

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – New recruits for N Irish Guide Dogs**

## Image of the day

### New recruits for N Irish Guide Dogs

**Say hello to Guide Dogs Northern Ireland three new training dogs.**

Guide Dogs Northern Ireland write - Erin, Winnie and Gus sit, smiling with tongues out, on the green carpet of a hotel room

On the left, we have black Labrador x Golden Retriever Erin, who was puppy raised in Cupar, Fife.

In the centre, we have yellow Labrador x Golden Retriever Winnie. He (just like Winnie-the-Pooh!), was named in memory through our Name A Puppy scheme and puppy raised in Carnoustie.

Finally, we have Gus, also a yellow Labrador x Retriever, who was puppy raised in Dundee and is named after a retired guide dog, through Name A Puppy donations.

All three underwent early training in Forfar and we are sure you will wish them well in their advanced training, here in Belfast!

Guide Dogs Northern Ireland

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/guide-dogs-northern-ireland/>

# People and places



## Wildflowers abounding in Aghrim

**As part of National Biodiversity Week, the children of the Glebe National School, Aghrim, Co. Galway, recently conducted a wildflower survey in the Aghrim Climate Action Park and in the Rectory Garden Project.**

The results were staggering. Thanks to the gradual processes of re-wilding, there is now an extravagant range of wildlife flourishing in the meadows and walled gardens.

From daisies and dandelions to forget-me-nots to gentian speedwell; from clover and brambles to yellow rattle and yellow iris; from cuckoo flowers and cow parsley to purple vetch and phacelia, there is beauty beyond imagining, to delight the hearts of those who are eagle-eyed enough to seek it out.



*Aughrim Climate Action Park*

## **Guided tours of St Laserian's Cathedral in Old Leighlin**

**From today Thursday to Sunday you can catch guided tours of St Laserian's Cathedral in Old Leighlin from 12 – 4 p.m. daily.**

A 13th century gem which nestles in the village of Old Leighlin. The original monastic settlement dates from the 7th century and, at its peak had a community of 1,500 monks. A synod held here in 630AD was decisive in reconciling the date of Easter for the Irish church. The cathedral embraces a fascinating and often violent history of Viking raids, murder and religious turbulence. Its 13th century nave and chancel and its 15th century tower and Lady Chapel remain largely unchanged. Also to be seen is the unique four-bay sedilia, the 12th and 13th century fonts and the splendid Catherine

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O'Brien East Window. Today, St Laserian's remains an unspoilt and magical place. Nearby is St Laserian's Well with its celtic cross believed to date from the time of the saint.

Admission: Free, however a donation of €2 is greatly appreciated towards the cathedral's upkeep



## Queen's Chaplaincy Choir Director honoured

**The Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's University can rightly be proud of their Choir Director, Marcella Walsh, who was awarded a special honour for 5 years' service to the Down and Connor Lourdes Pilgrimage by Diocesan Administrator, Bishop Donal McKeown.**

Marcella volunteered this year with the Diocesan Choir and contributed much to the experience of pilgrims with her wonderful music and song. Marcella even caught up with her old friend, Andrea Bocelli,

who gave a concert at the Lourdes Basilica, before this year's pilgrimage drew to a close. Well done Marcella.

## **Catholic Education Partnership welcomes Social Personal Health Education consultation**

**The Catholic Education Partnership (CEP) welcomes the opening of the consultation process of the Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) Senior-Cycle Curriculum Specification by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).**

The Chief Executive of CEP, Alan Hynes, said, “The specification respects the individuality of students, in the context of their responsibilities towards others, with an emphasis on the dignity of all persons. Senior cycle students are moving toward the responsibilities and challenges of adulthood, and the specification recognises their increased agency in that regard. However, the role of parents as primary educators of their children is something we believe is still essential to explicitly recognise and respect in all SPHE programmes.

“CEP is disappointed that the spiritual aspect of wellbeing has been neglected. We are confident that the NCCA will recognise the importance of this element at all levels of SPHE, as it already is in the specifications for primary and the junior-cycle post-primary. CEP believes that a consistency of approach across all levels is advisable.

“CEP understands what the NCCA are trying to achieve with the inclusion of ‘allyship’ and ‘privileged status’. Within Catholic schools, we believe that the ethical question of justice among peoples is better served by ideas grounded in

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the solidarity we owe to others as fellow brothers and sisters, arising from our common humanity. Within a European context, we believe the NCCA should have taken account, for example, of the [Aims and Values of the EU]. It is disappointing not to see European values reflected in the document, but it reflects the general research bias of the NCCA towards the Anglosphere, often ignoring our EU partners and other sources, in this case taking inspiration from the particular social and historical context of North America.

Lambeg players

# STOP IT NURSE

A comedy in 3 Acts  
By SAM CREE

**Portrush Summer Theatre**

Wed 23<sup>rd</sup> to Sat 26<sup>th</sup> August

Box Office: 02870 829539

Lambegplayers.com



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“Catholic schools look forward to engaging with this specification through a Catholic lens, encouraging respectful dialogue and encounter with other points of view, informed at all times as to the essential dignity of all persons, created as we all are in the image and likeness of God.

“CEP looks forward to participating in the consultation process and our submission will be published in due course. We encourage parents, students, teachers, school management, and other stakeholders in education to participate in this important consultation process.”

CEP notes that the Minister for Education has signalled her intent to make SPHE a mandatory subject for schools to offer and timetable for all students. As is noted by the NCCA, this does not affect the right of parents to withdraw their child from this subject, in-whole or in-part, or the right of students who are 18 or over to determine their own participation. CEP and other Catholic education bodies will engage with the Department of Education to secure the necessary supports to assist schools in meeting this entitlement.

Details of the NCCA’s consultation process are available at the following link: <https://ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/curriculum-developments/senior-cycle-social-personal-and-health-education-sphe/>

The Catholic Education Partnership, (CEP), was established in the of 2020 and replaced the Catholic Schools Partnership. CEP is a registered company and charity, with a mandate for primary, post-primary, third level and adult education issues. Mr Alan Hynes is Chief Executive Officer of the CEP.



## News reports

### Multiply 2023 Church Planting Conference

**The Archbishop of York took part in the Multiply 2023 Church Planting Conference. Across 4 cities, 700 people gathered to explore how to become a church where mixed ecology is the norm.**

During an interview at St George's Leeds, Archbishop Stephen provided a valuable explanation as to why the Church of England had sought to make this a priority within a Christ-centred Church.

Read more at <https://bit.ly/3pMcEIS>

### 'Let justice and peace flow' this Season of Creation

**The Season of Creation runs from the start of September to the Feast of St Francis of Assisi in October, Ellen Teague writes in The Tablet.**

Christians "can be part of that mighty river of peace and justice" in the Season of Creation.

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales / Mazur

Catholics are being urged to hold services outside and "connect" with Christians from other churches during the upcoming Season of Creation.

Resources are now available for the annual celebration that runs from the start of September to the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, in October.

Prayer services, prayers, sample flyers, bulletin inserts and the official Season of Creation social media channels are offered online in the “Let Justice and Peace Flow” resources, with the symbol this year being “a mighty river”.

The resources offer tips for advertising on social media, print and web media “to ensure good attendance and lead to a diverse, dynamic celebration”.

Hosting an ecumenical prayer service is described as “a wonderful opportunity to connect with Christians outside of your denomination or network”.

There is encouragement to include local groups and individuals that work on social justice, peace-building, or the protection of rivers. It is also suggested that a service be held outside, to worship in the context of God’s creation, or at a site of environmental significance.

If it is a place of great natural beauty, the focus would be on giving thanks to God. If it is a place of environmental degradation, “the focus is on confessing our environmental sins and lamenting the voices of co-creatures who have been lost and committing to actions of healing and restoration.” Organising a contemplative walk or pilgrimage is another idea.

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A group could be formed to study ecologically-themed Scriptures, or pray with ecologically-themed prayers such those that can be found in the Laudato Si' movement prayer book.

Advocacy is suggested so that Christians “can be part of that mighty river of peace and justice”. Faith communities are urged to engage with national representatives who influence global meetings

The international Season of Creation advisory committee includes Dr Celia Deane-Drummond, director of the Laudato Si' Research Institute in Oxford, Sr Alessandra Smerilli, secretary of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Bishop Graham Usher, the Church of England's lead bishop on the environment and Dr Ruth Valerio, director of Global Advocacy and Influencing at Tearfund.

[<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/17317/-let-justice-and-peace-flow-this-season-of-creation>]

## In the media

### **UK Space Agency: Model rocket in Belfast as part of space tour**

**BBC - A 21m (72ft) space rocket replica has landed at Writer's Square in Belfast.**

It is part of the UK Space Agency's "Space for Everyone" tour which will give budding astronauts and engineers

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hands-on experience and information about careers in the sector.

Matt Archer, director of launch at the agency, said he hoped the tour would "inspire the next generation to engage with the space sector".



He said there were "exciting opportunities" in the industry.

And he stressed that children and young people don't need to become rocket scientists to get involved.

According to the government, total UK space industry income grew 5.1% in real terms to £17.5 billion in 2020/21, with the industry directly employing about 48,800 people.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-66244728>

## **Blair likened NI to Middle East in church leader talks**

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**BBC - Former Prime Minister Tony Blair viewed Northern Ireland as "similar to the Middle East" with people focusing on "the bad without taking the gains into account".**

He made the comments during a meeting in January 2002 with Northern Ireland church leaders.

Confidential minutes of the talks have been released by the National Archive.

During the meeting Mr Blair was also told that Protestant churches "had lost touch with working class communities".

The National Archive's documents include briefing notes prepared by officials for the prime minister and subsequent minutes of the meeting, which took place on 24 January 2002.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-66250711>

**Poor oversight and vetting issues marred 'cash-for-citizenship' scheme, report finds**

**Irish Examiner - Ireland's 'cash-for-citizenship' programme suffered from poor oversight, a lack of "any real vision", and issues surrounding the vetting carried out on applicants, a report compiled for the Department of Justice found.**

Consultancy EY was commissioned by the department to evaluate the Immigrant Investment Programme (IIP) in 2019, and delivered its final report in November 2020, though it is only now being published.

The report noted that 'tracking' the investments made under the programme was difficult due to a lack of "available and

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useful data”, making the scheme’s economic benefits hard to measure.



The programme did “not have a formalised strategy or purpose”, the report found, together with stated objectives which were “too high-level to support the effective operation of the scheme”, it said. More at -

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-41187052.html>

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

### Being Churches Together in 21st Century Ireland

**2023 is the centenary of the foundation of the Irish Council of Churches and 50 years since the historic**

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## **Ballymascanlon Talks which led to the establishment of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting.**

“As part of our anniversary celebrations we would like to invite you to our event: ‘Being Churches Together in 21st Century Ireland.’

“Join us as we consider how, together as Churches, we are to effectively and authentically engage with one another and in the public square in Ireland today.”

It will take place on Thursday 7th September from 10am to 4:30pm in the Helix, Dublin City University. See below for information on speakers and workshops!

Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/being-churches-together-in-21st-century-ireland-tickets-653866501307>

## **Recital in Killadeas**

**One of the most accomplished pianists, organists, and composers in Ireland, Orly Watson, was so taken with the beauty of the instrument in Priory during a recent visit to Killadeas as part of a tour with USOC (Ulster Society of Organists and Choirmasters) he has asked to give a recital in Killadeas on 4th August at 7pm.**

A published composer, he is currently completing doctoral studies in that field in Queen’s University, Belfast. He studied organ at Armagh’s two cathedrals under Theo Saunders (Oxon) and Baron George Minne, and the piano

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in Belfast with Simon Mawhinney and in London with Michael Dussek.

A graduate of Oxford University and of the Royal Academy of Music in London, Orly has performed extensively in Ireland and England and has worked for the Royal Irish Academy of Music and for Northern Ireland Opera. He is one of the leading accompanists in Ireland and was awarded the 2018 Peter Rankin Internship by NI Opera.

Orly was a recipient of the Archbishop Gregg Memorial Organ Scholarship in St. Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh at the same time as Rev. Mark. Orly excelled, and Rev. Mark chose a different career, but Rev. Mark is delighted to welcome Orly and to co-host a recital with him. This promises to be an evening not to be missed.

## Our Hunger in Northern Ireland

The Trussell Trust Northern Ireland report released recently finds that one in six people face hunger across NI, with women, disabled people, carers, parents, among groups disproportionately at risk.

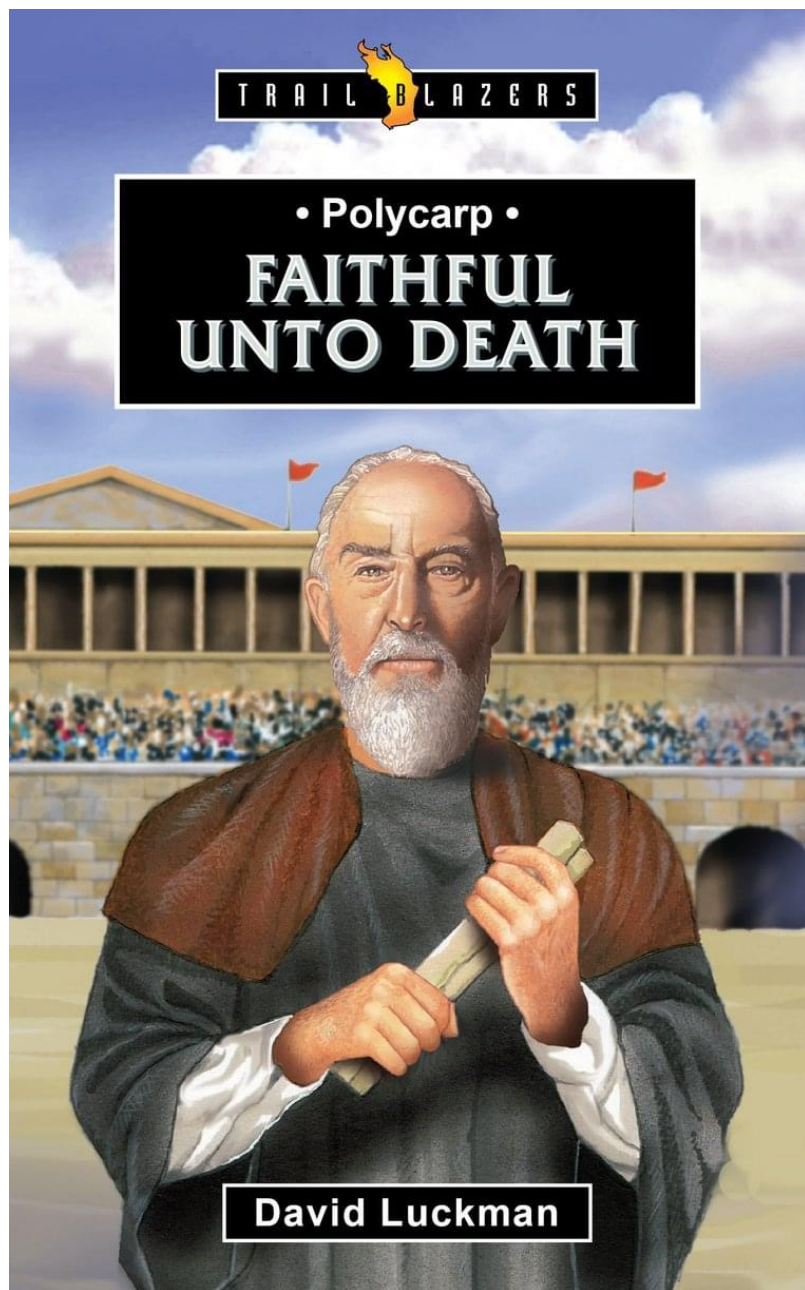
## David Luckman publishes third children's book

**The Rev David Luckman, a member of staff in Lambeg Parish, has recently published Polycarp – Faithful unto Death – the latest title in his series of children's books.**



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The story focuses on Polycarp, who lived in the second century – in Connor Diocese the parish church in Finaghy is dedicated to St Polycarp.



The book is the latest release in the Trailblazers series of Christian Focus Publications. Trailblazers are biographical books for children who are aged 10-14.

Polycarp was a student of the apostle John. When he was older, Polycarp became the Bishop of Smyrna, a city in Turkey, and ministered in that city all his life, teaching the word of God to the church, and modelling a godly lifestyle.

As an old man, Polycarp was hunted down by the Romans and murdered because he would not profess 'Caesar is Lord' in front of a stadium full of people calling for his death. Polycarp died a martyr's death and in-so-doing, encouraged

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faithful Christians to stand firm and contend for the gospel in a world full of opposition to them.

Explaining why he wrote this book, David said: “Polycarp is known as an ‘early church father’ and he was such a significant figure in history that I think it’s important for children to know something about him.



“As a Christian, Polycarp faced persecution from the Roman Empire because he

refused to worship Caesar. Polycarp embodied Christ’s command to his church in Smyrna, by being ‘faithful unto death’ (Revelation 2v8-11).

“I also think it’s important for young Christians to read and learn something about the hardships and successes of other Christians’ lives and ministries, because it can be a great encouragement and help to them when they face similar experiences growing up as Christians. In western societies, it is unlikely that readers will be hunted down for their

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Christian faith and killed for it, but they will face opposition and persecution for loving and following Jesus in the world today.”

To date, David has released two other books in the Trailblazer series: Jack Turner – Truth in the Arctic is currently on the publisher’s CF4K Top Sellers list, and Thomas Cranmer – The King’s Ambassador.

He has also written a Trailblazer to commemorate the 700th anniversary of John Wycliffe’s birth next year. John Wycliffe – According to the Word will be released in January 2024.

Polycarp – Faithful unto Death can be purchased directly from Christian Focus Publications, Christian bookshops or on Amazon.

David Luckman is the Church Planter at Hilden Community Church in Lisburn, which is part of Lambeg Parish in Connor Diocese. He is married to Sarah and has two daughters

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Read their report here  [bit.ly/3r6zag1](https://bit.ly/3r6zag1)

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC ABUSE?  
YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

## Join Changing the Story: A Well-Being Group for Survivors

Beginning August 28th, join us for 12 weekly well-being sessions via Zoom and an in-person retreat. Contact Jacqui: [muchangingthestory@gmail.com](mailto:muchangingthestory@gmail.com)



## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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# Church News Ireland

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