

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – The Great Daffodil Appeal

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Image of the day

The Great Daffodil Appeal

From today look out for the wonderful Marie Curie collectors appearing on bus shelter posters across Northern Ireland.

Lynn, Heather and Alistair (photo above) are encouraging others to sign up and collect for the Great Daffodil Appeal during the month of March and raise vital funds to help care for more people at the end of life.

Lynn said 'I really enjoy collecting, it is a great opportunity to speak to people and we hear lots of stories about how people's loved ones have been cared for and supported by Marie Curie. I've always found it to be a fun and rewarding experience and would encourage everyone to get involved.'

To find out more about volunteering visit -

<https://tinyurl.com/3byhjpvw>

Muriel's Marie Curie Fundraising Group. Marie Curie Scrabo Fundraising Group. Omagh Friends of Marie Curie. Fermanagh Friends of Marie Curie. Marie Curie East Belfast Fundraising Group. Lisburn and Hillsborough Fundraising Group. Marie Curie Down Fundraising Group. Marie Curie Armagh Fundraising Group. Marie Curie North Down Friends of Marie Curie.

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News

Cardinal welcomes historic Muslim-Jewish Accords

Cardinal Vincent Nichols has welcomed an historic accord signed by senior Muslim and Jewish denominational leaders in the UK, which marks a defining moment in interfaith relations.

The agreement, The Drumlanrig Accord, was presented to His Majesty The King at Buckingham Palace, on Tuesday, 11 February.



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The Accord sets out a new framework for engagement, built on mutual respect, dialogue, and practical collaboration. It champions the principle of disagreeing agreeably, ensuring that differences do not lead to division but instead foster deeper understanding. It is a call to action committing both communities to working together on practical initiatives that support the most vulnerable, tackling societal inequities such as discrimination, isolation, and poverty.

Cardinal Nichols said: "I welcome this initiative by Muslim and Jewish leaders to work together for the common good. In my experience, developing friendships and close relationships between faith leaders is an essential part of encouraging social cohesion and good interfaith relationships more widely in this country.



Wednesdays
6.30pm
Term-time

In the Ramoan Parish Centre

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"I look forward to continued collaboration with all leaders to ensure faith continues to play an integral role in a healthy society."

This is a non-political initiative that represents a deep and enduring commitment from the UK's Jewish and Muslim communities to strengthen relationships, promote understanding, and work together for the common good.

The Accord is the outcome of a year-long series of high-level meetings convened by Imam Dr Sayed Razawi, culminating in a private retreat from 14-16 January at Drumlanrig Castle in Scotland hosted by the Duke of Buccleuch. For the first time in UK history, senior representatives from eleven major Muslim and Jewish denominations gathered to shape a future founded on shared values, reconciliation, and social responsibility.

RSCM calls for action to keep children singing in church choirs

Two thirds of church choirs have no members under 18 – a figure that rises to 80 per cent in villages and rural areas, an RSCM (Royal School of Church Music) survey of church musicians' fees in England has found.

An ageing singing population is a big challenge, its deputy financial and operations director, Paul Hedley, acknowledges, but it is not a lost cause.

The RSCM undertook the survey in November 2024 to provide a basis for updated guidance for its members on the

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rates commonly known as RSCM rates. Only members are privy to the rates themselves, but the UK-wide survey results from the 1161 respondents reveal that 92 per cent of choirs, 50 per cent of piano/keyboard players, 31 per cent of music directors, and 28 per cent of organists are voluntary.

Of the 95 per cent who regularly use the organ in worship, 68 per cent report that their organist is of “Diploma level”, with fees typically 20 to 50 per cent higher than where the usual player has “Satisfactory competence”. For wedding

DESERTMARTIN PARISH CHURCH
Presents
THE BAND, BUGLES, PIPES AND DRUMS
of the
**ROYAL IRISH REGIMENT
IN CONCERT**

Magherafelt High School
Friday 11th April
7.30 p.m. sharp



Contact
Rev Philip Benson 07850345156
or Sam Hudson 07712311156

**Tickets
£10
each**

fees, London pays 30 per cent, and south-east England five per cent, above the average: an indicator, the results suggest, of their relatively high gross disposable income.

The survey encompasses worship bands (16 per cent of respondents had a band); instrumentalists (19 per cent); music technologists (16 per cent); cantors or vocal soloists (ten per cent); and organ scholars (eight per cent). Regular use of recorded music was low. It was most commonly used

A purple-themed calendar for Lent and Holy Week 2025. At the top, a purple oval contains the year '2025'. Below it, the title 'LENT & HOLY WEEK' is written in large, bold, purple letters. The main event, 'Ash Wednesday', is highlighted in a larger purple box with a circular image of a forehead with ash. Below this, a grid of 10 purple boxes lists the days of Lent and Holy Week, each with a small circular icon and the date. At the bottom center, there is a decorative floral graphic.

2025

LENT & HOLY WEEK

Ash Wednesday

March 05, 2025

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Season of Lent. It is a season of penance, reflection, and fasting which prepares us for Christ's Resurrection on Easter Sunday, through which we attain redemption.

1st Sunday of Lent March 09, 2025	Palm Sunday April 13, 2025
2nd Sunday of Lent March 16, 2025	Maundy Thursday April 17, 2025
3rd Sunday of Lent March 23, 2025	Good Friday April 18, 2025
Laetere Sunday March 30, 2025	Holy Saturday April 19, 2025
5th Sunday of Lent April 06, 2025	Easter Sunday April 20, 2025

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as a backing track for congregational singing in just eight per cent of churches.

Given that 90 per cent of responses came from Anglican places of worship, it was unsurprising, he suggested, that 99 per cent of respondents had congregational singing as part of their worship. Church attendance evidently had a bearing on the statistics, as does population: the reported average attendance at a main or typical service was approximately 62, dropping to 38 in villages or rural places of worship.



Agherton Parish Church Portstewart

Dementia Friendly

Church Service

**Wednesday
19th February
at 2pm**

An informal, friendly church service in Agherton, the Diamond, Portstewart. Open to everyone, but especially designed for those living with dementia and those caring for someone with the condition.



**For more information
028 7083 3277**

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The dearth of under-18s remained one of the most significant findings, Mr Hedley said, describing it as “a big potential wake-up call” for the whole sector of youth involvement in church music.

“If it’s not addressed, then the future of singing in church is under threat,” he said on Tuesday of last week. “It’s hard growing church choirs where they have completely disappeared, but it’s not impossible, given what the survey shows in terms of the ability that’s out there in players and music directors, and people who want to be involved. We’re hoping this survey sparks really good conversations about all this.”

Aside from its residential courses, and Voice for Life musical training programme, the RSCM is about to bring in a new initiative to encourage children’s and young people’s participation: what Mr Hedley describes as “a toolkit for material specifically around resources for developing junior choirs and young voices.

“A lot of people, whether they’re experienced directors of music or those with less experience, often either struggle or indeed feel really uncomfortable about the prospect of setting up something fresh starting to work with young people.

“We’re wanting to provide some material that can address some of those tricky questions about what it would take in a particular church or environment — including safeguarding concerns, which we have, of course, to be aware of, but which are not insurmountable.

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“We should be able to see significant change, but it’s not going to be within the next 12 months. This is a long, slow burn. To drive it forward, we have to succeed in training the next generation not just of singers, but of music leaders, whether that be an organist and director of music or a young or older worship leader.”

And one critical piece of the jigsaw was partnership with the incumbent, he concluded. “Without that good partnership, nothing happens.”

See also News Letter editorial in Media on page 24 below.

Education

Hello to the new Chair of Sport NI, Gavin Boyd

Gavin has been on the Sport NI board since 2021 and has served as Vice Chair since 2023.

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons MLA has appointed Gavin Boyd as the Chair of the Sport NI Board from 10 February 2025 to 09 February 2029.

Gavin previously served as a Sport NI Board Member from 1 August 2021 to 27 August 2023, interim Vice-Chair from 28 August 2023 to 31 May 2024, and permanent Vice-Chair from 1 June 2024 to 9 February 2025.

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Gavin commented: “I am delighted to take up the role of Chair of Sport NI and as a Board member since 2021 I’d like to thank our previous Chair George Lucas for his leadership and expertise over the past eight years.



“I am looking forward to working with colleagues, governing bodies and sports clubs to support our mission to increase participation in sport and physical activity and support our athletes to compete amongst the best in the world as we look ahead to the 2026 Commonwealth Games and 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.”

Welcoming the news Sport NI Interim CEO Richard Archibald said: “I’d like to congratulate Gavin on his new role as Chair of Sport NI. He has played an integral role on the Sport NI Board and we are delighted to have retained his expertise for another four years.

“Gavin will naturally slot into leading the board as we continue in our mission to maximise the Power of Sport to change lives.” On his appointment, Gavin said: “I am looking forward to working with colleagues, governing bodies and

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sports clubs to support our mission to increase participation in sport and physical activity.

"Whilst also supporting our athletes to compete amongst the best in the world as we look ahead to the 2026 Commonwealth Games and 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games."

Find out more: <https://www.sportni.net/news/gavin-boyd-appointed-chair-of-sport-ni/> #PowerOfSport

Dalriada student awarded Entrance Scholarship by Maynooth University

Dalriada school, Ballymoney, writes - "We are delighted for our former pupil, Emily Cochrane, who, because of her excellent A level results, was awarded the Entrance Scholarship worth €1000 by Maynooth University at a Presentation Ceremony on Wednesday evening.



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“She is currently studying at Maynooth for her Bachelor of Arts degree. Well done Emily, we are very proud of you.”

Campbell College staff team posts

“We are looking for new people to join our staff team!”

“If you know somebody looking for a new role, please encourage them to get in touch. For further information, please visit our website”:




<http://bit.ly/3krYv0m>

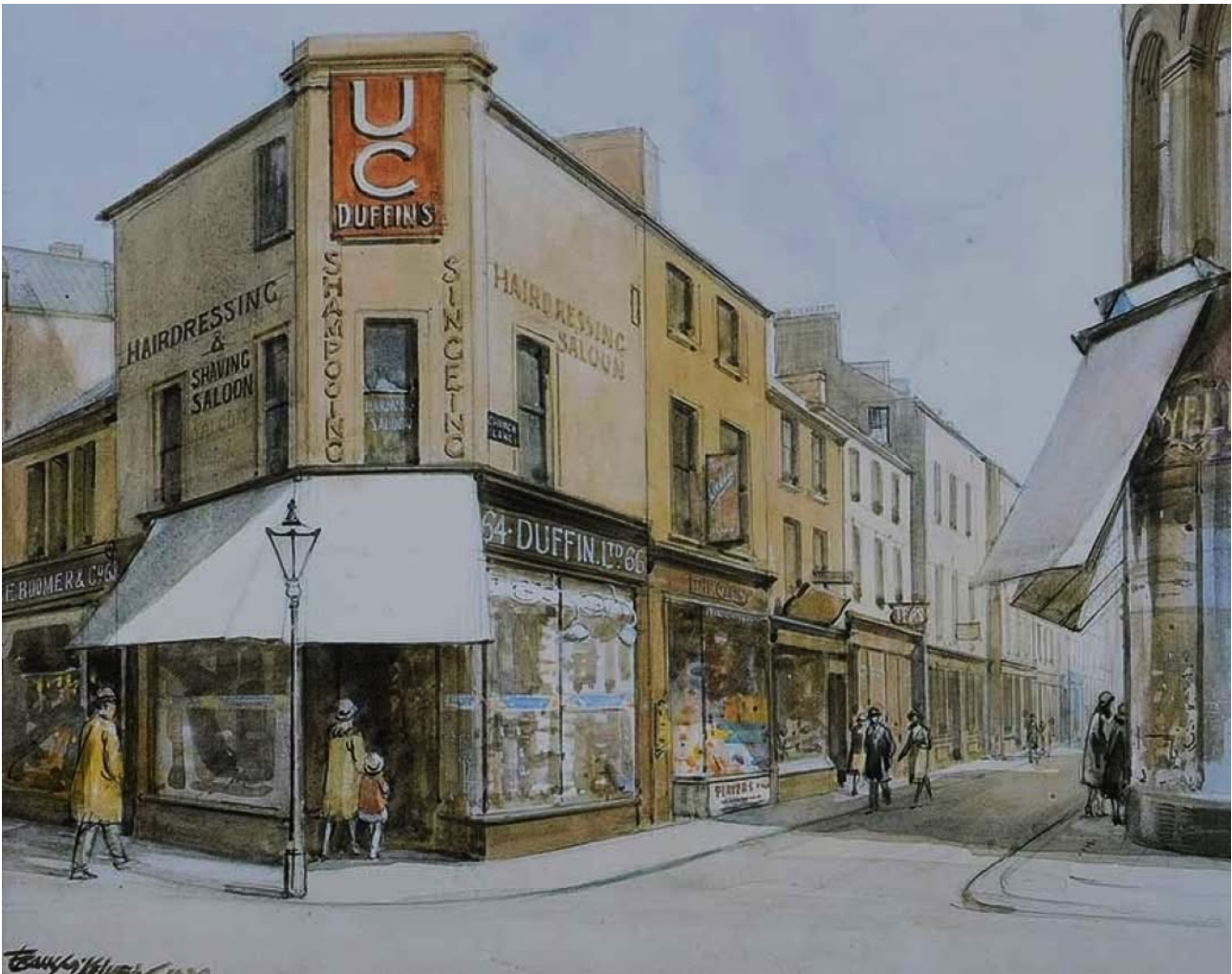
Cathedral Calls

Cathedral Gardens planning approval awaits Belfast Council decision

The application for full planning permission for a public realm scheme within Cathedral Gardens, Donegall Street is finally coming to Belfast City Council committee .

It includes:

-  An interactive lighting experience
-  A canopy covered digital tile play zone
-  Projector provision for digital art displays



Belfast street scene by Frank McKelvey

<https://www.belfastentries.com/people/frank-mckelvey/>

- ✓ A public plaza
- ✓ An urban forest and woodland garden area
- ✓ A lawn area next to the university campus
- ✓ A World War Two Blitz memorial
- ✓ Retaining the Rinty Monaghan statue

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Those in favour of the development say it will move quickly to becoming a reality and that this is another stage in transforming this area - hopefully the road/pedestrian rebalancing is next!

The WW2 memorial, which is on a site flattened during the Blitz is long overdue. Hopefully it will renew interest in how this area was impacted, the site itself was once a vibrant area of housing and retail businesses.

Finally, urban forests are something which have been championed in the belief they would benefit Belfast's people and public realm. Progress has been slow and proponents hope this project will stimulate similar schemes, both in the city centre and in communities.

**Clergy
and
ministry**


**Publicity
and
charves
for TCD
chapel**

**A couple of
fun chap
updates**

✉ chapel@csc.tcd.ie @tcdchapelchoir

Regular Services

with



Trinity College Dublin
Chapel Choir est. 1762

Choral Evensong

Thursdays, 5.15 pm (45mins)

Choral Eucharist

*Sung Holy Communion with Sermon
Sundays, 10.45 am (1hr)*

Services every week during term time
All are welcome to attend

CHAPEL OF TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

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arrived from TCD chapel. Firstly, you can now spot the ‘regular services’ posters up around campus, beaming in classic chapel teal!



“Why not walk about and give one a scone, while you’re at it you could loudly admire them within ear-shot of the passers-by?”

The chappies have now acquired the latest peice of swanky chapel merchandise in the form of scarves (lovingly christened “charves”).

Pictured here is condictor Callum rocking his charf! Prepare to catch us chaps on campus kitted out 🕶️...

Historic church welcomes kirk’s newest minister

A former IT expert who gave up a jet-setting career to train as a minister has been ordained at the historic Church of the Holy Rude in Stirling.

Rev Simon Hesselton will stay on as an assistant minister at the 15th century kirk in the immediate term, allowing him to continue working towards a PhD in church history at the University of Edinburgh's School of Divinity, New College.

Simon, who lives in Larbert, just a seven-minute train commute from Stirling, came to join the Church of Scotland as an adult, having been brought up in the Roman Catholic Church.

"Like most teenagers, I probably went off church a bit, but it didn't stop me from reading the Bible," he admitted.

"I probably had a realisation in my late teens that at some point I would end up in some form of ministry, but I didn't know how, because I didn't see myself becoming a priest."

His introduction to the Church of Scotland came after he met his future wife Gillian and visited her home church.

"It was very different from my early experiences of church," he said.

"I eventually joined the Church of Scotland and we joined a church near to our home after we got married."

As he became more involved with the church, Simon began to experience a growing sense of call.

Although he had a very successful career, latterly as a cyber-security expert for PricewaterhouseCoopers, one of

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the "Big Four" international accountancy firms, he opted to give it up and enrol as a divinity student at New College.

"I really enjoyed my time at New College and in fact, I have returned. I am only a part-time minister because I am now working on a PhD. When I was researching my undergraduate dissertation, I was frustrated by the word limit of 10,000 words, and realised I could easily write 100,000 on that subject, the relationship with Catholicism, because I was just scratching the surface of a much bigger and more exciting story."

Completing his PhD is likely to take around six years, but Simon will be able to work on it while working as a part-time or locum minister.

In the shorter term, that means staying on with the congregation of Holy Rude Viewfield, which suits him well.

He explained: "I did a placement there during my undergraduate degree, so I know the congregation reasonably well. At the moment, we are sharing with the Methodist church, so the congregation is a bit bigger than it would normally be because of that."

The church was even busier for his ordination service, where friends and others joined Simon's wife, and their sons for the special occasion.

The congregation included ministers and office-bearers from the Presbytery of Perth, including Alva minister Rev Jim McNeil, who preached the sermon on "The Joys of Leadership", and Presbytery Moderator Rev Alan Reid.

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Simon said: "People had travelled from far and wide and it was lovely to see so many people who had taken the time to come on a very wet Tuesday night. I really had expected it to be quite quiet, but it was anything but.

"It was very special."

Events

Global Justice in youth work facilitation skills training

Do you want to see your youth group mobilised and empowered to change the world around them? Asks Armagh C of I diocese.

This Lent, join a practical 4 session, interactive training programme for youth leaders that will give you the skills, resources and confidence to address issues of social and global justice with young people and mobilise them to become change makers! The training will be delivered by Tearfund Ireland and will be suitable for anyone who works with young people aged 11-18 in a Church or school setting.

When: 4 Tuesday evenings - 25th February, 4th March, 11th March & 18th March

Time: 7.30pm-9pm

Where: Online Zoom

Contact: Complete the following form to register:

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<https://forms.gle/g2kK2oY1CWVuj6ja6>

Or email Luke@CIYD.org for more details.

Nominate a charity for Benefact's £1,000 Draw

100 charities now have the chance to win £1,000, doubling the usual number of winners!

Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity and nominate today. Excellent helpful briefing at -

<https://brnw.ch/21wQC9p>

Shout out for exhibitors at Dunluce Parish Art and Photography Exhibition

Artists and photographers wishing to exhibit their work at the annual Art and Photography Exhibition in Dunluce Parish, Bushmills, are invited to fill in an online entry form.

The exhibition will run from May 2-5 and will once again raise funds for the Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal – last year the event raised more than £3,500.

Artists and photographers who are interested in showing their works will find details in the Invitation to Artists document and Entry Form on the Downloads page of www.dunluceparish.org. The closing date for receipt of entries is Friday April 18. Queries can be sent to the

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coordinator of the exhibition, Aileen Gault,
dunluceparishart@outlook.com.

Last year the exhibition featured 270 by 71 artists/
photographers 69 works by 39 participants were sold.

Desertmartin Parish Vintage Rally & Summer Fete 2025

This year's event will take place on Saturday, 16th August 2025, from 12 noon to 4 pm (registration from 11 am) at 25 Dromore Rd, Desertmartin, Magherafelt, BT45 5JZ.

Vintage cars, tractors, motorcycles, stationary engines, farm machinery and stallholders are all welcome. More information will follow shortly. Contact details:
dtparishes@gmail.com, 07850 345 156 & 028 7963 9418.

Resources

NI Libraries Learn @ Lunch series

If you missed NI Libraries most recent Learn @ Lunch series, you can watch every Photography session with Catriona Corrigan on their YouTube.

Watch a user-friendly site now at -

<https://tinyurl.com/LNIYTLaL2>

Spring issue of Search

The Spring issue of the Church of Ireland journal, *Search*, edited by Canon Ginnie Kennerley, offers articles on the challenges of the times writes the C of I correspondent to The Irish Times -

How best to work and pray for healing for the conflicted and competing nations of the world looks even harder this year than last – and praying for the churches and the life of faith is no easier. The two problems come together in the USA, where many now wonder whether the word “Christian” still means what it used to. **Professor Randall Balmer**, a TEC theologian who warmly supports Bishop Mariann Budde’s appeal to Trump for mercy on the disadvantaged people he has threatened, ponders the elements of racism, sexism and victimhood infecting the religious Right. Like Bishop Budde, he urges support for “the least of these”, whom Christ commands us to serve. In Ukraine, there is inter–church activity on “Pathways to Peace” described by Ihor Krasovskyi.

The Revd Maggi Dawn considers how best clergy can enable real prayer in their congregations, giving a sense of divine presence in the liturgy. Denise Stobart takes her reflection further by exploring the spiritual enlightenment offered by music in worship, and **Margaret Daly–Denton** follows up with an account of an inter–church event in Dublin at which former **Archbishop Rowan Williams** spoke on “A Noisy World in Need of Meditation and Service.”

Another area requiring deep prayer is the universal need for healing. **Archdeacon Ross Styles** shares his experience of

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bringing God's love to people in need through the Church's Ministry of Healing, inviting wider participation and offering training in this area. Finally, looking to the rising generation and how to make faith exciting and meaningful for them, with or without Sunday Schools, **Rachael Murphy** reflects on ways forward in this important area.

In the media

Sinn Fein seeks to bypass churches and their views in same-sex equality move

News Letter editorial on Saturday February 15 2025

An attempt by Sinn Fein this week to characterise concerns about protections for religious organisations in equality law as anti-gay were entirely wrong.

The Christian Institute told a Stormont committee that attempts to introduce a single equality law in Northern Ireland could have unintended consequences – including limits on religious liberties and freedom of speech.

They also raised the issue of exemptions from certain equality laws for churches – an entirely reasonable discussion in a liberal society which should still value freedom of expression.

MLAs on the Executive Office committee debated whether equality law protections for workers also should apply to volunteers – and what consequences that could have for religious organisations.

This is an important issue, a clash between protections for gay people and those for faith groups, which has been at the heart of debates around equality legislation for years.

But extraordinarily, it was an issue which was almost left out of the committee's inquiry. Had it not been for the TUV inviting the Christian Institute to give evidence, it may not have garnered any public attention.

Questions were raised about whether churches could retain the ability to dismiss people from positions if they weren't living by their teachings, such as gay people. That was met with an angry response from Sinn Fein MLA Carál Ní Chuilín – who said the Christian group was essentially saying “gays don't apply”.

While Carál Ní Chuilín's concern about discrimination against gay people is no doubt sincere, she and other MLAs must also have regard for people of faith – who cannot be compelled to take actions contrary to their religious faith in the name of equality.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

The publication of Church News Ireland is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD. He may be contacted at houstonmckelvey@mac.com

Church News Ireland

www.churchnewsireland.org

**Link in Monday through Saturday from
early morning**

Please recommend to your friends