

Church News Ireland



Pulling away from the Quay.

Image of the day – Curragh voyage to Iona

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Curragh voyage to Iona remembered at Bunbeg on St Columba's Day

Sixty years after their voyage by currach to Iona – following in the spiritual and historical slipstream of Saint Columba – the four surviving crew members gathered with relatives and friends in St Patrick's Church in Bunbeg last Sunday, the saint's feast day, for a special service commemorating and celebrating their epic journey.

The idea for the original pilgrimage had been conceived by the late Canon John Barry, then-Rector of Hillsborough, as a way of marking the 1400th anniversary of Columba's voyage to the Scottish island where he was to settle, found a monastery and, eventually, die.

The crew for the journey was assembled by Maghera parishioner Wallace Clarke, a well-known and highly respected sailor (who also acted as skipper), and the boat was built by Bunbeg parishioner Jim Boyd, who was part of the crew who rowed to Iona.

Of the thirteen who made the journey, only four are still alive – Jim, Billy Patterson, Alistair Jameson and Jim Connolly. The quartet joined the Bishop's Curate -in-Charge of Gweedore, Carrickfinn and Templecrone, Rev Liz Fitzgerald, in Bunbeg Parish Church last Sunday for a service which had 'Journey of Faith' as its theme.



Rev Fitzgerald began by reading an extract from an article in the June 1962 Church of Ireland Gazette which described the planning that had gone into the journey. She told the congregation that the voyage of 60 years ago had been a “journey of faith” as the men rowed in their 30-foot by 5-foot-seven currach to Iona – faith that they would make it safe and

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sound. It was also, she said, a journey of faith as in a pilgrimage; the adventure and journey deepened the faith and commitment these men had for their Lord God.

Throughout the service, a cross that the crew made and took with them to Iona, 60 years ago, was displayed at the front of the church. The service ended with a slide show and a talk about the voyage, and this in turn was followed by tea, fellowship and then lunch.

Mr Boyd disclosed that he had received a letter from the curator of the Tower Museum in Londonderry confirming that the original currach was in safe storage and would feature as an exhibit when the new maritime museum opens.

Photos include the four surviving crew members Jim Boyd and Billy Patterson; and Alistair Jameson and Jim Connolly.

Wallace Clarke was well-known amongst Irish sailors. In his Grey Goose he was a familiar sight along the north coast. He also was a prolific writer with books on Rathlin Island and "Sailing round Ireland". Also in the crew on the Iona voyage was William McCappin, later to be Bishop of Connor, and Tony Orr of St Mark's Dundela, father of Archdeacon Orr in Cork Diocese.

The endeavour was well documented by the late Jack Neilsen, MM, a parishioner of St George's, Belfast, who was in charge of the audio-visual department of ET Green's, a well-known Belfast animal foods producer. Its company's truck transported the vessel for displays. The subsequent film was available for showing at churches.

People and places



Rector and wife return to Africa as mission partners in Sudan

CMSI are delighted to announce that Rev Andrew and Joanne Quill have recently been reselected as Mission Partners to work alongside our partners in Ibba, S. Sudan. Many of you will know that the Quills previously served as mission partners in Kenya and Uganda through CMS Ireland. Andrew is ministering as a Rector in Omagh and Joanne is working as a counsellor. They will officially come onboard as Mission Partners in Training from September

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and the initial months will be given over to preparation, orientation and forging supportive links with parishes and individuals. Pray for the Quills during this time of upheaval and preparation for all the Lord has in store for them. We will share more details in due course.

First meeting of Bishop of Cashel's Advisory Group



Mr Richard Codd, Ms Carolyn Good, Ms Dorcas Collier-Hannon, Mr Eric Driver, Revd Máirt Hanley, Ven Mark Hayden, Mr Shane Reynolds and the Rt Rev Adrian Wilkinson

The Bishop's Advisory Group had their first meeting this week at the Bishop's House in Kilkenny. The Bishop described the group as one of the most important projects in the Diocese as the pattern of ministry continues to evolve in Cashel, Ferns and Ossory. Members missing from photo -

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Ven Bob Gray, Very Rev James Mullhall , Very Rev Stephen Farrell, Canon Trevor Sargent, Mr Victor Horan.

King of Kings theme for Sunday School Prize giving



Clogh Sunday School had their Prize giving Service last Sunday. The theme was 'Jesus King of Kings' and they led the service with Readings, songs, hymns and poems on the theme and also remembering the recent coronation of King Charles.

Captain David in his talk reminded those present of the words said at the coronation A young Person said “Your

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Majesty, as children of the Kingdom of God we welcome you in the name of the King of Kings.” King Charles replied “In his name, and after his example, I come not to be served but to serve.”



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After the service there was tea in the hall to celebrate duly decorated by the Sunday School teachers. The teachers were thanked for their dedicated work each week and so too were the children.

Donard Methodist Church a partner in Newcastle Churches tapestry



Ita, Lottie and Theresa demonstrating a small piece of the cross community Newcastle Churches tapestry (Bayeux style).

The members of Donard Methodist Church said “It is our hope that the entire completed tapestry will be displayed in our Donard church for a time later in the year.

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Lottie and Sadie have been representing the Methodists at the weekly 'stitch in' at the Parish Centre.

In the media

Presbyterian Church to examine reform plans at General Assembly

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland will next week begin a process which could bring “the most radical reconfiguration in ministry in living memory”, a senior cleric has said, Liam Tunney writes in the Belfast Telegraph.

Ministers and elders from across the island will gather at the church's Assembly Buildings in Belfast for the annual General Assembly, where a number of key discussions will take place.

Among them is how the church should react to changing demographics and shrinking congregations, with a lengthy 'green paper' report on reconfiguration set to inform a year-long consultation process on the matter.

Rev Trevor Gribben, clerk of the General Assembly, said the report had the potential to transform the church's outlook.

“This is a new and potentially transformative piece of work and is really about how we use what the Lord has entrusted to us, and to do His work as effectively as we can,” he said.

“This is the start of an important process that could ultimately see the most radical reconfiguration in ministry in living memory.

“The report is to get the church thinking, talking, listening and praying about mission and ministry. The consultation with presbyteries begins in the autumn, with another report and recommendations coming to next year's General Assembly.”

This year will also see Rev Dr Sam Mawhinney formally elected and installed as the 178th Moderator.

Rev Mawhinney, minister of Adelaide Road Presbyterian Church in Dublin, will be the first person from the Republic to hold the position since 2000.

A retrospective look at how the church dealt with the pandemic is also on the agenda, with a report examining how it was handled “theologically, morally and spiritually”. “Like most of society, no aspect of the work and witness of the church was left untouched,” said Rev Gribben.

“During the course of its work, which has taken two years to complete, the task group identified key areas of learning which led to a number of recommendations for the church to consider for the future.”

It will also examine its methods and procedures for dealing with dissent and decision-making as the final report from the decision making and dissent task group is presented to the General Assembly.



Presbyterian General Assembly 2023: Leaders propose clamp down on clergy dissenting in the media - after LGBT rows - and reaffirming core beliefs on marriage

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is to encourage its leaders to confine their dissent to internal meetings and not to rush to the media to undermine democratic decisions of the church, Philip Bradfield writes in the News Letter

And the move is being formally linked to a new report which affirms its core beliefs – including the nature of marriage being between a man and a woman.

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The moves come after repeated clerics and elders have gone to the media in recent years to express their personal anger and dissent from the denomination's conservative teachings on marriage and LGBT relationships.

The Annual General Assembly of the church's ministers and elders from across the island takes place in the church's Assembly Buildings in Belfast, starting on 21 June, and runs for three days.

Speaking to journalists, Clerk of the General Assembly Rev Trevor Gribben highlighted two significant reports that would be debated.

The first, from the church's Decision and Dissent Task Group, makes clear that the primary place for debate and dissent takes place in the various meetings of the church at different levels.

Speaking to journalists, he gave the hypothetical example of a minister who wanted to speak to BBC Talkback to challenge the church spending a lot of money sending missionaries to Malawi, when people on the Shankill Road needed help.

He would tell the minister, he said, that the church came to a collective decision on a budget and that the dissenter is "required to loyally implement that".

It is acceptable for clergy or elders to express dissent in the media, he said, the key question is how?

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He added: “If you’re going on to radio and you’re actually ringing [the BBC journalist] Mark Simpson and saying, ‘I want to come on to talk about this because I’m annoyed – it’s your motive [that matters].”

The second significant report, which he linked to the first, is an updated summary of the church’s core beliefs.

The six page document reaffirms many traditional presbyterian beliefs – including those which may conflict with liberal Presbyterians on LGBT matters.

It states that human beings “were created by God in his image, male and female” and that the faithful should.. “maintain chastity in thought and deed, being faithful within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman...”.

It is intended that both reports would be binding on all ministers and elders

UK Government out of step with global response to refugees, Archbishop Welby tells Lords

If all other countries adopted the approach the Government’s approach to asylum-seekers, the Archbishop of Canterbury told the Lords on Wednesday night, “the whole international refugee system would collapse”, Pat Ashworth writes in The Church Times



He was speaking at the end of the Committee Stage of the Illegal Migration Bill, during which bishops were once again critics of the Government's proposed plan to remove the right to seek asylum from anyone arriving in the UK by illegal routes.

Another prominent speaker in the debate was the Bishop of Durham, the Rt Revd Paul Butler, who told the Lords that, if the Prime Minister's promise of more safe and legal routes for asylum-seekers could not be taken at face value, then the intention behind the Bill "would appear needlessly pernicious and unjustly punitive".

A number of amendments were proposed, debated, and withdrawn, having failed to attract Government support. Bishop Butler's comments were made in relation to an amendment to Clause 58, which seeks to put a cap on the number of entrants using safe and legal routes. The amendment sought to exclude the current named schemes

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in operation for those displaced from Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Hong Kong.

Bishop Butler told the House: “Since the pandemic, and following the end of the vulnerable persons resettlement scheme, I have despaired as I have witnessed the breakdown of our contribution to global efforts to support refugees to find sanctuary.

“I believe that the strength of shared opinion across different sides of this Chamber on the need for safe and legal routes, is, in part, due to the global reputation we once held on resettlement. Central Government led with great conviction and leadership in supporting communities up and down the breadth of this country to welcome over 20,000 Syrians who could then start to rebuild their lives.

“However, we now find ourselves in the absurd position that, in order to deter asylum-seekers from travelling to the UK regularly, we are being asked to sanction the possibility that the Government will deliberately break international law to ban the right of men and women and children to claim asylum on arrival.”

The Bill provided an opportunity to “demonstrate real leadership and make a different choice”, he said. The amendment would give the Government an opportunity to turn around the 39-per-cent decline shown in last year’s resettlement figures, and the 23-per-cent decline in family reunions. The latest figures in “the unprecedented magnitude of forced displacement across the globe” stood at 110 million.

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“Any long-term strategy for safe and legal routes must be formulated collaboratively with our international partners and wider refugee organisations rather than simply in a Home Office vacuum. Protection routes must be informed by the refugee experience and explore innovative and sustainable solutions with human dignity at their hearts,” he said.

The work on safe and legal routes “would stop before it even got started” if the numbers in the current schemes were included in the cap. “These schemes do not grant refugee status; so can the minister confirm that they will be excluded?” he asked.

He continued: “Most of us here will never know the pain of having to take the unfathomable decision to risk everything to reach safety, and the courage it must take to leave home in hope of sanctuary.

“The Government had the opportunity to offer accessible and safe routes that will provide hope for some of the world’s most vulnerable and, ultimately, save lives, and to do so alongside international partners offering similar routes in their nations. It is a privilege and a responsibility that we should never choose to abdicate.”

The amendment was not accepted, however, and the Bishop withdrew it.

He also spoke to later amendments that were also withdrawn, one requiring the Secretary of State to commission an independent management review of the efficiency of UK Visas and Immigration in processing

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applications, and the efficiency of the removal process for those whose leave to remain has expired.

Baroness Chakrabarti described the Home Office as “the department of last resort. It often picks up problems that have been created elsewhere when more progressive, creative, benign measures have not been aspired to or achieved.” She also referred to “the contrasting language of successive Home Secretaries in recent times: the very divisive, dehumanising, populist language that we have heard before. It never ends well.”

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books



Archbishop Welby’s interview on baby loss

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“It’s very moving that my BBC Radio 4 conversation about baby loss with Co-op chief executive Shirine Khoury-Haq has touched so many people” comments Archbishop Welby.

Listen again to the Archbishop Interviews here:
<https://bbc.in/3NkSvCE>



June edition of CTe-News out now

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The issue of Churches Together England includes stories on

- Windrush 75 anniversary
- Ending poverty and ensuring digital for all
- Eurovision 2023 in Liverpool

and a reflection from new CTE President Dr Anna Krauss
<https://mailchi.mp/cte/ctenewsjune2023>

Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter

The Early Summer 2023 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter is available. Read the newsletter here <https://tinyurl.com/4hfz8t3y>! Eco-Congregation Ireland says -“Thank you to everyone who contributed items for this edition! If you have any information or stories we would love to hear from you! Please forward your news to us at info@ecocongregationireland.com. Please share and circulate the newsletter to anyone you feel may be interested”

Church News Ireland

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