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**Dear Prime Minister, please tread carefully in your handling of the Irish border - Bishop McDowell**



**The Rt Revd. John McDowell, Bishop of Clogher, a diocese which traverses the Irish border writes in The Daily Telegraph**

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Now that the campaigning has ended and the governing must begin, I wanted to write to you about the matter of the Border on the island of Ireland, which is close to where I live. Indeed, the Diocese of Clogher, which I serve, includes all of County Monaghan in the Republic of Ireland and County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that my Diocese transcends the Border.

No doubt many others representing many people and interests will have communicated with you on this subject before. So I would first reassure you that I am writing as someone who has always recognised the almost impossible difficulties and stresses placed on those who have a vocation to public life, particularly politicians.

I cannot claim to represent a huge electorate or to have any specialist knowledge. But sometimes an individual should say things which might otherwise go unheard in the cacophony of other, better-known voices; the alternative would be to simply wither in the silence of exhaustion.

As Bishop of Clogher, I have a vocation to care for people on both sides of the Border and a responsibility to pray for both British and Irish Heads of State and their peoples, day by day. Although that is principally a spiritual job of work, it would be hypocritical of me to pray for something without actively working to achieve it. Besides, spiritual wellbeing needs a material basis on which to live.

So, although our priorities and the methods we use to achieve them may be different, I think it is fair to say that our goals overlap; nowhere more so than in the current difficulties surrounding Brexit and the Border, which (very

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worryingly) give every impression of escalating towards a crisis. For those of us old enough to have lived through longest civil conflict in post-War Europe, the very word “escalation” is resonant with overtones of lived horror and real tragedy. As such, it is reassuring

that those in power on both sides have repeated their desire to find answers to the Brexit/Border conundrum problems that protect what has been achieved here since 1998.

What your Government chooses to do to that end will be inevitably one of historical magnitude.

Government's role is to use the very substantial resources of the State to sift evidence, consider policy options and plan a way forward. In so doing it should take into account

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## **Attending an event marking the centenary of the founding of the Irish state**

the needs of society as a whole, i.e. to seek the common good. In light of this, the worst thing a Government can be is irresponsible or careless. No Government should commit a country to a course of action in which the consequences were so opaque as to be incalculable. It would, therefore, be both logically and morally correct for a Prime Minister to give deep pause before allowing a no-deal Brexit.

But I principally wanted to write to you about the Border.

The Border and the problems which it poses for any form of Brexit are not only technical or technological issues. Nor

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are they simply issues to do with trade or security matters. Expressed in the starkest terms, the Border is the background against which all political and much cultural life

FLORISH!

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12:30pm-4:30pm  
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Flourish! invites all clergy, pastors, ministry leaders, church staff and lay pastoral carers to attend their regional conference being held on World Mental Health Day. This event will focus on self-care for those caring for others and will consist of a key note speaker as well as 3 facilitated round table discussions. A buffet lunch will be provided and this is a free event for all participants.

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in Northern Ireland (and in a more limited way in the Republic of Ireland) is worked out. Some people like the Border and others do not, but positively or negatively, consciously or unconsciously, it is pivotal to how politicians and people here assess almost all policy alternatives.

For this reason alone, any big change which has an impact on the Border is unavoidably complicated and inevitably charged with emotional and symbolic significance.

After a period of relative obscurity, it now appears that everybody is fascinated by the Border. It is interesting, for a while, to be at the centre of the world's attention. But on the whole I think many of us would rather have been left alone.

For a political border, it is very beautiful in places. That is largely because of the hundreds of small farms looked after by hundreds of sturdy farmers along its length. There isn't much money in it for most of them, but if you ask them why they don't move to somewhere less difficult to farm they say "You can't roll up the land and take it with you". The long term well-being of men and women like these, and their neighbours all along the border, requires and deserves a clearly spelt-out, sustainable agreement between both sides. This is so that they have not only that material basis necessary for civilised living but also hope for their children's future. Neither peace nor prosperity are possible without hope.

I think it was the great English public figure and man of Letters Thomas Babington Macauley who said of Ireland that "the molten lava of the past flows hot and dangerous under the thin crust of the present".

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The ground on which people build and grow in the Border region feels particularly fragile today. It is almost possible to feel the heat of the past burning the soles of our feet. So, please, in your consideration of the future of this place: tread carefully. And with deep and genuine concern I would ask you to be very conscious of the legacy your Government will leave.

See also - Bishop McDowell - Why Brexit can't be allowed to damage the trust and mutual understanding between London and Dublin in the Belfast Telegraph, October 25, 2018.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/rt-rev-john-mcdowell-why-brexit-cant-be-allowed-to-damage-the-trust-and-mutual-understanding-between-london-and-dublin-37455568.html>

## **Disability equipment donated to the needy in Kenya**

A container load of wheel-chairs, standing frames, walkers, crutches and other equipment used by children and adults with a disability is on its way from the Daughters of Charity (DC) Services in Ireland to their services in Kenya. This is the second shipment. Four years ago a similar donation was made to DC Services in Nigeria where it made a huge difference in the lives of many children and adults with a disability.

The congregation's Mission Development Co-Ordinator, Sr. Geraldine Henry, who organised the collection of the  
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## **A physiotherapist treating a young boy in the DC Centre in Thigio**

equipment from their centres around Ireland said that it will be given to users at their centres at Thigio, Kiio, Kitale, and Chepynal in Kenya, but some of it may also be shared with other service providers in Kenya. “This equipment will be life changing for people with a disability, for some it will enable them to become mobile or even sit up for the first time” she said.

Leitrim-born, Sr. Catherine Mulligan, who co-ordinated the development of DC projects in Kenya over the past 12 years said that in the centre in Thigio and in the other centres in Kenya “we care for children and adults who have physical and intellectual disabilities. This requires a great range of different services. For the centres and the families, mobility

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## **Sr. Geraldine Henry observing the completion of loading of container**

is a big challenge; how to get the client to the centre and home again, but also how to empower the person by helping them to be as mobile as possible. The school bus can reach most children to bring them to the centre but we have to help them be mobile at the centre moving from one activity to another. Mobility at home too is important if they are not going to sit in one place until someone carries them elsewhere”.

Sr. Catherine said that the consignment now on the high seas is eagerly awaited by staff, teachers, physiotherapists, families and care-givers. “These very generously donated wheelchairs, walking aids, hoists, etc. will make a huge

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difference to those in need and will change in many ways the programmes we offer. Most of all, it will bring joy to those who cannot now move around easily. The equipment will be hugely appreciated by all. We deeply appreciate the effort of all involved in this consignment”.

There is an informal twinning relationship in place between DC Services in Ireland and those in Kenya. Sr. Geraldine Henry points out that “staff in the services in Ireland donate a small amount from their salary on a monthly basis and this goes to support the services for people with disabilities in Thigio in Kenya. Volunteers from our services in Ireland have also gone to Thigio and worked for varying periods with the staff and children there”.

## **Making Glendalough’s churchyards hospitable for birds and bees**

The increasing urgency to recognise the pressure we humans are putting on creation has thrown climate change and the threat to biodiversity into the spotlight in a whole new way. Student Greta Thunberg has mobilised young people all over Europe to bring the issue to the attention of Governments and people are harnessing the energy created to raise awareness of the need to change our habits before climate change reaches the crucial tipping point beyond which there may be no return.

Recently Wicklow County Council became the first local authority in Ireland to declare a biodiversity and climate change emergency having been briefed by local students

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**The Revd Brian O'Reilly and Oran O'Sullivan with a bee box outside Glenealy Parish Church.**

who had taken part in school strikes for climate action. In May Ireland as a State also declared an emergency. This follows similar moves in the Scottish and Welsh parliaments and in London and Manchester. Declaring an emergency is one thing but what actions will follow remain to be seen.

What can churches do to contribute to the growing movement to raise awareness of and address people's impact on creation? There are some obvious steps such as encouraging parishioners to reduce, reuse, recycle and recover their waste and looking at the energy used within parish properties.

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The Rector of Rathdrum the Revd Brian O'Reilly has joined forces with Redcross parishioner Oran O'Sullivan, formally of Birdwatch Ireland and now owner of Irish Garden Birds. Together they have been surveying churchyards in the Diocese of Glendalough to see what can be done in these green spaces to encourage biodiversity. Their goals are to educate and inform people at parish level as well as install boxes for birds and bees, if it is appropriate to do so, in churchyards.

They have been awarded a grant under the Department of the Environment's LA 21 Fund 'ABC Project: Actions for Biodiversity in Churchyards', which is administered locally by Wicklow County Council.

For Brian pollinators and birds were not top of his agenda until recently. He admits he is only now learning the difference between a swallow and a swift and that solitary bees are more productive pollinators than the more sociable bees that live in colonies. Oran is a mine of information in helping him on his personal learning curve. However, he feels that their task in assessing churchyards' suitability for biodiversity measures is attainable.

"You have to push yourself outside your comfort zone to tasks that don't necessarily meet your vision. Don't over complicate it. For me this has been a stepping stone approach but it is meeting a need. It is empowering to realise that by putting a bee box in you are meeting a need. You don't have to buy a whole hive," he explains. "We can facilitate biodiversity. We have our churchyards. We don't

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**Dress up in a monk's robe and learn all about how monks lived at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin on this fun guided walk around the cathedral. For 6-12 year olds. Admission Prices: €5.00 per child (aged 6 to 12) and include Cathedral Entrance Fee.**

use them for crops. We can set an example and use the facilities to achieve a balance.”

Bringing 25 years of experience from Birdwatch Ireland to the project, Oran is against doing things as a ‘box ticking exercise’. He also says that we should be challenging a lot of what is done in the name of conservation although he notes that there is more enlightenment emerging now.

“Churchyards are very good because they are undisturbed for most of the week and are generally in mature grounds

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surrounded by high walls. That's why I was interested in this project and I feel that it is sustainable. Some graveyards are over manicured and I while I fully understand there has to be a level of tidiness, there are corners that can be left and choices can be made on planting," he comments. "In some cases it is not worth putting up a box and in some cases planting is as important."

Having visited Glendalough churchyards, Brian and Oran are now putting bee boxes and nesting boxes into churchyards that are suitable. They stress that not every churchyard is useful for bird boxes and there is no point in putting boxes in simply for the sake of it. "They have to go into a specific environment. Some churchyards are too clinical. Nesting boxes need to go in a place where there is some cover. We don't just turn up at a church and bang up a box, they must be put in the right place. This is the great thing about having Oran on board. He has an understanding of what will work," Brian explains adding: "You also have to bear in mind that you can put a bird box up but there is no guarantee that birds will use it."

Where bird and bee boxes are put into churchyards, Brian and Oran will provide advice on how to maintain them. For example, nesting boxes must be cleaned out after use and bee boxes need to be put near pollinating plants. They suggest that one person from the parish take charge of the care of the boxes. This will mean that they have a point of contact to whom support and information can be provided. "We don't want to do the survey, give the boxes and walk away. We want to ensure people know what to do to maintain their boxes," Brian explains.

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Plants developed by horticulturalists are not necessarily the best for encouraging biodiversity. They suggest taking steps like building herb boxes in churchyards so that not only are parishes installing something to attract pollinators but parishioners can benefit from a supply of fresh herbs. Apart from the choice of planting in churchyards, there are little changes in regime which can be adopted to encourage biodiversity. Oran says that leaving a small area of the churchyard unmown to allow a meadow to develop is a hugely positive step.

“What you are doing is replacing or giving an additional site for a bird or a bee that would have nested in a hole in a wall or hedge. New housing schemes plant trees but they are very young so this contribution is significant,” Oran concludes.

## **Church of England celebrates 50 years of women Readers**

The Diocese of Chester is one of the places that will be marking the anniversary this Sunday (28 July).

Warden of Readers for Chester Diocese, Vivien Gisby, said: “We wanted to mark the occasion with a celebratory service followed by tea, cake and fellowship. The event will be an informal opportunity for our Readers to meet and chat and for us all to give thanks for their ministry in our Diocese and across the Church as a whole.”

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Rosamund Essex was the first woman to be licensed as a Reader in the Church of England in July 1969. An Oxford graduate who was also the editor of The Church Times from 1950 to 1960.

In her biography she wrote: “The highlight of all my work in the Church came in 1969 when quietly, almost unnoticed by the Church at large, a canon law was given royal assent which allowed women to be Readers. Few people recognised at once what a revolutionary step this was.”

Readers in the Church of England are lay people from a range of backgrounds and experiences that are trained and authorised to preach, teach and lead worship. There are more than 8,500 Readers actively involved in ministry across dioceses in the Church of England today.

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Men were licensed into the role in 1866, but it was over 100 years later, in 1969, before women were permitted to train to become licensed Readers.

In December 1961 the Bishop of Southwell, Dr F. R. Barry, asked: “If a woman can become a Minister of the Crown, the Vice-Chancellor of a university, or the Queen of England, why cannot she be a lay reader in the Church?”.

Between October 1969 and December 1970, 44 women were licenced as lay readers

2019 marks two other anniversaries in the calendar of women’s ministry in the Church. This year it is 25 years since women in the Church of England were first ordained priests and five years since legislation was passed to enable women to be appointed bishops.

## **July 27/28 - Today in Christian history**

**July 27, 1681:** During a bitter battle between Scottish Episcopalians and Presbyterians, five Presbyterian preachers are martyred in Edinburgh. The Church of Scotland became Presbyterian permanently in 1690.

**July 28, 1148:** Too weak to retake Edessa from the Muslims, the armies of the Second Crusade besiege Damascus. They blundered and were forced to retreat within five days. Believers throughout Christendom were shocked and devastated that a crusade preached by a moral exemplar (Bernard of Clairvaux) and led by royalty

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(King Louis VII of France and Emperor Conrad III of Germany) would fail.

**July 28, 1727:** Moody, stiff young preacher Jonathan Edwards marries Sarah Pierrepont, a lively 17-year-old. The union proved happy and produced 11 children, six of who were born on Sundays. This caused a bit of a scandal, because people then believed children were born the same weekDay they were conceived. Nonetheless, people admired the marriage, including George Whitefield, who declared, "A sweeter couple I have not seen".

**July 28, 1881:** American Presbyterian theologian J. Gresham Machen is born in Baltimore

## July 27 News Links

### [Plotting the route for our future Church](#)

The Irish Catholic

At a time in **Ireland** when the **Church** is experiencing tumultuous and ... The **news** meant that the Virginia-native would be uprooted from his Co. Cavan ...

### [Irish people don't want hard border, says new Armagh bishop](#)

The Tablet

... through the peace process over the past years in Northern **Ireland**. ... Paradoxically, it liberates the **Church** "to find a new and creative voice in the ...

### ['Discrimination and nepotism' rife in teaching profession in Northern Ireland, says union](#)

Belfast Live

NASUWT Northern **Ireland** chief, Justin McCamphill , said: "With no ... an appointment on the basis of discrimination on the grounds of **religious** belief.

### [Man stole head of 800-year-old mummy from Dublin crypt 'while out of his head' on booze and Xanax](#)

Irish Mirror

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After leaving the **church** he fell asleep in town and realised when he woke ... **Irish Mirror** Sports page - which brings you all your **Irish** and UK sports **news** - can be found here. You can also check out our **Irish Mirror** GAA sports page.

### [How we turn our backs on martyrs](#)

The Irish Catholic

Right now **Irish** people stray and wander from the **Church** every day, turning their backs on that which for which our ancestors died. Perhaps our ...

### [The Revered Paddy McKee will be retiring as vicar of Ryhall with Essendine and Carlby at the ...](#)

Stamford Mercury

In the early 1970s, Paddy began training in the **Church of Ireland** but after the opportunity went 'pear-shaped', he was told by the Archbishop of ...

### **UK news in brief**

Church Times

UK **news** in brief ... rural strategy” to save the English countryside from neglect is “deeply disappointing”, two **Church of England** bishops have warned.

### **Can bats and church wardens live in harmony?**

Eastern Daily Press

A partnership between Natural England, Historic England, Church Conservation Trust, The **Church of England** and the Bat Conservation Trust has ...

### ['Gospel truth' of the Cardinal](#)

ft.lk

In the 16th century Martin Luther King who opposed the Roman Catholic Church was excommunicated from the Church. The **Church of England** was ...

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