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**Image of the day - Black Head light, County Antrim  
and Ailsa Craig**

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## People and places

# Full programme at the 2021 Charles Wood Festival



**The organisers say - “We are delighted to launch details of the 2021 Charles Wood Festival and Summer School taking place in Armagh between 22-29 August, including the return of the Charles Wood Singers, under our Artistic Director David Hill.**

“Whether it’s indoor, outdoor, in-person or digital, we’ve got it all for you this August.

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“For our full programme and to book tickets please go to:  
[ <https://www.charleswoodsummerschool.org/summerschoolfestival21> ]

## Christian Aid is delighted...



**“... that Dr @JohnSentamu (former Archbishop of York) will be our next Chair of the Board of Trustees.**

“Long outspoken about poverty and justice, Dr Sentamu is also the first person of African descent to take this position in our 75-year history”.



## **Small acts of kindness from People's Kitchen, Belfast**

**One night on Outreach, the team came across a young man whom we will call Curtis, in his early 20s, resting in a sleeping bag, in a doorway in the centre centre, reading a book. Curtis initially didn't want to speak to us, just saying yes and no to requests for food and coffee.**

One of the team, whom we'll call Sharron, sat on the ground beside him, and started chatting to him. She asked him what he was reading. He said he loved science fiction books.

The next night on Outreach, Sharron brought Curtis, a copy of 'Blade runner'. Curtis was amazed at the thoughtfulness of such a gift. He told Sharron he had never been given a book before as a present.

'Blade Runner' had been a favourite film of his, but he had never read the book.

He began to tell Sharron about his background, how he had had a huge row with his mum and left home in Liverpool over 4 years ago.

Over the next number of weeks, Sharron brought Curtis a different science fiction book, each time she was on Outreach.

Curtis devoured each volume he was given, and was able to discuss with Sharron in great detail, the adventures of the

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characters in the book, and the different worlds he had been transported to. Each book was received with great thanks, and pleasure.

One week Curtis told the team that he was returning home to Liverpool, to try and rebuild his relationship with his family.

He told Sharron he would never forget her generosity, and their chats about the books.

He said that while he was reading, he was able to forget about the cold grim realities of sleeping on the streets, and wondering where his next meal was coming from.

Even, if only for a short time, the books transported him into a different world, where despite the obstacles and hurdles faced by the hero, things had a way of resolving themselves, and most times, most times, things ended happily.

He hugged Sharron before he left, and gave a funny Vulcan sign with his hand, and said, 'Live long and Prosper'.

Strange how little things can connect us. But we only find those little things, by talking, listening, being there, and being kind.

Small acts of kindness indeed.



## Reports

# Cleric tells Irish Government to ‘grow up’ and end ban on communions and confirmations

**A well-known Dublin parish priest has called on the country’s Catholic bishops to follow the lead of Bishop Kevin Doran and permit communions and confirmations to go ahead in their dioceses this month, Sarah Mac Donald writes in the Irish Independent.**

Fr Joe McDonald said he had run out of patience with the Government over its indefinite postponement of the sacraments and its treatment of the Church.

He told the Irish Independent that he has 1,200 children awaiting confirmation and communion, 600 of whom belong to last year’s cohort.

“We can no longer accept a fob-off from a Government who either don’t respect or don’t understand the problem of deferring liturgical life indefinitely,” he said.

Although Fr McDonald had been supportive of the Government’s handling of the Covid-19 crisis which was “a terribly difficult situation”, he said when it came to the churches, “they have been treated disgracefully”.

“I wonder if there is some subconscious notion within the Government that this is an opportunity to show the country

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that the bishops have no power any more and that they will not be dictated to by the Church,” he said.

He added that if that is the reason for the ongoing ban on certain sacraments, his response to “this immature nonsense” was “grow up”.

“We are not talking about some devotional extra, we are talking about something that is core to our faith,” he said.

“The Government needs to be reminded that for us the liturgy is the summit and source of our life in faith.”

But he was also critical of the lack of leadership from the bishops.

“Is it too much to expect that a bishop could toss the table like Jesus in the temple and if you are not going to toss the table at least thump it. For God’s sake – speak up,” he urged.

Writing in the Irish Independent last week, Dr Doran said: “The mission of the Church cannot be put on hold indefinitely.”

Having consulted his priests, he said the Diocese of Elphin had decided to proceed with communions and confirmations from this month.

The diocese covers parts of Sligo, Roscommon, Galway and Westmeath. Priests in the diocese are expected to contact local communities in the coming days to begin the process of scheduling the delayed religious services.

Children were asked to register for the sacraments in March and dates have been set for some services.

The dioceses of Meath, Clogher and Waterford and Lismore have also decided to go ahead with the sacraments.

While the Government has eased restrictions on baptisms and weddings, the ban on communions and confirmations continues.

A spokesperson for the Irish bishops was unable to say whether the country's largest diocese, Dublin, will begin holding communions and confirmations as Archbishop Dermot Farrell is currently on leave.

He said the decision to administer the sacraments to the faithful was a matter for an individual diocesan bishop and his parish priests.

Fr McDonald, who is parish priest in Celbridge and Straffan in Co Kildare, praised Bishop Doran for "stepping up" as a pastor and "showing courage".

The priest's stance is indicative of growing frustration within the Church over the Covid-19 restrictions.

Fr Michael Toomey, parish priest of Ardfinnan, Ballybacon and Grange in Co Tipperary, tweeted this weekend: "While the Government can give us advice, they can't tell us how to pray or perform our ordained ministry without discussing it with us any more."



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“How is it we can celebrate the sacrament of marriage with 100 people but can’t celebrate communion and confirmation? Enough is enough,” he wrote.

The rules for general religious ceremonies allow 50 worshippers in smaller buildings and pods of 50 spaced by four metres in bigger premises.

Courtesy Irish Independent 02.08.2021

## **Archbishop Martin: I would ban 'persecution' of Christians**

**The head of the Catholic Church in Ireland has said he would like to ban the “persecution” of Christians here, Adrian Rutherford writes in the Belfast Telegraph.**

Archbishop Eamon Martin also believes the Church is in transition and needs to be open to change.

He was speaking to the St Patrick's Podcast, hosted by The Saint Patrick Centre in Downpatrick.

Asked what he would like to ban from Ireland in the Spirit of St Patrick — who is said to have banished snakes — Archbishop Martin declared he would like to end victimisation and oppression based on personal beliefs.

“If I think of when St Patrick became angry, he was angry with the soldiers of Coroticus for attacking his newly baptised Christians, for taking them off into slavery, for



killing some of them, for assaulting them. I think I would like to ban persecution of people for what they believe in,” he said.

“I mean there's a lot of people in Ireland today who want to live the Christian faith, who want to be Catholic, who want to publicly profess their Catholic faith and feel they cannot do so because of ridicule, because, in some cases, of downright oppression of what they believe in, and perhaps verging on forms of persecution. I would like to ban persecution from Ireland.”

Speaking to former Adoration Sisters turned pilgrim guides Martina Purdy and Elaine Kelly, he acknowledged that attacks from within the Church itself could be quite vicious also but concluded they were part of the pattern of life for St Patrick and other Christians.

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Archbishop Martin said it was “too early to say” whether the lockdown had sped up the decline in Mass attendance, noting that some young people were now accessing prayers online.

“A lot of people have made their way back to the sacraments,” he said. “I would notice at mass on Sundays now we are almost at capacity with current social distancing.”

But he rejected any suggestion that the church in Ireland would perish, adding: “At this time the Spirit is calling and gifting people for the up-building of the church. The Church will not die.”

He said the church was in transition and needed to be open to change, saying “courage” was needed “to turn the page to a new chapter, a new episode in the life of the church in Ireland”.

Courtesy the Belfast Telegraph 02.08.2021





## Young Christians' Relay to COP26

**A group of young Christians from several of our National Member Churches are walking in relay from Cornwall to Glasgow. One of the young walkers, Rachel Mander, explains the background to the initiative, the group's aims and how they are getting on a couple of weeks into their journey...**

Just after the G7 in Cornwall, we set out to walk all the way to another set of talks - the international climate negotiations, COP26, being held in Glasgow in November. We're walking as an act of faith, hope and love. We have lots of days which we still don't have any offers of accommodation for, and where the route isn't finalised.



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Already though, we have seen provision. A beautiful send-out service from Truro Cathedral, offers to meet a mayor, accommodation with views of a sunset over the harbour, rope swings over rivers, and a WhatsApp group with people praying for the journey.

We're walking because at the moment, many countries are being pushed further into debt because of the impacts of climate change. The existing international commitments to provide financial support to the countries most vulnerable to climate change, are being broken by our own government.

We want to pressure the UK government to prepare for COP26. As a global financial player, we should be reversing the recent cuts to aid, delivering on existing climate finance, and ensuring that no country gets pushed into debt because of climate change (the technical part of the UN negotiations for this is ensuring provision for a loss and damage financial mechanism).

## A prayer for COP26

Lord of creation,  
during these 100 days,  
inspire creativity and boldness  
in our political leaders;  
inspire energy and fervour  
in every activist;  
inspire action and prayer  
in me.  
You are Lord of creation;  
remind us that we  
are its stewards.  
Amen.

## YCCN boat

A boat is  
accompanying us on  
our journey, with sails  
made from material  
from around the  
world. It's part of our  
acknowledgement  
that "We are in the  
same storm, but not  
the same boat" - just  
like we have seen



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with the covid-19 pandemic. As young Christians organising this Relay, we know that the story of our adult lives will be witnessing the effects of climate change, which will hit our neighbours around the world first and foremost.

Many churches around the world have been calling for climate action for decades. A 2004 World Council of Churches statement calls “on our sisters and brothers in Christ throughout the world to act in solidarity with us to reduce the causes of human-induced climate change... and to pay for the costs of adaptation to anticipated the impacts”. I personally was just 7 years old when this call was issued. In faith, we ask churches in the UK to respond by joining us in this Relay to COP26.

We have over 100 days of walking ahead of us, and events in 10 major cities across the UK. We would love you to join us: walk with us, host us in church halls, hold Climate Sunday services as we pass through, campaign with us to ask the UK government to act to ensure no country gets pushed into debt because of climate change.

Join us as we, “Rise to the Moment”. You may sign up on Young Christian Climate Network website

## **Irish Health Minister warns clergy over services ban**

**Irish Health Minister Stephen Donnelly has issued a blunt warning to Catholic bishops, urging them not to resume confirmation and first communion ceremonies in the Republic, John Downing writes**

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“When you're dealing with a deadly virus, ultimately what you're doing is putting people's lives at risk,” he said.

Mr Donnelly was responding to questions about the stated intention of at least three Catholic bishops to resume communion and confirmation ceremonies in their dioceses despite anti-Covid-19 guidelines in the Republic.

Last week, Bishop of Elphin, Kevin Doran, wrote about the need to ease restrictions and stated his intention to cease keeping to them. Bishop Doran said he and senior priests had decided ceremonies should be held in line with public health regulations for general worship.

“The mission of the Church cannot be put on hold indefinitely,” he said, arguing the ban was a “guideline” and not a binding law.

The next day the Bishop of Clogher, Larry Duff, and Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, Alphonsus Cullinan, announced they were going to do the same .

There has been controversy about the increase in numbers permitted to attend weddings, which goes from 50 to 100 from Thursday in the south. But funeral attendance remains unchanged at 50 mourners, and communions and confirmations are still not advised. Mr Donnelly said he understood the frustration among people of faith and saluted the patience shown by church leaders.

“The public health measures are there to keep people safe and ultimately to keep people alive. Ireland is doing well and

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I would ask any clergy considering going against the public health measures to stick with them,” he said.

He said Bishop Doran is right to say the communion and confirmation 'ban' is “a public health guideline, not a law” and as such can be ignored. “But we have a lot of evidence of 'spreader events' arising out of communions and confirmations and that's the only reason the public health advice is there not to do it,” he said.

## Poem for today

### In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge Killed in France 31 July 1917

By Seamus Heaney

The bronze soldier hitches a bronze cape  
That crumples stiffly in imagined wind  
No matter how the real winds buff and sweep  
His sudden hunkering run, forever craned

Over Flanders. Helmet and haversack,  
The gun's firm slope from butt to bayonet,  
The loyal, fallen names on the embossed plaque —  
It all meant little to the worried pet

I was in nineteen forty-six or seven,  
Gripping my Aunt Mary by the hand  
Along the Portstewart prom, then round the crescent  
To thread the Castle Walk out to the strand.

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The pilot from Coleraine sailed to the coal-boat.  
Courting couples rose out of the scooped dunes.  
A farmer stripped to his studs and shiny waistcoat  
Rolled the trousers down on his timid shins.

At night when coloured bulbs strung out the sea-front  
Country voices rose from a cliff-top shelter  
With news of a great litter – “We’ll pet the runt!” –  
And barbed wire that had torn a friesian’s elder.

Francis Ledwidge, you courted at the seaside  
Beyond Drogheda one Sunday afternoon.  
Literary, sweet-talking, countrified,  
You pedalled out the leafy road from Slane.

Where you belonged, among the dolorous  
And lovely: the May altar of wild flowers,  
Easter water sprinkled in outhouses,  
Mass-rocks and hill-top raths and raftered byres.

I think of you in your Tommy’s uniform,  
A haunted Catholic face, pallid and brave,  
Ghosting the trenches with a bloom of hawthorn  
Or silence cored from a Boyne passage-grave.

It’s summer, nineteen-fifteen. I see the girl  
My aunt was then, herding on the long acre.  
Behind a low bush in the Dardanelles  
You suck stones to make your dry mouth water.

It’s nineteen-seventeen. She still herds cows,  
But a big strafe puts the candles out in Ypres:  
‘My soul is by the Boyne, cutting new meadows...

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My country wears her confirmation dress.'

'To be called a British soldier while my country  
Has no place among nations...' You were rent  
By shrapnel six weeks later. 'I am sorry  
That party politics should divide our tents.'

In you, our dead enigma, all the strains  
Criss-cross in useless equilibrium  
And as the wind tunes through this vigilant bronze  
I hear again the sure confusing drum

You followed from Boyne water to the Balkans  
But miss the twilit note your flute should sound.  
You were not keyed or pitched like these true-blue ones  
Though all of you consort now underground.

## Pointers for prayer



Intercessions for week following Ninth Sunday after Trinity –  
1st August 2021



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Holy God Make us receptive and open as we lay our intercessions before you. May we accept Your kingdom like children taking bread from the hands of their father or mother.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

We thank You that our clergy are working faithfully to lead your church here in....., and that you work through them. May they always be aware of the blessings you bestow on them; strengthen and uphold them when they grow weary in their ministries. Constantly remind us all that You who began all good work in us will ultimately perfect it through your son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Creator God we pray for your whole creation; for our brothers and sisters throughout the world and for their lives to be respected and revered regardless of creed or colour, gender or sexuality, wealth or status and for a responsible sharing of precious resources and the conservation of our fragile and beautiful world. We pray for our Queen Elizabeth and Government of the United Kingdom, for the King and Government of Spain and all world leaders and the responsibilities that they have in bringing these things about.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

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Father God, we raise before you those in our community trying to grow or produce our food under difficult circumstances as the Pandemic here in the Costa Blanca continues. We also pray for folk who are struggling to cope with the situation, especially the frail and elderly and any others at risk.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Loving God bring healing to all who are wounded, make whole those who are broken, and shed light wherever there is darkness. Hear now those we name before you who have asked for or are in need of healing prayer.....

(Short Silence)

(add names of those requesting prayer)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Merciful God we thank you for those who have travelled before us on the way of the cross and are now at peace in your eternal presence. Help us to live always mindful of your promise to us that the road of faith will lead into your heavenly kingdom.

(Short Silence)

(add names of the recently departed or on Anniversary)

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Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Faithful God, Fill our hunger with the food that lasts, the bread of God which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

## Speaking to the Soul

**Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.**

Philippians 2:12-13 NLT

If you have given your life to Christ, confessed your sins and received his forgiveness then you have the gift of salvation. This is the amazing Good News that Paul was so desperate to share. But he was equally concerned that his readers should understand that they now had work to do. The situation is much the same as in marriage. Having a wedding and receiving the gift of marriage is just the start of the journey. You now have work to do. Lots of it!

Advertising always reveals a great deal about a society. These days we often hear products being promoted because they will offer us a quick and effortless route to

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making life easier, smoother, happier and more fulfilled. It's very tempting to speak of the Christian life in the same way. But it would be a lie. I have not the slightest doubt that living for Christ is the most wonderful and fulfilling life that exists here on earth. But nowhere does Paul ever suggest that following Christ requires no effort, pain or hard work.

I fully recognise that hard work doesn't sound very attractive, but we should never fear it. Jesus once invited his followers to take on his yoke, explaining "my yoke is easy and my burden is light". You don't see many yokes these days so I had better explain. A yoke is simply a wooden beam normally used between a pair of oxen or other animals to enable them to pull together on a load when working in pairs. Jesus doesn't deny that his followers will have burdens to bear, but he makes the incredible promise that as they take his yoke they "will find rest" for their souls. (Matthew 11.28) I know exactly what Jesus means. Over the years I have seen many people working incredibly hard for God in this country and around the world and it has been beautiful to see their peace and contentment because they have done their work yoked to Jesus.

## **QUESTION**

What is the hard work that God is calling you to do?

## **PRAYER**

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that as we accept your yoke we find perfect rest. Amen

