

MEDIA ADVISORY

Issued: 7 January 2023

For the attention of newsdesks, photodesks and religious affairs correspondents for planning purposes.

Celebrating our Reconciling Vision of Hope

The Irish Council of Churches - one of the world's oldest national representative church bodies - will mark its centenary with a joint service of worship this month. The service will also celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Ballymascanlon Talks, which led to the establishment of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting.

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

Event: Celebrating our Reconciling Vision of Hope

Date: Sunday 22nd January 2023

Time: 3.30pm

Venue: St. Anne's Cathedral, Belfast

EVENT DETAIL

The Irish Council of Churches and Irish Inter-Church Meeting will be holding a joint service of worship in St. Anne's Cathedral, Belfast on Sunday 22nd January 2023 at 3.30pm.

The purpose is to celebrate the Centenary of the founding of the Irish Council of Churches whose first meeting took place on 23rd January 1923. The service will also celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Ballymascanlon Talks which led to the establishment of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, the way in which the ICC engages with the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland.

The service will be led by the Dean of Belfast Cathedral, Very Rev Stephen Forde and the preachers will be Most Rev Eamon Martin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, and Rev Dr Harold Good, former President of the Methodist Church in Ireland and recipient of the World Methodist Peace Award in 2007.

At the service we will give thanks for the courage of our predecessors, for whom these were brave initiatives, recommit ourselves to the ongoing work of reconciling, which is part of the unfinished work of peace on our island, and bear witness to the hope that comes from the promises of a new creation in which there will be no more division, violence or pain.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Through ICC and IICM the churches in Ireland today engage, dialogue and act together in many areas, including peacemaking and reconciliation, housing insecurity and homelessness, migration and asylum issues, anti-racism, climate justice and care of creation.

Further events are planned later in the year to mark these anniversaries:

Irish Council of Churches
Irish Inter-Church Meeting

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- In March the 100th AGM of the ICC will reflect on the role of the churches in 21st century Ireland in service of peace and reconciliation, to be held in Limerick Church of Ireland Cathedral.
- In late Summer a symposium is planned which will take place in Dublin and will offer the opportunity for informed and in-depth consideration of the work of ICC and IICM over the past decades, both where it has had a positive impact and where churches have fallen short, and to explore future avenues for collaboration and engagement.
- An updated publication documenting the history of the organisations and their work will be launched at this event.
- In November, the Irish Inter-Church Meeting annual conference will mark the 50th anniversary of the Ballymascanlon Talks.

Irish Council of Churches

The Irish Council of Churches was founded in 1923 in the aftermath of the Irish Civil War as the United Council of Christian Churches and Religious Communion in Ireland. The Council is the national body through which our member churches formally engage, dialogue and act on a wide variety of issues. We are established by our member churches and funded by them. Our mandate covers the whole island and continues to reflect the all-Ireland focus of the majority of our member churches.

The ICC Executive meets four times a year and is made up of church general secretaries and other nominated representatives from across the range of Protestant, Orthodox, Reformed and Independent church traditions. The President is the public representative of the Council.

Our current President is Rt Rev Andrew Forster, Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe). Presidents are elected on a rotation basis and serve for two years. The ICC Vice President is Bishop Sarah Groves of the Moravian Church, who will become President in 2024.

Irish Inter Church Meeting

In 1973 in the midst of the Troubles the Council began historic talks in the Ballymascanlon Hotel in County Louth with senior members of the Catholic Church. Over the course of time these became formalised as the Irish Inter Church Meeting. The meeting is coordinated by a committee which also meets four times a year. This Inter Church Committee is formed from the leadership of the churches made up of 50/50 representation from the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference and the Council. It is co-chaired by Most Rev Dr Brendan Leahy, Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick, and the President of the Council, Rt Rev Andrew Forster.

Membership

Our present day membership of the Irish Council of Churches reflects the changing landscape of Christianity across Protestant, Orthodox, Reformed, Independent and Migrant-led churches.

Through our structures churches in Ireland from across the wide range of established traditions have been meeting together on an ongoing and all-Ireland basis for 100 years. Countless positive changes have taken place as a consequence of the relationships formed, bridges built and actions taken through and beyond our dialogues together.

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