

Church News Ireland



Fire destroys Greenisland Parish Centre after a weekend of celebration and fellowship

A fire which has gutted parts of a Co Antrim church is being treated as arson - the Belfast Telegraph reports.

On Sunday evening, nine firefighting appliances – including an aerial appliance – and 49 firefighters attended the blaze



at Greenisland Church of Ireland in the Station Road area of the town.

Photographs from the scene show substantial damage to the church hall, where a section of the roof was destroyed in the blaze, which began around 9pm on Sunday night.

In a statement, police confirmed they are treating the blaze as arson and are appealing for information.

Inspector Knowles said: “At approximately 9.10pm, we received a report of a fire at the property on the Station Road.

“Officers along with colleagues from the Northern Ireland Fire Service attended and the blaze was extinguished.

"The Church was celebrating its 70th anniversary this week, and last night was busy in particular. Thankfully no one was injured, however a significant amount of damage was caused to both buildings.



"We are treating this as arson and I am appealing to anyone who may have witnessed anyone suspicious in the area or to anyone with CCTV, doorbell or other footage that could assist with enquiries, to contact police on 101 quoting reference 1437 of 01/09/24.

"Alternatively, you can submit a report online using the non-emergency reporting form via <http://www.psni.police.uk/makeareport/>. You can also contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or online at <http://crimestoppers-uk.org/>"



Members of the Parish after the special service on Sunday Morning at which the Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev John McDowell (left) was present

Speaking about the fire, Reverend Issy Hawthorne-Steele said: "It's absolutely devastating, it's a shock. Most of the people are all in shock.

"Unbelievable that we have had such a weekend of celebration and then to hear that the church is on fire has been unspeakably awful, hard to take in."

NIFRS was advising members of the public to avoid the area where possible last night and for nearby homeowners to keep their windows and doors closed.

Police said the road was closed while emergency services dealt with the fire and advised road users to seek alternate routes.

In an update at 2am, a NIFRS spokesperson said the team was scaling down attendance at the incident to three pumps and would remain throughout the night.



Saturday's celebration

They added that the cause of fire was not yet determined

In a statement issued via its Facebook page last night, the church said nobody had been hurt during the incident.



Saturday's celebration with All Nations Ministry

Folks we have awful news. There's a terrible fire at the church," said a spokesperson.

"It started at the back of the building and as I write the fire crews are desperately trying to stop it from spreading to the whole building. Please pray.

"We are just so thankful that the building was empty and nobody has been hurt."

In a further update, the church said the roof of its hall and parish centre was "gone".



East Antrim MLA John Stewart said news of the fire was “deeply concerning”.

“I truly hope that no one has been injured and that damage will be limited but the scenes are very worrying indeed,” he said.

“My thoughts are with all those connected with the church or affected by the fire and also the emergency battling the fire.

“This is truly awful to see.”

Alliance Councillor Aaron Skinner, who was at the scene last night, said the fire service was doing a “fantastic job” of stopping the fire spreading.

"It does look like the hall has been completely destroyed, unfortunately. There was a big community fun day and services throughout the weekend... so it's just a horrible end to a fantastic weekend."



Greenland shares its sad news

On social media - What a shocking and terrible night for our parish and the whole Greenisland community. As I write, the smoke is still rising and the fire crews are still working hard, but the worst of the blaze seems to be under control.

We have been overwhelmed by the support and love of the Greenisland community - people who helped us out with

everything from traffic control, available toilets (much needed!) and of course a cuppa to steady the nerves. We are heartbroken but also so thankful - to the fire crews, to the local community, to our neighbours who sounded the alarm, and so thankful that no-one was hurt.

We have just spent the weekend giving thanks for the first 70 years of Greenisland Parish life. We have every faith that with God's guidance, the strength of our parish family and the support of our amazing friends and neighbours, our story will go on.

An update from Greenisland Parish

Another update: we're starting to be hopeful that the structure of the main church will be ok (though it will be massively water damaged - huge amounts of water are being poured on the roof). The fire crews are doing an incredible job, we're so thankful to them

Please do keep praying

Bishop of Connor at the scene on Sunday night

Bishop George Davidson - I'm not long back into the house from Greenisland. Little did I think when we spent a joyful afternoon celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Church of the Holy Name that I would



Photos at Greenisland Parish exhibition

be back this evening standing with Isy and her people as we watched the terrible fire on the premises!

It was heartbreaking to watch and to stand with so many parishioners who couldn't quite believe what we were witnessing. I'm so thankful that no-one was hurt and very grateful to the members of the Fire Service and the PSNI for all their efforts this evening.

Tomorrow we will have a better picture of what will be needed to restore and replace what has been damaged, but tonight I am sure that the CHURCH OF THE HOLY NAME, GREENISLAND IS ALIVE AND WELL!

It is strong and courageous in the face of this challenge, it is still loves and cares for the community of Greenisland; it is safe in the arms of Jesus, who gives it life!

The Church of the Holy Name is not a damaged building, it is the amazing group of people that I met there this afternoon and who stood together this evening and cried and hugged each other and resolved to keep on worshipping and serving Jesus in Greenisland.

“9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

Prayerful messages of support from other churches and friends

Such a wonderful celebration of faithful ministry and service to the community had just been completed. To see this happen to a very precious place is devastating. God will prevail, and his people will rise up. May he protect the firefighters and neighbouring properties as the fire is extinguished. Love to all in Greenisland.

Stephen Lowry

The sad news of Greenisland Church of Ireland last night. We promise to stand by this congregation in the rebuilding of their precious church building in the future. Please pray for the Rector and congregation in the days and weeks to come.

St Patrick's Church, Jordanstown

A sad day for Greenisland as people learn about the devastating fire at The Church of the Holy Name, Station

Road. My thoughts and prayers go to the Rector Rev Izzy and all the parishioners. Yesterday they celebrated 70 years.

Stewart Dickson

Please pray for the Parish of Greenisland. This weekend they celebrated their 70th Anniversary, and tonight there is a terrible fire at the church. Give thanks that the building was empty, and no one hurt. Please pray for the continued safety of the fire crews desperately trying to get this under control - **St Moluas - right**

We pray for the parishioners of Greenisland parish following last night's fire.

St John's Malone

This evening, the ministers, session, and congregation of All Souls Church (Belfast) send our heartfelt prayers for the church community at Greenisland Parish. We are deeply saddened to hear about the devastating fire at your church buildings.



Please know that we stand with you in solidarity during this difficult time. Our thoughts and prayers are with your church family. May you find strength and comfort in the days ahead.

All Souls Church (Belfast)

We offer our thoughts & prayers to the congregation of Greenisland Church of Ireland whose building was ravaged by a serious fire this evening.

Non Subscribing Presbyterian Church Ireland

Please join me in praying for Rev Isy and the Parishioners of Greenisland this evening.. Please pray too for NIFS for the firefighters trying to get it under control. Just earlier today the parish celebrated their 70th anniversary.

Catherine Simpson

Praying, as will so many, for peace and strength in the sadness and clear thinking for all in discerning the road ahead.

Derek Kerr

Please pray for the rector and people of Greenisland Parish. I had the privilege of Rev Isy serving as a curate in Ahoghill and Portglenone. The church celebrated its 70th anniversary service today.

Acknowledgements - Belfast Telegraph and the various photo - journalists included.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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