



*The Christmas Tree* in the Conference Room taken on a dark afternoon leading up to Christmas speaks loudly of the current reality of Drumalis in this festive season. The tree twinkles its lights across an empty room towards stacks of unoccupied chairs. This was to be Christmas music week - no music, no singing, no people, the robins on the tree are silent.

Behind us hangs "Boundaries", the extensive work of art created by Helen Sanlon, displaying something of the history of Drumalis and the Sisters of the Cross and Passion. Here sits the shadowy figure of Elizabeth Prout, the foundress of the Congregation (pictured right). She is serenely keeping her watchful eye on the sad and lonely child in need of love, care and compassion. For her, **the ministry continues**. She is no stranger to the horror of pandemic. In fact, her 200th birthday has passed without any fuss, including the postponed General Chapter which was to have taken place in this Conference Room named in her honour. It has indeed been an unusual period in the history of Drumalis.

But the key word is **"the ministry continues."** Following in the path of the Foundress, who was no stranger to illness and uncertainty, the Drumalis Team have sustained much of the work of the Centre "virtually" with the help of Zoom. In some cases, it has opened up activities to a wider catchment. To others, sadly, it has meant a loss of connection - no physical access as the shutdown continues.

None of this would have been possible without the support of the extended Drumalis Community and volunteers who continue to meet up and dream and pray together regularly. The presenters and programme leaders have consistently been available and inventive in their areas of expertise. The in-house administrative team have kept the necessary supports in place, the grounds and maintenance men continue to keep the plant ticking over. And finally, the possibility of a new and inclusive way of expanding the ministry of Drumalis has emerged, which has the potential for reaching far beyond the existing boundaries of space, distance, costs and abilities. The future awaits...



### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - EVENTS HOSTED BY DRUMALIS VIA ZOOM IN 2021

#### "THE ELIZABETH PROUT BICENTENARY LECTURE SERIES"

Thursday, 14 January at 7 pm "Understanding Jesus Means Understanding Judaism" with Professor Amy-Jill Levine

Thursday, 4 March at 7 pm An Evening with Dom Christopher Jamison OSB

Thursday, 25 March at 7 pm Lecture on the Theme of Fratelli Tutti by Sr Joan Chittister OSB



#### "LET JUSTICE WELL UP LIKE WATER" GOOD RELATIONS ROOTED IN JUSTICE

Public Theology Course led by Dr Johnston McMaster over eight Tuesday evening sessions from 7 pm - 9 pm from January - March 2021, commencing Tuesday, 5 January 2021.

*For further details or to book any of the above, please contact Drumalis during office hours (Mon-Fri, 9 am - 5 pm) - 028 28272196/28276455 or email [drumalis@btconnect.com](mailto:drumalis@btconnect.com) Please check the Drumalis website and Facebook page for the latest programme updates on retreats, workshops and adult faith development courses.*

## Public Theology at Drumalis



In early 2018 Drumalis hosted a six-session introductory course on public theology facilitated by Dr Johnston McMaster. The course had developed from a taster day in 2017.

A large number of people participated and there was enthusiasm for a more developed engagement. The level of interest suggested that there is a real need for faith to engage with the large public questions and a longing for a way of living faithfully and ethically in the local and global world. Public theology at Drumalis was born with the Centre committed to opening up a new way of doing theology, applying social ethics to the great public challenges and questions, and developing a theology of social awareness and action.

The first course, **Doing Public Theology: An Introduction**, identified the 'publics' in public theology and made connections between theology or theological ethics and public challenges. Broadly the public challenges in today's world are political, economic, environmental, violence, war, globalisation, and the related issues of poverty, peace and the religious-secular relationship. The course input was published in a book and recorded on podcast.

Engagement of significant numbers of people led to a second course in 2019, **Doing G-O-D in Public: The Practice of Public Theology**. The course content was also published but the great interruption of Covid-19 meant that there was no podcast. A third course was begun, including engagement with key people involved in dimensions of public life, but Covid interrupted this

programme after only two sessions. The course was abandoned.

Shortly afterwards we all discovered Zoom and undeterred Drumalis pursued much of its educational programme through Zoom. In response to the pandemic and crisis a course was designed and delivered on **Is There Life After Covid-19? The Search for Meaning and Moral Values**. This too has now been published. Some thirty people have participated in the eight-session programme involving input and group discussion. On all of the public theology programmes the participants have been cross-community or truly ecumenical, bringing diverse insights and perspectives and engaging with each other in open and respectful ways enhancing much mutual enrichment and shared challenges.

A fourth course on public theology will begin for eight sessions on Zoom in early January 2021. **Let Justice Well Up Like Water: Right Relations Rooted in Justice** will be a critical reflection on the Hebrew prophet Amos connecting his major insight of social justice to a range of current public issues and challenges. This too will be published.

Public theology is now an established part of the Drumalis programme making a significant contribution to the development of public theology, applied social ethics and the practice of ethics and faith in the public square. It is an innovative programme to which participants have contributed in a hugely significant way. With such people, new participants joining each course, and the commitment of Drumalis and its key leaders, public theology at Drumalis has not only developed into a landmark programme, it will continue to develop and empower people for more faithful and ethical living in community and the world. The Community Relations Council has provided some of the funding for the programme underlining the importance of a programme of social and public ethics and the contribution of faith values to public life.

- Dr Johnston McMaster

## Creation Time 2020



Although Drumalis is closed to in-house guests, Creation Time was nonetheless marked in a number of ways in September 2020 – both virtually through online prayer and practically by the planting of new trees in the grounds.

Drumalis took part in Eco-Congregation Ireland's Virtual Climate Justice Candle Project for the Season of Creation by designating a candle at Drumalis. We shared various images of this candle along with prayers on our Facebook page and also used it as the centrepiece for online Sunday Evening Prayer via Zoom.

Sr Margaret Rose also successfully qualified as a

Laudato Si animator through the Global Catholic Climate Movement. The aim of this in-depth online training course is "to inspire your community to care for creation." Sr Margaret Rose put this training immediately into practice as, together with Sr Anne Harnett CP, she delivered Zoom workshops to participants on the Pathways Adult Faith Development course on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.



## Remembering Sr Mairead



Sister Mairead Bradley after nearly 60 years in the Cross and Passion Community passed away peacefully in the care of the Villa Pacis community in Belfast on the 20th of September 2020.

Her death was in some ways a happy release. It was sad to see her such an active, involved and energetic woman reduced by illness and unable to communicate. The crisis of Covid meant that she was not to be sent off with a normal liturgical ceremony. But a gathering, arranged in her memory on Zoom, by Drumalis, where she had contributed so much, gave many of her friends and family a chance to participate in a moving celebration of her life.

Mairead's family appreciated this opportunity to join the Cross and Passion Community in prayer and gratitude. They "Zoomed" in from all over the world as we shared stories, memories, prayers and photos to give thanks for Mairead's life. Her beloved nephew Sam ended his heartfelt tribute to Mairead with a prayer in which we can all share: "Dear friend, dear sister, dear aunt we wish you eternal rest." This service can still be viewed on the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5Uk6ri9KIo>



**"Friends of Drumalis" Update** - In our Summer Newsletter, we gave a comprehensive report on the contribution of the Friends of Drumalis to the sustainability of the ministry into the future. The fact is that the contributions of the Friends have helped us to keep the retreats and programmes going online. Also, the overheads continue even when there are no guests. So, at this time we say a sincere **THANK YOU** to all our donors who have faithfully and generously contributed to keeping Drumalis afloat. To those Friends who have not yet renewed their membership we say **PLEASE** renew your membership and keep in touch - your help is needed! And to those who have not yet signed up, we extend a warm invitation to do so - details available on the Drumalis website. Already, since the beginning of April, £28,000 has been received from generous benefactors. With re-opening in the spring, there will be major costs and we still hope that the Charitable Donations of our Friends will help us to keep costs of coming back to Drumalis within the reach of everyone.

You can also support Drumalis while you shop on Amazon by choosing Drumalis as your preferred charity on [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk) - for every purchase you make, a donation is made to Drumalis.



## "Blazing Streetlights"

Siobhan O'Hare (pictured right) shares her thoughts on the courses given by Sr Pam Thimmes osc which she has attended via Zoom since lockdown:

"Sr Pam's perspective is informed, fresh and female. She recognises the dominating foci of multiple mainstream interpretations of the scriptures and provides an exploration of these texts that reveals a rich understanding and appreciation for curious adults. Her courses move seamlessly between the world of academia, with a rigorous reliance on context, theological debate, and the lived experience of faith.

I have attended many talks led by Sr Pam and love the academic level and pitch as well as the reflective elements. In May 2020, the Zoom course, 'Mary of Nazareth' helped me understand the unfailing strength and faith of Mary, despite experiencing extreme suffering and in contrast to the images of passivity that we are sometimes left with from Christian iconography and popular understandings.

In the Zoom course on Mary Magdalene in August 2020, I was struck by the prominence of her role, particularly in John's Gospel as well as the conscious and successful efforts of the early Church to undermine her importance by labelling her a prostitute.

At present I am enjoying, 'To Whom Shall We Go? Seeking Jesus in the Gospel of John'. This course is delivered on Zoom in eight different sessions. I find this course fascinating because John, the 'maverick' provides such a different perspective on



the story of Jesus and discipleship.

The gospel and the course invite the participants to discuss and explore John's perspective and how this has been interpreted by our various Christian denominations. The value of different narratives and worldviews has become a recurring theme. As a Catholic adult, it is very important for me to continue my faith education. Exploring scripture with Sr Pam as a guide allows me to begin to understand our God more fully and recognise how he often works in subtle and unexpected ways. I believe that we are meant to wrestle with these texts to identify our misconceptions and recognise ourselves and each other in the faith journey of those who came before us. While I have always been interested in scripture study, it is clear to me now that elements of my understanding have been one-dimensional in the past and that there remains and always will remain, much to discover. Rediscovering the 'characters' that I learned about in childhood allows me to see anew with adult eyes and understand the human relationship with God that is depicted. In turn, this has opened my eyes to the subtle and unexpected workings of God in my own life, far away from mainstream and one-dimensional expectations of God.

Life has thrown some obstacles across my path; that's just life, I guess. The difficulty lies in trying to follow 'the way' when the challenges of life seem insurmountable. With absolute certainty and gratitude, I can say that Sr Pam's scripture courses in Drumalis, and the contributions from other curious Christians on those courses, are blazing streetlights that help me to navigate the bumps on the road when I am in the dark and to savour the warm light of day when the road is smooth and joyous."

## Singing at Christmas at Drumalis



"I have been singing with 'The Voices' chamber choir at the Drumalis Christmas concerts for eight years and I can honestly say, that it is the singing highlight of the year for me. Loreto McAuley, our very talented musical director never fails to compile a wonderfully unique and diverse programme of traditional carols, classical pieces and contemporary songs arranged for various voices and musical instruments. The Christmas chamber ensemble is always different so the musical textures and sounds of each concert are quite distinctive - the audience never quite knows what awaits them as they take their seats...

Over the years we have explored the music of Christmas and the festive season from many different perspectives, traditions and eras. I always enjoy the opportunity to learn new music and to revisit old favourites, but also to consider Christmas and all that it means from different vantage points. The repertoire for the concerts has featured traditional voices of Christmas, such as Mary, the shepherds and the angels, rejoicing in the promise of the Messiah and his birth. We have performed songs and music which capture the joy and excitement of children (and adults!) at Christmas time alongside more reflective and meditative songs for the season. The choir have also presented music which contemplates Christmas from the perspectives of more unusual figures, such as the Space-man, Snowman and 1<sup>st</sup> World War soldier.

As a singer, I enjoy the variety of the programme - singing as part of a small ensemble, as a soloist and with my long-term duet partner, Simon - the tenor. He and I have had a lot of fun over the

years, learning and performing a range of Christmas repertoire by artists as diverse as Boney M, the Clancy Brothers and Nina and Frederick! We were devastated when we discovered that we had exhausted the latter's Christmas song collection!

Any reflection on the Christmas concerts at Drumalis would not be complete without mention of the delicious Christmas dinners and suppers, although as a singer, I should probably try harder to resist the wonderful food so that I don't arrive 'on stage' fit to burst...

There is something quite magical about Drumalis at Christmas. The beautiful surroundings are made even more lovely with candles and decorations and the aroma of mulled wine and punch which greets the singers and audience on their arrival to a concert. The warmth of the welcome from Sisters Anna and Margaret Rose and Drumalis staff, the friendliness of the audience, the intimacy of the concert setting and the enjoyment in rehearsing and performing with my 'Voices' friends, makes it a real pleasure and delight to be involved in the concerts every year.

Christmas at Drumalis is an integral part of my Christmas celebrations so I have really missed meeting and rehearsing with Loreto and my singing buddies in 'Voices' this year. However, we were not defeated by the current social restrictions and have recorded a 'virtual' version of our annual concert which will be shared online. I hope you enjoy it!"

- Alison Montgomery

**Music for Christmas hosted by Drumalis via Zoom will take place at 7:30 pm on Friday, 18 December and Monday, 21 December - places available, £15 per person. Please contact Drumalis during office hours (Mon-Fri, 9 am - 5 pm) 028 28272196/28276455 for further details.**

## Who plants a tree, plants a hope...

The plan for the bi-centenary of the foundress was to plant 200 trees in Drumalis. It did not happen this year because of the Covid restrictions. However, on the day of her birthday, 2 September 2020, four of the remaining on-site staff members of the Drumalis Team planted two weeping willow trees by the pond (pictured right) - one for each century of Elizabeth Prout's life. The two hundred trees have been re-ordered for planting in Spring 2021!

**Planting trees is an act of faith in the future.** As we leave these two young trees into the care of the natural world, we can't help thinking of the children of the future who will be most affected by the crises in our world today. They are the ones from whom we are stealing the natural resources necessary for life and happiness in the future. They are the ones whom Mother Mary Joseph would have been looking out for. It reminds us of that beautiful, evocative, and mysterious poem of WB Yeats - "*The Stolen Child*", which is as true for today as it was for his time, and for the world of M Mary Joseph too. With her help may we continue to respond to the needs of our times because as ever: "*The world's more full of weeping than you can understand.*"



In the Summer Newsletter, we featured an article on our collaboration with A Rocha and the recruitment of a conservation volunteer, Emma Johnston. Unfortunately, it was impossible to continue this placement due to the pandemic and it was with regret that Emma returned home. However, during these months of lockdown and restrictions, we have stayed in contact with our friends in A Rocha by phone, email and Zoom. We hope that we will continue our work together for the sake of the planet through our membership of their Partners in Action network.



**A Final Word...** We finish with a picture of the simplest of all the cribs in Drumalis, no adornments, no accessories just the *key figures* in the story - Jesus, Mary and Joseph in a simple setting, participating in the unfolding of a profound mystery. During these months of pandemic, in organisations across the world, the role of the *key workers* has been acknowledged. This year marked 90 years of ministry at Drumalis. We acknowledge the generations of *key people* who through their dedication, expertise, generosity and fidelity have brought this place to where it is today. So too we acknowledge with gratitude all who have come to Drumalis to pray and find healing and peace over the past 90 years - all participants in the unfolding of this "*oasis of peace*". Last but not least, to all our readers, we send Christmas greetings; may this be a happy, healthy and grace-filled feast for us all, may God bless our families, those who are sick and those who have died during this time of pandemic.

*With prayers and blessings and love from Sr Margaret Rose, Sr Anna and Maura*