

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – 10th Foodbank Harvest

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10th Foodbank Harvest at St Katharine's



To mark the 10th year of the parish's support for the North Belfast Foodbank (Trussell Trust), St Katharine's, Belfast, held a very special Sing Harvest Service.

The rector, the Rev Canon William Taggart, said: "We are one of the founding members of the group which supports the work of the local FoodBank on a regular basis. The church was decorated for the occasion and our window ledges groaned with the amount of tinned and dried items."

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Speaker at the service was Mr Jeff Cousins, a volunteer from the local FoodBank.

St Katerine's Church is in Fortwilliam Park between the Antrim and York roads in Belfast. The parish area was originally part of St Peter's Parish and was separated in 1944.

The parish church was consecrated on 225 Nov 1956. The incumbents - Canon Tom Beacom was Curate in Charge from 01/01/1944 and was instituted rector in 1958. Rev Ernest Harris was instituted 28/01/1983. Canon William Taggart was instated 18/07/1990. He is also the Registrar of Connor Diocese..

People and places

Assistance from Phillipines church to North West Methodist Mission

Ann and staff of the North West Methodist Mission recently acknowledged one year of service in Clarendon Shelter for Camille.

Camille has travelled from the Phillipines as part of her Global Missions ministry.

Ann and her colleagues said, "Camille embraced her missionary work and is an amazing asset to the team at Clarendon. She has contributed to programmes within the



shelter including her own mental well being programme initiated by herself.

“Congratulations Cam. We are excited to see your progress in your final year ahead”.

C of I Mind Matters Conference

Mind Matters, The Church of Ireland’s Mental Health Initiative, held a conference in Dublin on Friday 20 October.

Speakers included The Most Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, who joined the conference live from East Jerusalem.



It was also an opportunity to showcase some of the projects undertaken across the Church to promote positive mental health, to reflect, and to consider the next steps in keeping mental health a priority across the Church. Several delegates attended from Down and Dromore and Magheralin presented their 'Gathering Together for Wellbeing' project.

Gallery of photos at -

[\[https://www.downanddromore.org/news/gallery/748/mind-matters-coi-conference\]](https://www.downanddromore.org/news/gallery/748/mind-matters-coi-conference)

Irish pilgrims recall 'incredibly special' experience in the Holy Land during war

A group of Irish pilgrims who were in the Holy Land as Hamas attacked southern Israel Oct. 7 said the experience of being there in turbulent times or war helped them identify with the suffering of the local people, Michael Kelly writes in OSV News

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The group of 52 pilgrims also emphasized that it helped intensify their prayers for peace while in the Holy Land.

The group, with spiritual director Father Conor McDonough, were part of a “Christian Solidarity Pilgrimage” organized by The Irish Catholic newspaper, based in Dublin.

The Irish pilgrims were visiting Bethany, where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, on the outskirts of Jerusalem when news broke of the Hamas attack on the Gaza-Israel border 50 miles south.

Organizers quickly made the decision for the group to return to Bethlehem in the West Bank, since missiles were already being directed toward Jerusalem as part of the combined rocket and incursion attack on southern Israel.

The Palestinian militant group Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel, with its fighters entering communities near the Gaza Strip, killing some 1,400 residents and taking dozens of hostages. More than 2,800 Palestinians in Gaza have died since as a result of Israeli bombings.

The following day — as planned — the Irish pilgrims moved about 124 miles north (200 kilometers) north to the childhood home of Jesus, Nazareth.

Galway pilgrim Maria Ó hAodha said the entire group was focusing on praying for peace while continuing to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

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“It’s very special to be here in the Holy Land, and to visit all the sites where Christ lived and preached and I think we’re privileged to be here to be unified with the local people and be so aware of their historical problems, but obviously now that things are currently so unstable,” she told OSV News.

Monaghan-based pilgrim Patrick Grant, originally from Canada, described the pilgrimage as “incredibly special” despite the tension caused by the situation in the south.

“While the conflict is causing uncertainty, I think that it is helping us to enter into it (the pilgrimage) on a different level, and helping to remind us to put our trust in the Lord — that he is good and he is going to take care of us and the land that he comes from,” Grant said.

The group continued touring pilgrimage sites in the north of Israel around the Sea of Galilee while praying for an end to the conflict, and were even able to mark the 89th birthday of one of the pilgrims in Nazareth before arriving home in Ireland Oct. 12.

Father McDonough said the group was “relieved” to be home and praised the Irish Embassy in Tel Aviv, which helped get the group safely out of the country.

“We were all a little scared on our last night in our hotel in Nazareth. Drones came over Israel from Lebanon and the air-raid sirens went off. We were all sent to the safe room in the hotel,” he said.

“We thought it was a second front. But as it turned out, it was done in error. It left us all on edge, we were certainly

ready to go home at that stage,” Father McDonough told OSV News.

He described the escalating situation as Israel declared war in response to the attacks. “There were roadblocks and reservists on the streets with guns. That is not something we as Irish people are used to seeing. Everywhere we went, there was just a sense of despair from people, both Palestinians and Israelis,” he recalled.

“People were describing it as their 9/11. There was a sense of disorientation. People were giving us the sense that everything has now changed, and no one knows what will happen next,” Father McDonough said.

Because of the violent backdrop, the pilgrimage took on a different dimension, said the priest. “We were trying to get out early, but we could not. But the pilgrimage did not end, in fact it intensified,” he said.

“We tried not to be looking on our phones for constant updates of what was happening. We weren’t just praying for our loved ones in Ireland but for all of the people around us,” which made the Irish pilgrims “very aware of the fragility of life — and it became an immensely spiritual experience, for us all,” the priest said.

The group of pilgrims, ranging in age from 18 to 89, tried to keep a “sense of normality” after the Oct. 7 Hamas strike, even watching the Ireland-Scotland rugby match from their hotel in Bethlehem.

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The priest said the political situation in Israel and Palestine was complicated and he was praying for peace, but was worried by the situation, condemning the violence on all sides.

“People were just traumatized. It is not as simple as one versus the other, Israel versus Palestine. There is a huge spectrum on both sides. It’s wrong to reduce it to simple narratives,” he told OSV News.

“The Hamas attack was just horrific. Actions like that push a lasting peace so much further away. The Hamas attack was spectacularly violent — and so was the retaliation,” the priest said.

Irish Presbyterian Church launches climate change survey

The Irish Presbyterian Church has launched a survey within its 550 congregations to test the temperature of grassroots members on the contested issue of climate change, Billy Kennedy writes in the News Letter.

Understanding the ongoing challenge of being "good stewards of God’s creation ever-present", the church hierarchy wants to hear the views of as many of its members as possible on the issue of global climate change, through a dedicated online survey that has been set up at Assembly buildings in Belfast. The purpose of the survey, which can be taken at www.presbyterianireland.org, is to hear the views from a range of people within the



Mothers' Union Festival Service - for branches in Derriaghy and Lisburn Rural Deaneries was held on Wednesday night in Christ Church Parish Church, Derriaghy. Nine branch banners here with the rector, Rev Aaron McAlister.

Presbyterian Church in Ireland – children, young people and adults – to provide a baseline understanding of thinking, perceptions and positions currently within the denomination. The Rev Dr Allen Sleith, convener of the church's stewardship of creation task group, said the survey was an important exercise. “The survey, along with other data, is just one part of the jigsaw, as we will also use the results from different focus groups to produce a report for our church's 2024 General Assembly.

"This will help shape how Irish Presbyterianism can best engage with the issue of climate change and creation care. I would encourage our members to take time to look at the survey and take part in this important initiative." Dr Sleith,

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minister of Hillsborough Presbyterian church, added: “While the conflicts raging in Ukraine and the Middle East dominate our current headlines, another crisis continues to loom large. This is the threat to our planet's well-being, particularly due to climate change, caused largely by human practices since the 19th century industrial revolution.

"The effects of this are increasingly evident here at home, but in other parts of the world the impact is truly devastating, not least for our global partner churches and the communities they serve." The survey, which closes on October 31, looks at each respondent's perception of, and attitude to climate change across a range of 21 multiple choice questions. There are also opportunities for further comment. It asks, for instance; "How concerned are you" and 'what concerns you most' about climate change?" With nearly 800 responses so far, from about a third of Presbyterian congregations, the survey also asks if respondents have made changes in relation to their personal lives when it comes to climate change, buying locally sourced produce, for example, or made changes to the way they travel or consume energy, and what would hold them back in making changes to their lifestyle. It also asks what their congregation is doing. The survey follows a number of important recent initiatives that the Presbyterian Church has taken in relation to being encouraged and challenged to look at ways it can better look after the environment. In 2018, the church's general assembly passed a resolution commending its council for global mission's stewardship of creation report on climate change.

Dr Sleith said: “I would encourage our members to complete the survey as a means of helping our denomination to care

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appropriately for the world that Christ came to redeem and transform.”



Service for Diocesan Schools at St Fin Barre's Cathedral

Seven National Schools from Cork City and its environs gathered in St Fin Barre's Cathedral on Tuesday 10th October 2023 to celebrate the start of the school year and to give thanks for the harvest.

This was the first of three services organised by the Diocesan Church Music Scheme to gather together all Diocesan Schools at the beginning of this academic year.



The Dean of Cork, the Very Rev. Nigel Dunne opened the service by showing a video of the cathedral bells and then encouraged all of the schools to ring their own bells by



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way of a greeting. The lesson from St Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was read by pupils from Bandonbridge NS, a thanksgiving was led by pupils from St Michael's NS, Blackrock, and the prayers were read by pupils from St Mary's NS, Carrigaline. Director of Music, Peter Stobart conducted Templebreedy NS, who sang Maurice Greene's anthem Thou visitest the earth.

Developments in education highlighted at Dublin and Glendalough Synod

The challenges facing the education sector at both primary and post primary levels were highlighted by the Diocesan Board of Education at Diocesan Synod in Taney earlier this month.

The report of the Board of Education was proposed by **John Aiken** (The King's Hospital) who outlined the work of the board in the promotion, support and encouragement of education in Dublin and Glendalough along with support for principals and boards of management of primary schools, the allocation of grants and management of board funds and properties.

2023 saw schooling return to a much more recognisable state than reported at previous synods, he said. However, he said the real impact of post-Covid lingered in both primary and secondary sectors. Mr Aiken said that the challenge facing schools was the management of coping mechanisms for both students and staff. He thanked the Minister and the Department of Education and Skills for acting positively by requiring schools to respond with new

life skills programmes at secondary level. He was thankful also for the Minister's decision that class teachers would not be required to mark any components of their students' Leaving Certificate exams.

Another "seemingly endless challenge" facing department and school officials was the extreme shortage of full time, relief and substitute teachers, he reported. This was a particular problem in the cities where availability and affordability of accommodation was at crisis point. "This Government and future Governments are dealing with a housing crisis, specifically for this discussion, of course, which may be impacting detrimentally on the provision of teachers in our schools in these United Dioceses," he stated.

Mr Aiken informed Synod of the election of two new members of the Board: **Canon Paul Arbuthnot and Dr Jacqui Wilkinson**. He commended them both.

He also highlighted the RE studentship in which the Board provides financial support for those at third level taking the Professional Masters in Education who are intending to teach RE in secondary schools within the United Dioceses. Applicants must already hold a degree level qualification with RE, Theology or Religious Studies up to third year or higher. He also reported that funds were made available through the Ralph Macklin Endowment (with Love's Charity and Gardiner's Charity) towards the cost of second level fees to a number of families last year.

He noted that the Primary and Junior Schools Service returned last year to Christ Church Cathedral and there

were plans to develop the National Evensong for Secondary Schools that was previously held in St Patrick's Cathedral. He welcomed the new principals at Rathmichael, St Matthew's, Sandford and Kill O' the Grange national schools. The Patron's Day for Primary Schools also made its return last year and he said it was a valuable forum for participants.

Contributing to the debate on the report, **Inez Cooper** (Leixlip) commended the Archbishop on his Presidential Address.

Dr Ken Fennelly (Councils and Secretary to the General Synod Board of Education RI) thanked members of boards of management who had given of their services in Dublin and Glendalough for the last four years. Their term comes to an end in November. He thanked Ruth Burleigh in the Archbishop's office for the work she does behind the scenes to keep patronage going in the dioceses.

Scott Peoples (Leixlip) spoke about enrolment policies in non fee paying schools which he said had become more rigid and geographically precise. He said that arrangements in schools in which a core number of Church of Ireland people were accommodated in the past had broken down. He asked if these changes in legislation had been challenged and said an ETB school in west Dublin was needed, like East Glendalough or Temple Carrig in Glendalough, for young people who were not in a position to pay fees.

David Wynne (Sandford and St Philip's) invited clergy to bear in mind the charities which can help some young

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people meet school fees, such as POS Children's Education which can support a child who has lost one or both parents. He urged clergy to direct parishioners in need to them.

Dr Hutchinson Edgar (Tallaght) is a special education teacher in Taney and reported that there was an increasing number of children with complex educational needs who can be accommodated in primary schools but who do not have the same facilities in secondary schools under Church of Ireland management. He hoped facilities could be found in secondary schools for children who had been educated alongside their brothers and sisters in primary school.

In response, Mr Aiken thanked Dr Fennelly for his expertise and support. He noted Mr Peoples's comments on enrolment policies and thanked Mr Wynne for his contribution. He agreed with Mr Hutchinson Edgar that special educational needs facilities at second level needed to be followed up and joined with Mrs Cooper regarding the Archbishop's address.

News reports

Pope Francis meets with Irish President Michael Higgins

According to the Holy See Press Office, Pope Francis has held a private audience with Michael Higgins, the President of Ireland, spending around 25 minutes in conversation.

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Ireland's President Michael Higgins was received by Pope Francis in the Apostolic Palace on Thursday, 19 October.

Following the private audience, President Higgins met with Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, and with Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, the Vatican Secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations.

A statement released by the Holy See Press Office said, "During the cordial discussions in the Secretariat of State, satisfaction was expressed at the good relations between Ireland and the Holy See, and mention was made of some issues of common interest."

It added that "attention then turned to some matters of a global nature, such as food security in developing countries and commitment to the elimination of poverty, the protection of the environment in the light of the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*, the phenomenon of migration in the delicate current world geopolitical situation, and the development of a multilateralism that might respond adequately to the current international conjuncture."

Exchange of gifts

Pope Francis' gift for the Irish President consisted of a bronze sculpture dedicated to migrants and a copy of the Pope's Message for the 2023 World Peace Day, the Document on Human Fraternity signed by himself and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in Abu Dhabi, the book on the *Statio Orbis* of 27 March 2020.

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On his part, the President gave the Pope a bronze statue, also dedicated to migrants, created by the well-known Irish sculptor, John Behan.

Anglican Church donates land for future site of Montreal memorial to Irish immigrants

The Anglican Church has donated the parcel of land near the Victoria Bridge to memorialize 6,000 Irish immigrants who died in Montreal more than a century-and-a-half ago.

The site at the Black Rock Monument will eventually be turned into The Montreal Irish Monument Park.

"We can't move The Black Rock; it's basically a headstone for the 6,000 souls that lie beneath it in the cemetery it marks and protects," said Scott Phelan, director and treasurer of The Montreal Irish Monument Park Foundation, while holding the contract for the land transfer.

Fergus Keyes, also a foundation board member, said years of planning and partnership went into that document. He added that the land transfer is the first part of the plan to build a proper memorial site.

"At the ground level is to remember the 6,000 Irish that died and are buried beneath our feet where we're standing in 1847," Keyes said, "and the second part is the great humanitarian effort of the people who came to help them, many of whom gave up their lives. And they represented

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every language and every religion you can think of that was in Montreal in 1847."

The next piece of the puzzle is the road running on either side. The City of Montreal has pledged \$15 million to move Bridge Street. Hydro-Quebec is donating land across the street.

"They're donating 3.86 acres of land to The Montreal Irish Monument Park Foundation for one dollar and they're giving us five years to build our world-class memorial park," Phelan said.

He said the park would include a museum and visitors' centre.

The Black Rock site is the oldest memorial to the Irish famine in the world, the largest mass grave of Irish people outside of Ireland and the largest mass grave of people in Canada.

CNI Events preview

CNI Events preview - of special services, art, music and drama. See final page of Events preview to forward info on your upcoming events.

<http://www.churchnewsireland.org/news/irish-uk-news/cni-events-review/>

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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