



**Image of the day**

**Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin**

## **NI churches to remain closed for in - person services until April 1 at least**

### **Statement by Church of Ireland Bishops in Northern Ireland in relation to Public Worship**

“Following the Northern Ireland Executive’s decision to extend the current Covid–19 restrictions to Thursday 1st April 2021, representatives of the Churches met earlier this week with Ministers from the Executive Office, the Minister of Health and the Chief Medical Officer. At that meeting the Chief Medical Officer stressed that it would make a significant difference and be of huge benefit to public health and safety, if churches were willing to continue, for the time being, not to gather in–person for services and other meetings.

“In the light of the Executive’s extension of the current restrictions, and on the basis of the continued and unequivocal public health message that people should continue to stay at home, we have agreed that all in–person Sunday gatherings for worship, along with all other in–person church gatherings, should remain voluntarily suspended for the time being in all Church of Ireland parishes in Northern Ireland until Thursday 1st April 2021 – with the exception of weddings, funerals, arrangements for recording and/or live–streaming, drive– in services and private prayer (as permitted by regulations).

“We have also agreed to further assess the situation immediately after the next NI Executive review of current lockdown provisions on Thursday 18th March 2021, in the cautious anticipation that, from Friday 2nd April (Good

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Friday) onwards, our parishioners in Northern Ireland could return to in-person gatherings for worship, with all necessary precautions and mitigations in place. This recognises the importance of Easter, the significance of which was acknowledged by the Minister for Health and the Chief Medical Officer at their most recent meeting with Church representatives.

“We welcome that a similar approach is also being taken by the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church and, in a slightly different form, by the Roman Catholic Church”.

+John Armagh +Andrew Derry and Raphoe +David Down and Dromore +George Connor

## **Dublin nuns brilliantly take part in viral dance challenge**

**A group of Redemptoristine nuns in Dublin have become the latest to try their hand at the viral Jerusalema dance challenge.**

The challenge has so far seen Gardaí, Coast Guards, nursing homes, hotel staff and more across Ireland putting their best foot forward and performing the dance routine, with most saying they are doing so to help lift people's spirits in one of the most difficult times of the pandemic.

Now a group of 'Red Nuns' based in County Dublin have taken on the challenge themselves, showcasing their home and grounds of the monastery of St Alphonsus in Drumcondra.

The sisters, as well as Redemptorist Fathers and Brothers, taking part in the video hail from 'Brazil to Cork to Dublin',  
[churchnewsireland@gmail.org](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.org)



and released the dance to help those struggling while 'praying for our world in these challenging times'".

Thirteen nuns from the enclosed Monastery in Dublin starred as the main dancers in the viral video, with Sister Lucy Conway telling *RTÉ News* they wanted to "cheer people up, it's been a tough time".

The sisters had been challenged by their fellow Redemptorist Fathers and Brothers, with Sister Lucy saying the challenge had brought them all closer together.

The brilliant video has already gone viral-- just 24 hours after it was posted to social media, it has been viewed tens of thousands of times and received hundreds of supportive comments.

"What a group of shakers and movers. So beautiful and uplifting," one woman wrote.

"Father Gerard you can really swing those hips! Stay safe everyone."

## **Washington Cathedral tolls bell for 500,000 who died of COVID-19 in United States**



Washington National Cathedral on Feb. 22 tolled its bell 500 times, once for every 1,000 people who have died from COVID-19 in the United States. As the cathedral marks the death toll topping a half million this week, millions of people are receiving vaccinations against the coronavirus.

Daily vaccinations peaked at 1.7 million Americans a week ago, but that pace slowed after a winter storm battered much of the country, according The New York Times. President Joe Biden has set a goal of vaccinating 1.5 million people a day in the race to curb the virus' spread. About 44 million have received at least the first dose of one of the COVID-19 vaccines.

National Cathedral, the seat of the Diocese of Washington in the nation's capital, has tolled its bell each time an additional 100,000 coronavirus deaths have been reported. The livestream of this week's bell tolling also included prayers of mourning from interfaith leaders.

“This gesture cannot replace the lives lost, but we hope it will help each American mourn the toll of this pandemic,” the cathedral said.

The cathedral also has launched a memorial project for COVID-19 victims. Survivors can submit the names of loved ones who have died, and the latest submissions will be read during virtual prayer services each week.

## **Christian Aid: Climate change the world's greatest security threat**

Ahead of this week’s virtual meeting of the UN Security Council which focused on climate change, Christian Aid's climate policy lead, Dr Kat Kramer, said: "Climate change is becoming the world's most serious security threat so it's good to see the Security Council putting the issue front and centre.

"Millions of the world's poorest people are already living with the impacts of climate change which is forcing displacement, devastating livelihoods and putting pressure on communities who are competing over resources such as land and water.

"In some countries these impacts become the drivers of local conflicts which can be instrumentalised by leaders and escalate into violence and war. This threat of violence and insecurity threatens to undermine international peace and security.

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"However, there are steps that can be taken, a recent study in Mali and Somalia shows that investment in efforts to adapt to the effects of climate change can build peace and social cohesion.

"It's vital that international leaders get funding directly to local NGOs, particularly women and youth, who know the contexts best."

Winning the Peace: Peacebuilding and Climate Change in Mali and Somalia can be accessed here:

<https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/winning-peace-peacebuilding-and-climate-change-mali-and-somalia>

## **Date set for installation of the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem**

The Coadjutor Bishop of Jerusalem, Hosam Naoum will be installed as the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem on Ascension Day – 13 May 2021. The ceremony will take place in the city's Saint George's Cathedral.

The date was announced in a statement from the Episcopal Diocese in Jerusalem, which said: "following a consenting vote by the Synod of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East, Archbishop Michael Lewis, Primate, issued a mandate approving the installation of Bishop Hosam Naoum as 'Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, bearing the title Archbishop.'"

The statement asked people to pray for Bishop Naoum, his family and the diocese, and said more information would be forthcoming as planning for the service progresses.



He will succeed Archbishop Suheil Dawani who has served as bishop of the diocese of Jerusalem since 2007. In 2014, the Province restored the title of “Archbishop in Jerusalem” to the position.

Bishop Hosam is a member of the Anglican Communion’s Standing Committee, having been elected by members of the Anglican Consultative Council at the ACC-17 meeting in Hong Kong in 2019.

## **Bishop-elect of Clogher in conversation with Alf McCreary**

**‘The coronavirus has forced all of us into rethinking our core values’**



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Rev Canon Dr Ian Ellis is Church of Ireland Bishop-elect for Clogher. He is married to Heather and they have three grown-up children and three grandchildren.

### **Q Can you tell us something about your background?**

A I am 63 and I was brought up in the Lisburn area, where my mother, Alice, still lives. My late father, James, was maintenance supervisor at the Lagan Valley Hospital. I attended Lisnagarvey High School and Friends' School Lisburn. I graduated from QUB with a physics degree and a PGCE and taught in Antrim Grammar School.

In 1986, I began training for ordination in the Church of Ireland, then was ordained for St Mark's Armagh in 1989 by Archbishop Robin Eames. I was rector of Loughgall and Grange parishes from 1991 to 2002, then secretary to the Church of Ireland Board of Education in Northern Ireland until 2015, when I was appointed rector of Rossorry parish in Clogher diocese. I am married to Heather and we have three adult children who are married and living in Dublin, London and Dumbarton in Scotland. We have three grandchildren. I also have a brother, Colin, who is an attorney at law and lives in LA.

### **Q How and when did you come to faith?**

A I was brought up within a traditional Church of Ireland family in Eglantine parish in the Diocese of Connor. There I was baptised, went to Sunday School and was confirmed. I was nurtured in this cradle-Anglican way and came to understand in my early teens that faith has a personal element and that Jesus calls us individually to follow Him.



Happily, that stirring of faith occurred at roughly the same time as my confirmation and so was very significant — a time of commitment and confirming what had begun at my baptism. When I look back, there were so many influences and I am so grateful for all who have helped me on my faith journey.

**Q Have you ever had a crisis, or a gnawing doubt, about your faith?**

A If we are honest, there are days when the shadows darken our path of faith and questions arise, but we ultimately believe that light has conquered the darkness and, despite what is happening all around us, God is eternally loving. In Jesus, we have assurance that our lives are secure.

**Q Have you ever been angry with God and, if so, why?**

A In parish life, you come across pastoral situations which are very challenging, particularly the death of a young person, a terrible accident, or a degenerative disease. We naturally ask, “Why?” There is no easy answer, except to reflect that God has entered our messy world in Christ, who also experienced its cruelty and injustice. I believe He is present with us in times of darkness and suffering in a very real way to bring us hope and light.

**Q Are you ever ashamed of your own Church, or denomination?**

A If we look back over the history of all our denominations, we can find episodes and attitudes which today we would approach differently. We believe that the Holy Spirit moves in the course of history, so Churches should be open to challenge and transformation.

**Q Are you afraid to die?**

A No, when I am with parishioners in end-of-life settings, I encourage them to place their hand into the hand of Jesus and to entrust their lives to Him and not to fear. I apply that to myself, too. I find great comfort in Psalm 23: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” I do not pretend to understand how resurrection life will be, but I believe that our lives are “hidden with Christ in God” and as He is resurrected, then so shall we.

**Q Are the Churches here fulfilling their mission?**

A No Church is perfect, but each is responding to the call of Christ to follow Him and to make Him known in loving words and deeds. Organised religion often tends to fall into a trap of becoming focused on the institution and a bit complacent. At times, we need a good stock-take and to be willing to re-energise the vision — the coronavirus has forced us to rethink our core values.

**Q Why are so many turning their backs on organised religion?**

A Church is just one option in a plethora of lifestyle options — the Churches may have lost the ability to connect with people and the culture of today. Some onlookers have concluded that the Church is unattractive and irrelevant. That is a great challenge in reaching out to the wider community in ways that make faith real.

**Q Has religion helped, or hindered, the people of Northern Ireland?**

A Some people believe that our Troubles were a religious war, but it is not as simple as that. The factors that contributed to the Troubles are complex and connect our history, religion and identity. Churches have a role in fostering peace and helping develop mutual respect and understanding.

This is especially important in our work in schools with the rising generation. There are Church representatives who serve as school governors and we can, with others, help

shape a Christian ethos in a school community and encourage a shared approach to education.

**Q What is your favourite film, book and music?**

A I tend to fall asleep in the cinema. I keep coming back to the singer-songwriters of the 1970s, such as Paul Simon, and guitar-based groups of the 1980s, like Dire Straits. I also play the guitar in an amateurish way. I find inspiration in poetry, especially our Irish poets — Yeats, Heaney and Longley.

**Q Where do you feel closest to God?**

A There are some beautiful places in Co Fermanagh, where the majesty of the scenery evokes awe and wonder of God the creator — the viewpoint at Lough Navar, for example, or on top of Cuilcagh mountain. I find Rossorry Church such a beautiful building in which to enjoy the peace and presence of God.

**Q What inscription would you like on your gravestone, if any?**

A I haven't thought about that at all.

**Q Finally, have you any major regrets?**

A Many people have what Paul Simon calls a “catalogue of regrets”.

However, someone once told me not to look to the past, because it is gone; tomorrow may never happen, we only have the present.

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That's a helpful way to deal with regret and overthinking your life. I do, however, have a small regret that I gave up piano lessons too hastily.

Courtesy The Belfast Telegraph.

## **Lives Lost to Covid-19: Fr Jim Delaney was a 'gentleman through and through'**

### **Fr Jim spent 36 years in Kenya and became fluent in Swahili**

Fr Jim Delaney was one of 10 Spiritan priests, also known as the Holy Ghost Fathers who died in January 2021 during the third wave of the pandemic.

One of eight children, he grew up on the South Circular Road in Dublin. Having attended Synge Street CBS, he entered the then Holy Ghost Novitiate in Kilshane, Co Tipperary, after his Leaving Certificate in 1945. He was professed the following year. His younger brother Noel, who died in 1979, also joined the order.

Fr Jim studied philosophy, culminating in a BA from UCD in 1949, and spent the next two years prefecting in Rockwell College.

One of more than 40 Spiritan priests ordained in 1954, Fr Jim was appointed to the newly-created diocese of Mombasa in Kenya.

He spent 36 years in Kenya and became fluent in Swahili. During his time there, he was involved in the building of churches, a hospital and schools. He was assigned to open



a new parish at Chaani, where he built St Joseph's Church, the first in 40 years on Mombasa Island.

He was involved with all aspects of parish life – baptisms, weddings and funerals – and when it was his silver jubilee, families walked long distances to celebrate with him.

Having already done significant fundraising work in the United States, he moved there in the 1990s where he raised funds for Marian House and the missions. He ministered in St Aloysius church, Jersey city, for a number of years. He returned to Ireland nearly a decade ago.

Speaking at his funeral mass, his friend Fr Noel O'Meara described Fr Jim as a "gentleman through and through. He could be great company to those who were his particularly good friends".

Fr Jim was known to his family as Uncle Seamie. "He was a wonderful uncle and grand uncle to us all," said his niece Jeanne Sadlier.

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“He was a very warm and thoughtful person. He always had a good sense of humour and never took himself too seriously. We looked forward to his calls and all the latest news of his adventures in fundraising.

“When he came home for Christmas, as he sometimes did, it made it a really happy occasion. Everyone used to love talking and discussing various topics with him. He could relate to people of all ages.”

Some of the times he was home were sad, when he celebrated the funeral Masses of very close family. There were also happy times – and a very special occasion when he officiated at the wedding of his grandniece on May 1st, 2015.

“He never needed or used notes for any of his sermons. As an uncle he could talk for Ireland.”

Courtesy Ronan McGreevy and The Irish Times. 24.02.2021

## Pointers for prayer

Heavenly Father,  
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,  
and grew closer to you in the desert:  
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer  
that we may witness to your saving love  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty Father,  
whose Son was revealed in majesty  
before he suffered death upon the cross:



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give us grace to perceive his glory,  
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him  
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

Pray for the launches of new Church Army centres of mission in Rochdale, Gwent Valley, North Sutton and Ipswich; that these will launch as planned and new staff will find ways to engage with their communities when they are appointed.

Pray for all teachers and parents involved with students or their children. We ask for stamina and creativity as they seek to educate in less than ideal circumstances.

It has been announced that on Ascension Day - 13 May 2021, Bishop Hosam Naoum will be installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, bearing the title Archbishop. Please pray for Bishop Naoum, his family and the Diocese.

We think today of families who are struggling to cope with the ongoing restrictions to normal life, especially those who live in small homes with no outside space. We pray for an abundance of tolerance to help ease their less than ideal circumstances.

Today we give thanks for young climate activists. A UN survey shows that demand for green business and jobs is particularly high among young people, who have been a driving force behind getting the issue onto the political agenda.



We remember with thanks the numerous Mothers' Union members who, over the years, have used their God-given gifts to change the world. We pray that, in our day, we'll also be willing to use our gifts to help transform lives and communities

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.

Lord Jesus, you prayed that we would all be united together so the world would believe and experience your love. Help us to put aside that which keeps us apart and work together to share your love through our actions and our lives.

Holy God,  
you know the disorder of our sinful lives:  
set straight our crooked hearts,

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and bend our wills to love your goodness  
and your glory  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God,  
you have created the heavens and the earth  
and made us in your own image:  
teach us to discern your hand in all your works  
and your likeness in all your children;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all  
things,  
now and for ever.

Almighty and everlasting God,  
you hate nothing that you have made  
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:  
create and make in us new and contrite hearts  
that we, worthily lamenting our sins  
and acknowledging our wretchedness,  
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,  
perfect remission and forgiveness;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

## **Speaking to the Soul**

For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's

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ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!”  
2 Corinthians 5:19-20 NLT

If you have ever visited an embassy you will know what a strange experience it is. Suddenly you find yourself in another country: it's weird! In an instant everything changes and you find yourself looking at pictures of Royalty or the Head of State and listening to a different language from the street outside. That is of course the whole point of an embassy which intentionally represents a different country.

Paul tells us that's our job. We are ambassadors of a different country because we represent the Kingdom of God. And, in common with all ambassadors, we have messages to share. Ambassadors are carefully trained so that they can faithfully represent the views of their government and forge strong relationships with the country to which they have been posted. And that precisely describes our role. This world is not our home. We are just passing through and so in all that we say and do we need to ensure that we are being faithful representatives of God and his kingdom.

Our key role as God's ambassadors is to pass on a message of reconciliation. God sent Jesus into the world to give us the opportunity to have our sins forgiven and to enter into a relationship with him. We now need to pass on that message in our ambassadorial role. It's a simple and clear message. “Come back to God!” To be trusted to be an ambassador of any sort is awesome, but to be called to be an ambassador for God is as good as it gets. Wherever you go today and whatever you do, remember that before anything else you are God's ambassador.

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## QUESTION

In what ways will you be able to represent the Kingdom of God today?

## PRAYER

Lord God I thank you that you sent Jesus into this world in order to forgive our sins and bring us into a relationship with you. Help me to be a good ambassador today and to help people to see that you are eager to enter into a relationship with them as well. Amen.

