message of Jesus this Christmas time.

If you would like to buy a meal and food parcels please click the link <https://www.samsireland.com> to donate via SAMS website or contact the SAMS Office at [office@samsireland.com](mailto:office@samsireland.com) or 028 3831 0144.

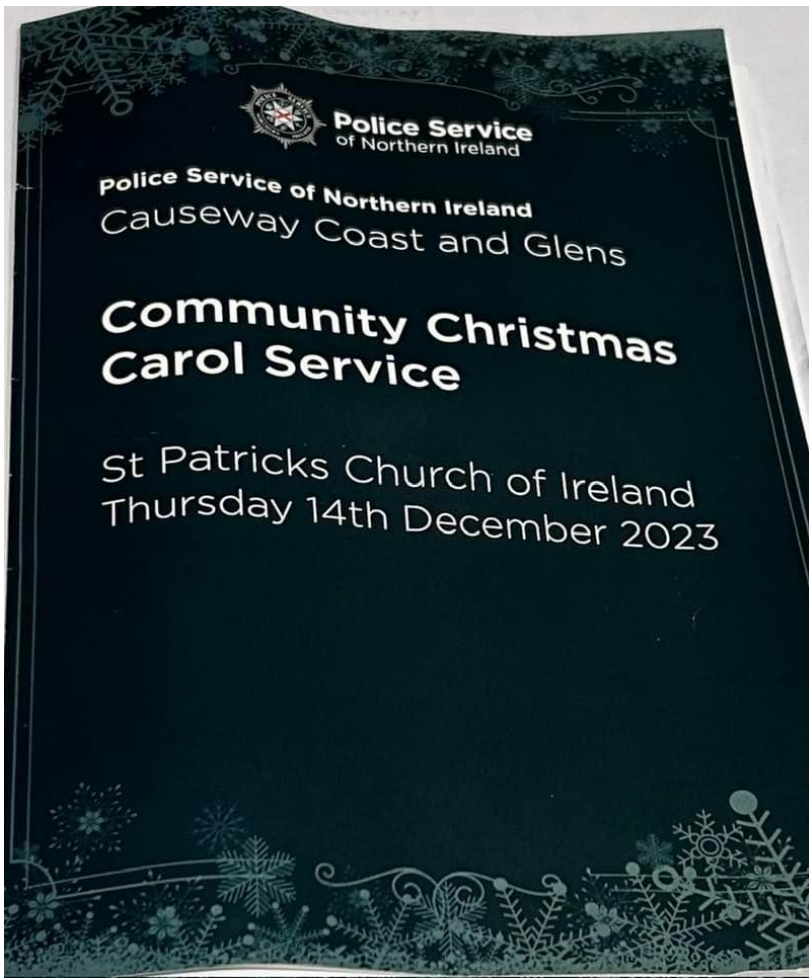
## Causeway Coast Community Carol Service



**It was a beautiful evening in the stunning St Patrick's Church in Coleraine for those attending the Police Service of Northern Ireland**

### **Causeway Coast and Glens Community Carol Service.**

It was a very inclusive service with great singing especially from St Malachy primary school and the indomitable



Causeway Shanty Singers amongst others. Then afterwards the gathering was led by a piper to Tea/ Coffee and Christmas fare in the Church Hall.

## **Dr Graham Shearer appointed as Lecturer in Theology at UTC**

**Union Theological College has announced the appointment of Dr Graham Shearer as Lecturer in Theology.**

Graham recently graduated with a PhD from Union for his thesis entitled 'The Communication of the Divine Essence in the Act of Eternal Generation: A Dogmatic Defence,' completed under the supervision of Prof Michael McClenahan.

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Graham holds an MA in History from Homerton College, Cambridge and a BA in Theological and Pastoral Studies from Oak Hill Theological College. He worked for six years at the Universities and College Christian Fellowship (UCCF), initially training speakers in apologetics and then latterly as Team Leader for the Central region, based in Cambridge. Before coming to Union, he served as Associate Pastor of East London Tabernacle Baptist



Church in Mile End. He has extensive experience of speaking, preaching and teaching ranging from speaking at university missions to informal small group settings and has ministered in a wide-variety of cultural settings.

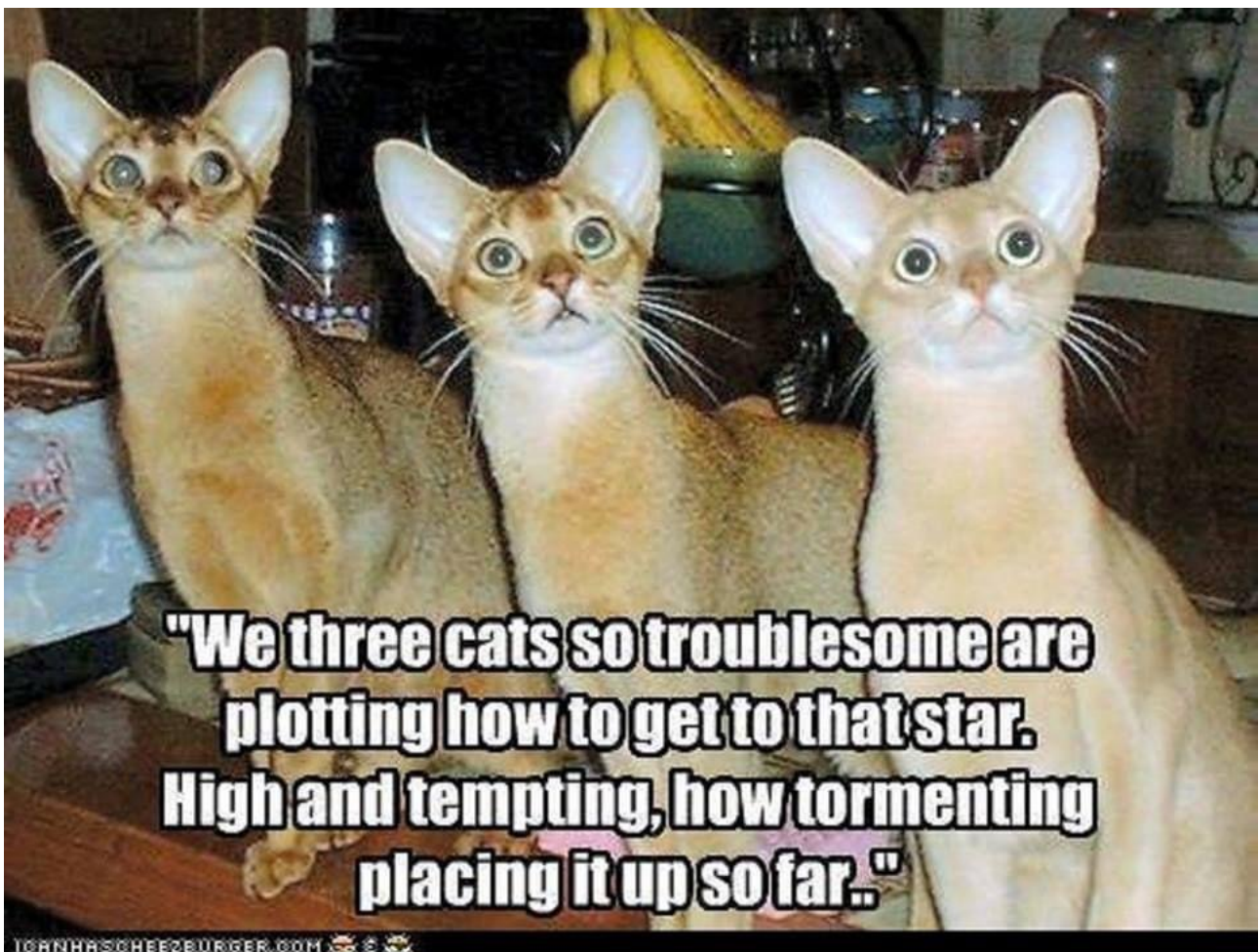
Graham says: “I’m delighted to be joining the faculty at Union. During my doctoral studies, I was enriched by the combination of deep theological reflection and sincere piety that characterises Union as an institution. It’s a privilege to be able to play a part in Union’s exciting mission of passing



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on the riches of Christian theology to a new generation of students, whether they be undergraduates, postgraduates, or training for ordained ministry. Anyone considering theological study at any level in order to grow in their knowledge of divine things should consider the various pathways Union offers. Union's task has never been more urgent or important than it is today and I'm grateful to be able to join the wonderful team already here in fulfilling it."

Prof Michael McClenahan, Principal of Union, commented that 'it gives me great pleasure to welcome Graham to the faculty of Union. Graham began his doctoral work in Belfast with a strong academic background, extensive experience in student ministry, and a number of years of pastoral ministry in London. His doctoral research was of the highest possible



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standard and we are delighted that he is joining us on faculty and as a member of our community.'

Graham will be teaching across the pathways that Union offers, from undergraduate to PhD. He is the coordinator of the God, Christ and Salvation undergraduate module which introduces students to the best of Christian reflection on the central ideas of the Christian faith. In the second semester he will teach The Great Tradition module on the MDiv programme, which aims to give an in-depth account of the doctrines of Scripture, God, and Christ. You can find some of Graham's previous writing here and listen to his lecture, at the Davenant Institute's 2022 UK Convivium Irenicum conference, entitled "Who Can Declare His Generation? Divine Incomprehensibility and Human Reason in 4th Century Trinitarianism" here. Graham is married to Katherine and they live in Belfast with their three children.

## In the media

### **[Irish Presbyterians to provide meaningful aid in Sierra Leone - News Letter](#)**

**With displacement of people in Sierra Leone's tropical forests continuing, families are having to start their lives from scratch as a result of the practices of multinational palm oil companies and local collaborators - Billy Kennedy writes**

This year's Presbyterian Church in Ireland world development appeal will provide meaningful support and

training to enable those who have been forced off their land to rebuild their lives.

For 40 years, in the run up to Christmas and over the New Year, the Irish Presbyterian church's 500-plus congregations have come together to support the annual appeal.

Assisting the work of PCI's relief and development partners, Christian Aid and Tearfund in a number of countries across the globe, this year's lead project is a Christian Aid programme seeking to lessen the economic and humanitarian effect of the ongoing injustice around palm oil production in West African nation Sierra Leone.

More than 30,000 people in 50 villages in Malen chiefdom in Sierra Leone's Pujehun district have been impacted by arrival of a multi-national-owned palm oil plantation over a decade ago.

The 18,000 acres have been leased, of which 12,000 make up the plantation, has also been blamed for pollution of the local environment as well as the destruction of farmland. As the Rev Liam Rutherford, convener of Presbyterian world development appeal committee explained, while congregations are being asked to support the appeal, titled 'Starting from Scratch: Hope for the Displaced', the church also asks people more widely to consider the impact of their actions as consumers, if the palm oil that they use is not sustainably sourced.

"In many countries, large European-based companies are buying up or leasing land for palm oil plantations, often with the support of local agencies and village elders, with little or

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no regard for the people who live on that land and rely on it for their livelihoods,” said Mr Rutherford, minister of Ballydown church, Banbridge.

“The generosity of Irish Presbyterians will make a difference to the lives of many, especially women, in helping them to rebuild their lives and start from scratch.”

Christian Aid’s head of fundraising Ruth Cooke, who met women impacted by the palm oil plantation when she was in Sierra Leone, said: “To assist 300 women who were forced to abandon their homes following the arrival of the plantation, money raised by the PCI world development appeal will fund a village savings and loan scheme.

“I saw how the scheme makes a real difference to the lives of the women.”

+ Primarily for Presbyterians, the WDA normally raises between £300,000 and £500,000 to support life-changing sustainable development projects in some of the poorest communities and disadvantaged places in the world. This year the appeal will also support Tearfund projects, including those in Bangladesh, working through the local church to equip communities to reduce the impact of climate related disasters. A proportion of PCI funding is also set aside for the church’s international partners’ development projects.

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## **Welby ‘forgot lines’ in Coronation practice - Daily Telegraph**

**King shown laughing in new documentary about event as Archbishop forgets words to a blessing, India McTaggart writes.**

The Archbishop of Canterbury could not remember his “lines” during rehearsals for the King’s Coronation, a new documentary has revealed.

A behind-the-scenes BBC documentary charts the lead-up to the historic service, watched by more than 20 million people in the UK, which the Most Rev Justin Welby presided over.

In a teaser clip for Charles III: The Coronation Year, the Archbishop can be seen fluffing his lines to a blessing while rehearsing with the monarch.

The King is shown laughing and shaking his head when the Archbishop forgets the words to part of the liturgy – the prayers and actions of the Coronation service – in a rehearsal clip filmed at Westminster Abbey.

The Archbishop says in an interview: “I have a memory that is probably about as good as our spaniel’s – in other words, zero.”

He is shown reading out the prayers to the monarch before stopping midway and looking at notes while admitting: “This can’t be right.”

An accompanying person in the Abbey can be heard quipping, “You must have said this before,” to which the King turns red with laughter.

The Archbishop later said to the camera: “He gave me a nice smile, nodded his head, but that was a glitch.”

The documentary chronicles some of the major moments from the first year of the King’s reign, and includes footage of the King and Queen joking and laughing during Coronation dress rehearsals in behind-the-scenes footage.

The King says “I can fly” as he holds up his lavish robes like wings during a practice run in Buckingham Palace, while the Queen deadpans, “Here we are with all the lads,” as her pages hold up the train of her dress. Annabel Elliot, the Queen’s younger sister, is interviewed as well as the Princess Royal, who gives her recollections of the first 12 months of her brother’s reign and how the monarch and his wife have adapted to their new roles.

Their Majesties’ close friend the Marchioness of Lansdowne, tells the documentary the moment when she, Mrs Elliot and the Queen saw each other in their coronation gowns for the first time was like the “bridesmaids going to see the bride”.

The Queen’s younger sister and Lady Lansdowne both had the formal role of Lady in Attendance during the service.

Mrs Elliot appears emotional in footage as she and members of the coronation entourage wave off the royal

couple as they practise leaving Buckingham Palace for the service at Westminster Abbey on May 6.

Lady Lansdowne said: “There was just a really exciting moment of just getting them into that carriage the first time, and we knew we were off.”

In a clip released ahead of the film’s screening on Boxing Day, Prince George is featured during the palace rehearsal, and in a photo the Prince of Wales is shown laughing with the King as the Prince practises fitting robes around his father for the ceremony.

In the same Buckingham Palace clip, Their Majesties are shown rehearsing their route through the palace with their pages of honour. The Queen’s train is held by her four pages: her three grandsons, twin boys Gus and Louis by her daughter Laura Lopes, and 13-year-old Frederick, by son Tom Parker Bowles, and her great-nephew, Arthur Elliot, 10, Mrs Elliot’s grandson.

The King’s pages holding up his gown are Prince George, Nicholas Barclay, the grandson of Sarah Troughton, one of the Queen’s Companions, Lord Oliver Cholmondeley, the son of the Marquess of Cholmondeley, and Ralph Tollemache.

**Charles III: The Coronation Year will be screened on Dec 26 at 6.50pm on BBC One and iPlayer.**

# Perspective

## Advent of Peace? by Richard Sewell



The fourteen pointed star which marks the traditional place of Jesus's birth.

**Peace is that most ephemeral of inner human qualities and also the most elusive of features in our world.**

We desire an inner peace that will help us to face the challenges and frustrations of our lives and we yearn for peace in the world that will drive away suffering, divisions and warfare. The Roman Empire claimed to have established 'Pax Romana' because Caesar Augustus inaugurated a period when no great wars raged within the



realm. Jesus was born in this so-called period of Roman peace. While it may have been peaceful for some, it was tyranny for others. Jesus was born under Roman occupation and it was experienced by his people, the Jews of Judea and Galilee, as oppression.

Palestinians today feel that they are living under a system of occupation and the long 'Wall of Separation' which divides Israel from the West Bank and Gaza is a visible symbol of the occupation and of divided peoples. On Christmas Eve, Christians who live in Jerusalem, including our own Anglican congregation have to traverse the Wall and the checkpoint to make the seven mile journey to Bethlehem.

We go there for a special service in the Basilica of Nativity at the traditional location of Jesus's birth, to celebrate the birth of the Son of God, another of whose titles is the 'Prince of Peace'. That name was appropriate then as it is now: Jesus comes into a world wracked with violence and suffering and which cries out for peace. That is not simply peace as the absence of war, but the peace which penetrates deep and wide to create justice for all. This Christmas, more than almost any before, we are conscious that the Holy Land is in a state of utter turmoil, when the yearning for an end to war and for the establishment of real peace is visceral.

Jesus Christ was born to be the source of that peace, for the world and for us as individuals. Whatever our own inner turmoil or distress, whatever deeply troubles us, Jesus, as the presence of God among us, can be the source of our inner peace too. It is a peace which brings calm to the unrest within us and it is the peace which breaches the

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bitterest of divides in the world. This is a wondrous gift to us all, but it is also a gift we must be ready to receive and to share in our lives and in our world, starting from Bethlehem and spreading from there, to everywhere.

*The Very Rev'd Richard Sewell is the Dean of St George's College in Jerusalem, the Anglican centre for pilgrimage in the Holy Land.*

## Poem for today



## Christmas Bells by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I heard the bells on Christmas Day

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Their old, familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along  
The unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime,  
A chant sublime  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth  
The cannon thundered in the South,  
And with the sound  
The carols drowned  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent  
The hearth-stones of a continent,  
And made forlorn  
The households born  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong,  
And mocks the song

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Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:

"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;

The Wrong shall fail,

The Right prevail,

With peace on earth, good-will to men."



## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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# Church News Ireland

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