

GERARDUS

GOES TO

DUBLIN

MARCH, 2020

A Note from the Chair

I would like to extend a big thank you, well done and I miss you to the Travel Committee. Everyone worked so hard to rebuild the committee and make this trip happen, all to offer something great to their friends and peers. As you know, being on the committee and suddenly becoming Chair was all very new to me (and rather confusing at first) but you were all super patient and supportive and made it a great experience. I had a great time on the trip and made some wonderful memories. We were so lucky to be able to run Dublin before the nightmare that is COVID-19 took over our lives and made travel impossible, if this was my last trip for the foreseeable I'm glad it was with all of you!

I would also like to thank all participants on the trip for attending and for making running the trip an enjoyable experience, we sincerely hope you all enjoyed it as much as we did and made the most of the opportunities whilst you were there. Nothing is ever perfect, but life is what you make of it and it was great seeing so many of you having such a good time! Whilst I won't be around next year, I have already heard of some exciting plans for the next trip and hope many of you will take the opportunity again; I'm definitely gutted that I can't!

~ Lydia



Committee

Lydia Theakston - Chair

Dewi Helder - Secretary

Inge Maatje - Treasurer

Austin Brewin - Trip Coordinator

Daan Kampen - Trip Coordinator

Marleen Boersma - Trip Coordinator



Participants

Annelien Westhuis, Ellen Scheeringa, Eva Boef, Ilse van Tuinen, Joëlle Fennebeumer, Luna Cazarely, Maartje Vos, Mara Min, Mariska van der Velde

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Introduction by Lydia and Dewi

After a somewhat turbulent start to the year for the newly formed Travelcie we decided to wipe the slate clean, strip back and begin planning a new, accessible, and fun trip for all; Dublin. Our aim from the outset was to provide an affordable trip with an interesting and academic focus, but didn't feel like the highly scheduled school trips we all went on in Secondary School. We wanted to give members of the faculty an opportunity to research something engaging and relevant whilst having plenty of free time to explore the sights and sounds of Dublin that they wanted most. Building on this premise, we agreed upon the idea of looking at religious responses to the new marriage and abortion laws in Ireland by visiting some significant institutions and speaking to their key players. After emailing countless organisations, we were lucky enough to have been invited in by the Dublin Christian Mission, Amnesty International and the Irish Bible Institute. In addition to this; we planned various trips to Churches, Cathedrals, crypts, the famous Trinity Library as well as making some lunch reservations for all and a fun final night at The Church Bar to top it all off. We also planned two introductory lectures, generously led by Méadhbh McIvor and Brenda Mathijssen which you will hear more about next.

After these activities were planned, a budget was made and accommodations reserved, we were able to announce the trip and open applications. Within a month the 15 participants that wanted to attend had paid deposits and excitement was beginning to grow. We were lucky enough to have attendees from each year within the faculty, bringing a real breadth of experience and knowledge to the table. We tried to take this breadth of experience into account when we were deciding on a research plan and outcome. We therefore decided to write a booklet about the trip and assigned the participants randomly to the institutions that we were going to visit. The members of the Travelcie, in turn, were, in groups of two, guiding the booklet with a more general experience of the trip, this overview of the planning of the trip and an insight into what the lectures were about.



Pre-Trip Lectures by Daan and Inge

As preparation for the institutions we were going to visit, we attended two lectures. These lectures were meant to create context for us so we could conduct our research properly. The first lecture was on Irish history and religion, given by Méadhbh McIvor, the second on research methods, given by Brenda Mathijssen.

Irish history and religion

One of the most important things to know about Irish history and religion is the British rule and domination of Ireland since the 12th century. Before this Ireland was a Catholic country. However, the British suppressed the Irish culture, because it was deemed lesser than the British culture, including the Catholic religion. This oppression in turn led to a stronger nationalist feeling in Ireland and Catholicism became a major part of Irish culture. To quell this nationalist feeling the British ruled with an iron hand. This came to a climax during the potato famine of the 19th century. The British did little to help the Irish during this crisis and up to two million people died or emigrated because of the famine. The first world war had a major negative impact on Britain. As a result of this Ireland tried to bargain for independence. This led to the partial independence of Ireland, with Northern-Ireland as a separate part with a special status. Northern-Ireland acquired this status because it is populated by a majority of English descended Protestants, still loyal to England. In 1949 the Republic of Ireland was founded and all ties to the United Kingdom were severed. The Catholic church had a major role in shaping the politics and culture of the Republic, which was probably a reaction to the former British oppression of Catholicism. Historically 95% of the Irish people identified as being Catholic. However, since the 1990's this percentage is steadily declining because of multiple scandals surrounding the Catholic church. In 1983, an amendment on the constitution was made through popular vote, making it illegal to have an abortion on Irish soil. Two thirds of the population voted in favor of the amendment. In 2015 a referendum was held on the legalization of same sex marriage, and passed by majority vote. In 2018 another referendum was held to remove the 1983 amendment which made abortion illegal. Now, since the first of January 2019, it is legal to get an abortion in the Republic of Ireland. However, abortions are only allowed up until twelve weeks into the pregnancy, and other issues still remain.

Research Methods.

In the next lecture we learned about research methods and strategies for our fieldwork in Dublin. First we discussed what we were going to research and what would come along with that. The things that we could miss when we do observations and what cultural differences there might be and how they could influence our research. But we also discussed how our own body

language, attitude, physical appearance, etc. could influence the way people look at us and therefore what they will tell us. This could also influence the narrative they tell and how they respond to our questions.

At last we discussed how this research would influence us and what impact it could have on us. Talking about abortion laws might be a sensitive topic for the people in Dublin, but it can also be a sensitive topic for ourselves. Therefore we received some tips on how to handle this best. We decided to make pairs so that everyone would have someone to talk to who knows what they are going through and with whom they can clear their mind when they feel the need to.



Overview of Tuesday by Austin

We gathered at the airport, the fruit of our long planning finally here. Everyone arrived on time which was a very welcome surprise and after coffees and a small welcome chat by Lydia, we slowly made our way to the check in desk only to realize that we were there half an hour before it opened. There was some slight grumbling about this amongst the committee as well as the participants but there was a common consensus that it was better early than late and, after another coffee, we were able to check our bags and enter the airport. Everyone split up once we



got through security, with people flocking to more coffee as well as breakfast, and some of us to the duty free shops. The flight boarded and was quite uneventful with the author napping for most of it. We arrived in Dublin and with little delay were on the bus from the airport into the city. We had an easy trip to the hostel, although once again, we were too early to check in, but thankfully were able to drop off our bags until we could. A smaller group of us made our way to a pie shop in the Temple Bar district to get some much needed lunch. The steak and Guinness pie with gravy was delightful and as we finished the group slowly trickled away back to the hostel.

At the hostel we were able to check in, with some slight disappointment amongst the committee that we were on the third floor and sadly there was no elevator (by far the low point of the day, if not the trip) but we pushed on and walked up the seemingly eternal stairs. Once everyone had settled in, people set out to explore the city. Lydia, Dewi, Daan and myself found ourselves in a semi-corporate feeling pub being served Irish beer by a French waitress. More and more of the group came to the pub as they finished shopping and sightseeing for the day.



Eventually though, we received what I can only call the bum's rush out by our lovely French waitress, and we made our way to a restaurant with hefty discounts for students and good enough reviews. The first night in Dublin found most of our group sitting around a very long table eating "traditional" American fare of burgers and fries with pieces of faux-Americana bric a brac looming off the walls and in the corners, while a two meter tall replica of the Statue of Liberty presided over the entrance to the ill maintained toilets.

When we finished our mediocre but enjoyable meal we made our way out to the street where most of the group rushed adoringly into the soon closing Disney shop and spent a time ogling the overpriced mugs and sweaters, as well as plushies of anything from Grumpy to R2-D2 and The Hulk. Not long after we ventured back through the chilly Dublin night back to the hostel where the majority turned in early, after a day that for many started at 3am with an early train and ended in rather small bunk beds in Dublin. With regard to my own experience, I went to sleep, curled on my slightly too short bed, with excitement at the successes of the first day as well as for the remainder of the trip.



Overview of Wednesday by Marleen

The hostel awakes early in the morning with the hustle and bustle of a breakfast in the making, as well as the earthquakes caused by the trains driving right past the windows every quarter hour. Not that it matters, as we had woken up already from a serenade of alarm clocks that could be heard from every corner of the room. It is quarter to ten when we are all ready to depart to the first official meeting of the week, this time with the Dublin Christian Mission.

We arrive at an ordinary looking building that does not live up to its name, The Lighthouse, in any way. We are welcomed by a kind American fellow, who is not quite sure what to expect but ushers us to sit down and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee. What follows are one and a half hour of open interaction and genuine interest from both sides. We end our meeting with a tour around the “lighthouse” and promise to send them our research booklet when it is finished.



It is a beautiful day and there is still enough free time left to wander around Dublin a bit. We come across statues of Molly Malone, advertisements for public political debates, the birthplace of Thomas Moore, dozens of churches, a Christian science reading room and even a sticker of Groningen! The variety of places within the city intrigues us, modern and traditional, touristy and local, the only thing these places have in common is that no one waits for the traffic lights. Luckily the traffic lights don't stop us from arriving at our two o'clock meeting with Amnesty just in time.

The difference between Amnesty International and the Christian Mission is astonishing: with their PowerPoint presentation and interactive exercises they are fully prepared for our visit. We spend two hours around the table discussing the history of Amnesty in Ireland and their approach to tackling the difficult dilemmas that are inherent to topics such as abortion rights. We end the day with a beautiful sunset and some of the best cocktails and pizzas we have ever had in a very fancy hipster bar.

Dublin Christian Mission by Joëlle

Before our trip to Dublin, our group which consisted of Luna, Ilse and I got the instructions to prepare questions for the Dublin Christian Mission. Let me first introduce to you what the Dublin Christian Mission exactly is and what it does for the city.

The goal of Dublin Christian Mission is to meet the psychical and spiritual needs of the Dublin community. The Mission seeks to work in neighborhoods with high rates of drug abuse, poverty, broken homes, abuse, teenage pregnancy and homelessness. The Mission believes these groups of people still have a lot of potential and their hope is to help them find freedom and healing in the name of God. Even though they told us that they originally are a Christian organization, they do not subscribe to a specific denomination. Their goal is to work with those, churches and individuals, who share the same views. Before entering the building of the Dublin Christian Mission, I had some prejudices. I felt like the missionaries would try to convince us that God is the only one who can help, making me feel like they would force their religion upon us as a group. When leaving the Dublin Christian Mission this was my idea anymore.

Our guide explained to us that The Light House located on Pearse street, is open four days a week to feed the homeless and poor community in Dublin. Everyday the homeless are provided with free, hot and fresh, meals. The guide explained that the most important part of these days is not only the feeding, but also the genuine connection between the volunteers and those who need relationships and conversations. He explained that their goal is to meet practical needs and to build a community to reach people spiritually. Therefore, the Light House has an open prayer room available on Tuesdays and Thursdays for anybody interested. On the Saturdays, the Light House provide people with donations of personal items, sleeping bags, clothes and so on.

Even though the Light House consists of genuinely nice people who want to help, the ideas regarding our topic abortion in Ireland did not necessarily surprise our group. Dublin Christian Mission is a community of people devoted to spreading the love of Christ to everyone. However, abortion is not completely accepted in this community. The guide explained that with his religious background, it would be impossible to fully stand behind allowing abortion. He, and more with him, see the origins of children as the work of God and therefore something that cannot be touched by human hands. The guide did tell us that the Light House would never judge a person with such a past.

What stood out for me during the trip was how much religion is still rooted in the Irish culture. I could not have imagined that it was still so alive in a community. When visiting the Dublin Christian Mission I, again, recognized the good parts of religion and how it can motivate people to help others.



Dublin Christian Mission by Luna

‘The vote is done, now what?’

The repeal of the 8th amendment has been voted in in 2018, but has been an ongoing battle in Ireland ever since it was put into the constitution. The 8th made it so that the life of the unborn baby, and that of the mother were equally valued. Making abortion illegal in Ireland. Since Ireland is a Republic, a change in the constitution has to be voted on by the majority. This happened in 2018, making abortion a possibility. In relation to this we went to different Christian and humanitarian organizations. One of these the lighthouse;

The lighthouse is the second oldest city mission in Dublin. Part of an Anglican Irish movement that is rather small in comparison to the rest of Europe. The building itself is rather inconspicuous and located in the center of Dublin. The interior is rather sober, but is contrasted by colorful paintings on the walls, most of which contain quotes from the gospel.

The main mission of the lighthouse, however, is not necessarily to evangelize but to connect into people's lives. As Jesus has many individual encounters, so does the lighthouse aim to create a more personal connection with the people that come there. In a place where church attendance is declining the church also has to come to society instead of the other way around. Although the lighthouse primarily focuses on homeless work, the other location also does youth work. In this way the lighthouse aims to still be present in public life.

The guy that welcomed us to the lighthouse, who has been working there for a number of years, was happy to inform us on the work they had been doing. He laid great influence on the individual connection. Since working with the homeless can be quite hard, as you deal with rough situations, heartbreaking stories and addiction, he got his strength out of the small differences that he could make in these individuals' lives.

Although he did not agree with the appeal of the 8th, he also tried to withhold judgement. The appeal had already succeeded, so he saw no use in complaining about it. The Christian mission according to him, centered around helping people, not ‘fixing’ government issues. ...question: ‘The vote is done, now what?’ With this question he also criticized other pro-life Christians. Cause if they are against abortion, what type of Christian organizations are there that help women that are pregnant? He believed that even though he might be against abortion, it was legal now, so deal with it basically. For him the question was how to live as a Christian, in a society that may have laws that are in stride with your religious convictions. Even though he himself was not about to open a Christian center for pregnant women, he did put emphasis on the lack of help for women in these particular situations from the Christian society.

The honesty of his personal opinion on this particular subject, although being vastly different from mine, gave me a new perspective on evangelicals. Even though our convictions on abortion will never be the same, his perspective was also refreshing. Showing that someone can disagree with something without condemning it.



Dublin Christian Mission by Ilse

We visited the Dublin Christian mission on a sunny morning. To be honest, I had no idea what to expect from our visit, which meant that I tried to enter as neutral as possible. We got a warm welcome to the Lighthouse. There were already some volunteers busy with the preparation while we entered.

In my opinion, the story that was told was quite beautiful, The Christian Mission provides all different kinds of services to help people in need. It became clear that it was not specifically about spreading the Christian faith, but about looking to what a particular individual needs. One of the main issues in Dublin is homelessness, which is one of the main focuses of the Christian Mission. Still, the volunteers at the Mission have knowledge about all sorts of different resources that can help with other issues. In some instances, the Christian faith can also serve to help the people coming to the lighthouse.

The individual and connecting approach of the Christian Mission also became clear when we asked about their position towards the abortion and gay marriage referenda in Ireland. The volunteers tried to focus more on individuals than on nationwide debates about faith. Our host mentioned that even within the Christian community of Dublin, there was a large variety of opinions.

There was talk about a different approach towards religion and church. The authority of the Catholic church diminished over the years, which had an influence on the Irish nation. There is a possibility to represent the gospels in a time where there is no overarching church which serves as an authority. The Christian Mission saw this as a duty to go to the people, since the people are not going to church. The success of the Mission also attracted the attention of churches, which indicates that the personal approach is indeed something that works in contemporary Dublin.

The visit to the Christian Mission touches upon many different aspects that we encounter in Religious Studies. It especially reminded me of the notion of secularization. The diminished authority of the Catholic Church might raise the idea that religion is disappearing from Irish society. However, when looking at this on a large scale, one can miss the smaller religious initiatives like the Christian Mission. It seems that there is an individualization going on rather than a complete disappearance of religion. As scholars of religion, it is important for us to keep this in mind. If we want to capture the religious picture of a certain city or country, we need to have a broad perspective to make sure that we do not neglect particular aspects.

The combination of the different institutions that we visited created an interesting overview of Dublin and Ireland for me. Even though the institutions had very different points of view, they were all evidently Irish. The major aspects, like the referenda and the Catholic Church, had touched all the different people that we spoke to. This clearly shows that there are many factors besides religion which bind people together.

The visit to the Dublin Christian Mission was more fruitful than I expected beforehand. It showed the behavior and initiatives of individuals based on their religion, which gave a unique insight. This visit told me way more about the religious nature of Dublin than a visit to a large cathedral. Still, it should be said that this was probably also due to our open-minded host, who was willing to answer our critical questions and was open to discussing some of the issues that the Mission had to deal with. The visible passion was one of the main reasons why the conversation was so useful and valuable.



Amnesty International by Mara

Where are lots of traffic lights, but none of them seem to have the authority to make pedestrians stop? Exactly, Dublin. Okay, I need to admit that those lights take ages to turn green, so that does explain why no one waits for them, but it was still quite a shocker when I came to Dublin for the first time.

We also met quite a lot of traffic lights on our way to Amnesty International. When we arrived, a representative of Amnesty took us to a conference room, in which she started explaining the Irish law with regard to abortion and same sex marriage laws. We already knew most of this, but she added a very interesting factor: Amnesty's role in all of this. Amnesty is an organisation that fights for human rights, which of course is a subjective matter, but in Amnesty's vision, human rights include the right to have an abortion or the right to marry a person that you love, regardless of both your genders.

What I thought was really interesting, was the use of ads and merchandise that Amnesty uses for such matters. There were ads that emphasized the importance of family in Ireland, which made room for same sex marriage in a largely Catholic society. Also, buttons were made with the Irish words for "It is my wish" [that same sex marriage is allowed]. Funnily enough, in Irish, there is no literal translation for "yes" or "no", which I found almost more interesting than Amnesty itself. ;)

Furthermore, I'd like to say something about Dublin and Ireland itself. At the Irish Bible Institute, we were told that the Netherlands has four times the population as Ireland, despite Ireland being geographically twice the size of the Netherlands. This could also be noticed when walking through Dublin. It was not nearly as crowded as it was in Amsterdam, though we should not forget that some COVID-19 restrictions and cancellations were already taking place. Moreover, Dublin wasn't that big. It was just small enough for us to walk everywhere and after a week, we did not need Google Maps at all anymore.

Something that surprised me, was the catholic merchandise that was available in everyday places, such as the grocery store. In many shops there were birthday card stands, and there were also one or two filled with 'communion' cards. This would not be the case in the Netherlands, at all. I think this could be connected quite well to the phenomenon of 'cultural Catholic', which is a label that some Irish people use to show that they have Catholic values, but don't go to church (regularly).

Though it was small, I would recommend Dublin. If you go there, I would suggest that you watch some Ed Sheeran video clips afterwards, where you'll recognize Grafton Street, as well as the Temple Bar.



Amnesty International by Mariska

We had all gathered in front of Amnesty's office, located in a little alley not even 100m away from the start of the famous Temple Bar street. Here we were greeted by a representative of Amnesty, a woman who told us she had recently graduated from university herself. While she was discussing the campaign, she mentioned that one important aspect of it was to engage in conversations about the topic of abortion and the 8th amendment. She told us that she herself had started the conversation with her grandmother, an older, Catholic woman, and how she feared that her grandmother would vote in favour of keeping the amendment as it was. However, when asked what her grandma was planning to vote in the referendum, she replied: 'in my life, I have had 14 children. Do you really think I would vote no?'¹.

This little anecdote stuck with me when we left, and I started wondering: why did this grandmother's reply surprise me? In the brief moments that I was 'introduced' to this woman, I had painted a picture of her in my mind. She was older and Catholic, so I figured she would probably vote against the legalization of abortions. However, in this quick assessment, it turned out I was a bit too quick, and forgot about the intersectionality of people.

What is intersectionality, you might wonder? As our trusted friend Wikipedia writes: 'intersectionality is a theoretical framework for understanding how aspects of one's social and political identities (gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, etc.) might combine to create unique modes of discrimination.'² In other words: it acknowledges that people's identities are multifarious, which influences the way people experience life (e.g. in the challenges they have to face).

While I had momentarily forgotten about this, Amnesty's campaign did not. Besides conversation-workshops they provided for activists, they organized public events and set up a campaign on social media. Within this media campaign they focused on individual stories of people who have encountered the real-life consequences of the 8th amendment. These women were victims of sexual abuse, women whose health is threatened by the pregnancy, but also women who very much wanted a baby but were carrying an unviable foetus.³ One story in particular was even about a man, and how he experienced the consequences of him and his wife having to travel abroad to abort a foetus with a defect that would not allow it to live once born.

There is one short video that Amnesty has created that I would also like to briefly mention. Titled 'The Unusual Suspects', this video shows 6 different women of different ages

¹ It has been a while and I forgot to write this down when I heard it, so this is not verbatim, but this was the general gist of the statement.

² Please don't throw me out of the faculty for quoting Wikipedia.

³ Regarding the terminology: Amnesty writes that they 'use a mix of terms: 'women and girls', 'women', 'pregnant people', or 'women, girls and all pregnant people'. This recognises that the majority of those who need access to abortion services are women and girls. It also recognises that not everyone who requires access to abortion services identifies as female.'

and ethnicities, wearing various types of professional clothing (e.g. a police officer, nurse and a judge). While these women are shown, a voice-over speaks: “she is not a criminal, but in Ireland they all would be. If any of them had an abortion, they would be committing a crime and face up to 14 years in jail”.

What makes these campaigns intersectional? The way I interpret it, they both acknowledge how the 8th amendment affects people in many different ways; there is not one abortion to rule them all; they are individual stories influenced by many different factors in these people’s lives. Moreover, these campaigns question the societal schema of who gets abortions and why: it addresses the differences between people, while simultaneously showing how the 8th amendment could negatively impact all people, not just one stereotypical group of women (if such a group were to exist in the first place).

Let’s return and apply this to the grandmother’s story. Had I seen Amnesty’s campaign beforehand, I might have been reminded that the 8th amendment could have affected her as well, despite being a Catholic and from an older generation. Instead, I would have realized that being those things did not make her immune to any issues she might have experienced as, for example, a woman: these various identities do not exclude each other. Rather, they make reality more layered, more complicated, and – as a researcher – more interesting.



Overview of Thursday by Marleen

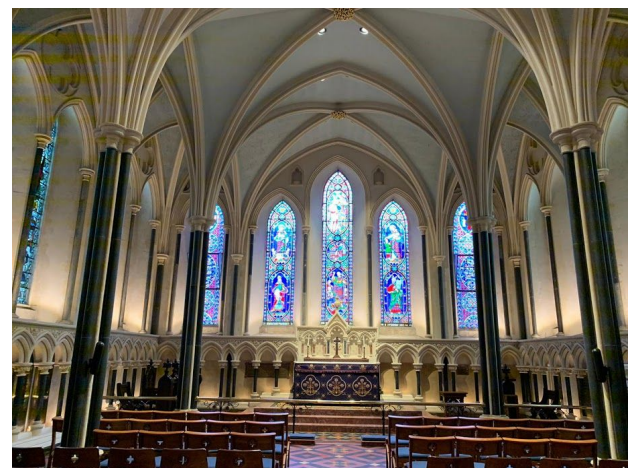
Today we have the morning off but because most of us went to bed early the night before we are up early and ready to explore! Mariska already had plans to go to the grounds of Dublin castle, and since we all liked the idea of seeing the castle up close we decided to join her. We arrive just when the building opens its doors and are mind blown by what we find inside. Each room we walk through is more wonderful than the one before. With the large crown pendants, thick red carpets, gigantic paintings, golden mirrors and even the throne of one of the Elizabeths: nothing is missing in this palace. However, this place is nothing compared to the other jewel we accidentally stumble across: the Chester Beatty Library. As faithful Religious Studies students our hearts are overwhelmed by the Biblical Papyri, old Qur'an scrolls, miniature paintings, statues, triptychs, and books of the Eastern religious traditions. Suddenly there were real life examples that we could observe with our very own eyes of all we had learned during Sacred Image, Rituals, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, and many more of the subjects. With way too little time to marvel about the true treasures we find we have to hurry to our next destination: Dublin's famous St. Patrick's Cathedral.

At St. Patrick's Cathedral, we can roam around the place freely, with information boards and video messages scattered around the place to teach us something about the history and significance of the place. We learn about the Butler's and Fitzgerald's who made peace through the Door of Reconciliation, the massive Boyle family monument and about the visit of our very own William of Orange. Leaving the rich history and tradition that is kept alive in the Cathedral behind we move on to the next stop, a group lunch at Dolce Sicily, a top rated Italian cafe. We climb up an excessive amount of stairs to get to a smaller dining room with a nice view out over the city and enjoy a delightful lunch.

Shortly after we finish lunch, we're off to the next treasure of Dublin: the Trinity College Library, and of course the 'Long Room' in particular. Some of us who thought about studying in Dublin observe the place



with heartaches, our own faculty building is wonderful, but this place is on a completely different level. We were all blown away by the Harry Potter style 'Long Room', with books reaching up to the ceiling, tiny ladders that could bring you to the top shelves and small hide out places where all of us could imagine ourselves reading books for hours and hours straight. Oh how we wished we had such a library in our student houses! We continue to entertain ourselves with visiting fancy expensive shops, spreading Gerardus stickers around the city and eating massive donuts. We finished the day at Leo Burdock's in the Temple Bar area, getting large portions of fish and chips which were enjoyed by all, before making the trip back to the hostel. Another great day in Dublin!



Overview of Friday by Austin

I awoke later than intended on Friday morning, still tired from the ever growing fatigue of being on a group trip, slightly exacerbated by being part of the committee responsible for everyone. After I had showered and fully woken up, the provided breakfast had long since shut down so Daan, Lydia, Dewi, Inge and I ventured out to the local convenience store. I had the disappointing breakfast of two slightly stale doughnuts, nothing close to the delicious beauty of the fried fish many of us had gotten the night before.

After a short time back at the hostel eating we made the five minute walk to the Irish Bible Institute; a small, nondenominational bible school located on the third floor of a mixed use building, so hardly recognizable from the street that we walked right past it without realizing. We walked in to the familiar setting of a lecture room and learned of Ireland's history, specifically in regard to religion and its impact on the lawmaking, as well as a slightly more religiously based talk about the law changes regarding abortion and gay marriage.

After the Irish Bible Institute, we had an hour and a half before we all were to meet up again at St Michan's Church, one of the oldest churches in Ireland, originally having been built in 1095. On the walk to St Michan's, the group I was with stopped at a small Italian cafe for coffees and cannoli, increasing the multicultural experience of the trip even more. After some lovely coffees we proceeded towards the church, walking past Ireland's supreme court. The barricades, barbed wire, and heavy security presence all serving as reminders of the country's long and bloody fight for independence.

Arriving at the church there had been some slight misunderstanding about the location, and as a result, people slowly trickled in. The main attraction of St Michan's is the crypts with their mummies, shown on a tour done by an old Irish man whose erratic and varied hand movements, along with his skilled story telling left all of us impressed, and ever so slightly unnerved. After climbing out of the crypt (see photo), everyone split up to go their own way for the afternoon. After wandering for a while a group of five of us found ourselves at the oldest pub in Dublin, dating back to 1198, so only about a hundred years younger than the church we had just been in. Unlike the church though, this pub was filled with tourists, both Irish and foreign, and had a remarkable sprawl with a large outdoor area, multiple rooms and even more hidden rooms that could be rented out for

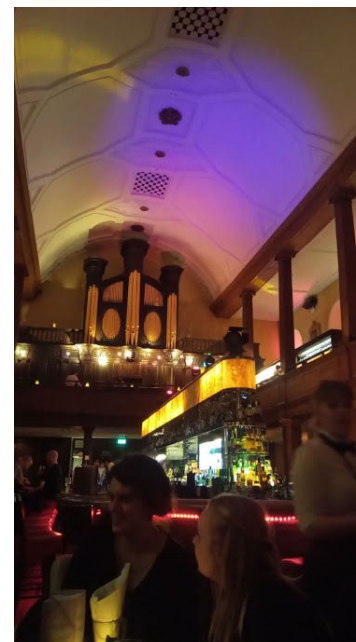


events. We sat in the dwindling afternoon sun enjoying a Guinness although a certain individual chose to go for an imported “specialty” rather than a local beer, or even what the author would consider to qualify as beer (see photo below on right).



Coming out of the pub with a level of sobriety that can be expected from nearly 10 euro pints we wandered through the Temple Bar looking for somewhere to get an early dinner, eventually finding ourselves back at the pie shop we had come to on our first day in Dublin. Branching out from the prior visit, I was pleasantly surprised by an even better chicken, leek and cheddar pie, accompanied by gravy and potatoes that I can say were good although slightly more cohesive than I would normally expect from mashed potatoes.

We finished dinner and returned to the hostel where people napped or otherwise rested before walking to our final full group activity before heading home, food and drinks at The Church, a former church that has been turned into a beautiful cafe/bar. The food we had ordered, worrying we wouldn't have enough, turned out to be much more than we needed, almost shamefully so, but it was still an enjoyable evening with good food and expensive but well made cocktails, the common favorite being the “Peachy Blinder.” After a while, the majority of the group had gone back to the hostel to get an early bed time while a group of us decided to venture out into the nightlife of Dublin. After a walk through the city, the six of us made it to The George, a popular, LGBT nightclub, only to be discouraged by the eight euro cover charge, as coming from Groningen, who wants to pay a cover to go in and spend more on drinks?? We continued walking, reaching Tramline, another large, well known night club near Trinity University. The club was loud, crowded and expensive, as they tend to be, but the group of us that went really enjoyed it, and made it home by a not too unreasonable hour (thanks in part to the forced closing times).



Irish Bible Institute by Annelien

In the beginning of April this year, I had the opportunity to go to Dublin. I had never been to Great Britain or Ireland, so I was genuinely grateful I was able to go now. I was interested in the Irish culture, language, and landscape. The main purpose of our trip was to research the impact the new legislations on Equal Marriage and Abortion have on the people in the Republic of Ireland. In relation to Abortion, the issue was about the refutation of the 8th Amendment. With the 8th Amendment, adopted in 1983, abortion was made illegal, leading to the women who could afford it going to England where abortions had been fully legalized. By visiting the Light House, the Irish Bible Institute, and Amnesty International in Dublin, we researched how these institutions relate to these laws and how these laws have impacted people in Ireland in general.

During this trip I have learned interesting things. I have learned the history of the English subjugation of Ireland that many Irish people have emigrated and settled across the world over the past centuries. Someone who worked at The Irish Emigration Museum in Dublin even told us that only a few people in Ireland can actually speak Irish. In regard to the abortion and equal marriage laws, I have learned that these issues are extremely complex, since these are not only political and religious issues, but can also be extremely emotional. In these issues, the aim is to understand both sides of the issues and to try to find out why people are for or against these laws. By keeping in mind the complexity and sensitivity of these issues, it is valuable to engage in conversations with both positions to paint a more accurate picture of the situation at hand.

The institution I was assigned to focus on during this trip was the Irish Bible Institute. To be honest, I did not know much about this institution beforehand, only that it was a university that was grounded on the Bible and taught theological subjects. When visiting the Irish Bible Institute, we were warmly welcomed by a hospitable professor of this university. In her engaging talk, she spoke about the history of Ireland, the political tensions between Ireland and England, and the fact that Ireland used to be against same sex marriage and abortion given its Roman Catholic roots and Christian ethos. However, she explained that the legalization of abortion and the Equal Marriage Referendum could happen since Ireland had shifted from a mono-cultural and religious society to a multi-cultural and multi-religious society which led people to question the credibility of the Catholic church in Ireland.

As the professor explained, the Irish Bible Institute has a Christian ethos. Most students at this university share this ethos and have different Christian backgrounds, from Baptist and Pentecostal to Roman Catholic. During the referenda on these issues, the students at this university were in a pickle about how to view these issues with regards to their Christian beliefs. The university teaches its students about the Biblical ethos. However, as the professor explained, under special circumstances such as these, people must choose. Even though the Irish Bible

Institute claims to be against the legalization of abortion, since its generally accepted belief is that all life is sacred, students are not told what to think about these issues. Instead, they are stimulated to think for themselves and to ask critical questions. In courses like secularity, society, and sociology, students are challenged to deal with different perspectives.

Besides studying the Irish Bible Institute and the equal marriage and abortion laws, we also visited museums, like The Irish Emigration Museum and the Chester Beatty Library. As mentioned, the first museum had an exhibition about the emigration waves of people from Ireland to other parts of the world and dealt with the reasons behind it. Religion was also shown to be an important part of the reason people emigrated, especially because of the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants, and the suppression of Catholics by the Protestant British. The second museum showed many religious scriptures and beautiful old books. This museum, with a focus on cultural heritage, was especially interesting for us as students who study religion. Furthermore, we visited the imposing Saint Patrick's Cathedral and Trinity Library, and the slightly terrifying yet impressive catacombs at St. Michan's. On the final day of our wonderful trip, we took a walk along the beautiful coast of Ireland, near the small town Howth to be exact. For me, this was the highlight of the whole trip, because I got to see the beautiful nature of Ireland. This moment was a perfect way to reflect upon the many impressions I had gained and the interesting stories I had the privilege of hearing, in a peaceful environment.



Irish Bible Institute by Ellen

Just before the corona craziness started and we were forced to work and follow classes from home, I had the amazing opportunity to go to Dublin for five days. I have never been in Ireland before this trip which made me really excited to explore a new city. The trip was focused on the impact of the legalisation of abortion and same-sex marriage in the Republic of Ireland. During the trip we visited, among others, the Light House, the Irish Bible Institute and Amnesty International to research the views of different institutions on the change of the laws while also focussing on the impact of the change on citizens.

In order to ask interesting and suitable questions at the institutions, we were all assigned to one of the institutions which we had to research before the trip. I was assigned to the 'Irish Bible Institute' together with Annelien and Eva. A quick google search teaches me that the 'Irish Bible Institute' is a university focused on the training of Christian preachers. They offer theological courses but also concentrate on the leadership position that the preacher will have. To be completely honest, I was a little scared to visit this institution. Since I have a strong opinion on the topics of same-sex marriage and abortion I was anxious these might clash with the views of the 'Irish Bible Institute' which could lead to emotional reactions. Luckily, this did not happen and I learned a lot about the institute and its views and opinions.

When we arrived at the "Irish Bible Institute", we were welcomed with open arms. An enthusiastic professor was eager to tell us about the history of the Republic of Ireland and its struggle with England. While the preparatory lecture by professor McIvor at the faculty taught us a lot about these topics, it became even more clear during this talk that the impact of the events was great. Moreover, the professor explained that the Catholic roots of Ireland were the main reason for the objection against legalising abortion and same-sex marriage. However, she argued, the legalisation via referendum was possible because Ireland changed from a strongly religious and mono-cultural nation to one that is multicultural and more secular.

The 'Irish Bible Institute' has a Christian and Biblical ethos. For this reason, the institution considers all life sacred and is thus opposed to abortion. But, the professor states, under special circumstances people have to choose for themselves. Moreover, the institute does not tell people what to think. Rather they try to teach different opinions and perspectives and let the students choose for themselves. Some of the students, all of whom have Christian backgrounds, found it really difficult to vote in the referendums. When students asked what they should vote for, the professor would tell them that they cannot tell them what to do. Personally, I think that this is a great way for dealing with different views and opinions. The students had the chance to think critically, form their own opinion and vote on what they thought was the best option.

Visiting the 'Irish Bible Institute' taught me more about the Irish history, their education programmes and the view they have on abortion laws. Personally, I do not agree with the view of the institute but I really appreciated the way the institute approached and informed the students about this topic. The change to a multi-cultural and more secular society made the referendum possible and the outcome has an enormous impact on women's right in the Republic of Ireland. Overall, this trip has taught me a lot about Ireland in general. It was an amazing opportunity to explore the city, learn about the interesting research topics and hike at the beautiful coast which I'm still grateful for. Once we are allowed to travel again, I will definitely visit Dublin again!



Irish Bible Institute by Eva

For the Dublin trip I was assigned to look into the Irish Bible Institute. Before I visited the institute, I was not sure what to expect as the topic we were investigating could potentially be sensitive or difficult to discuss for such an institute. However, this was not really the case. The woman that was giving us the 'lecture' was very funny and took on the topic without any visible problems. The lecture was based on some of the background information of Ireland before the referendum, and the changes that she had seen during and after. Later, she explained the difficulties they went through during the referendum with their students as an institute. Her students were wondering what they should choose regarding the referendum and asked the advice of the institute. She told us that they, as an institution, told their students what they thought was the right decision, especially regarding the religious context, but that students should always make their own decision. They gave advice to the students but did not want to influence them too much. She told us that the referendum raised question with the students and they the institute helped them as much as they could. Their approach regarding to the referendum was very clear, and left the choices open for their students. I believe this was a good approach, as everyone should choose this topic for themselves as it is very personal. Regarding the lecture, it was interesting to see the personal approach she took as she also told some personal stories regarding the topic. This was very interesting and helped me to understand the situation in Ireland better. Besides the Irish Bible Institute, two other institutes were visited, and all these three visits were very surprising and really interesting. Personally, I liked Amnesty International and the Irish Bible Institute the most. It was very interesting to get to know what they all stand for, and how they project this to their 'followers' and students.

Besides visiting the three institutes, there were many other activities during the trip. One of the activities included a visit to Trinity Library which I found very impressive. Another highlight of the trip was the visit to the St. Michan's Church and the crypts. It was interesting to hear the stories about the crypts, especially since our guide was very committed which made this activity more amusing than I expected at first. The trip was very entertaining, and I learnt many new things which I never investigated before. For me it was easy to 'engage' in the trip as the topic is something that I am really interested in. Next to the scheduled activities, there were numerous other museums to be visited which were all very amusing. Overall, the trip was very enjoyable and also allowed to become closer to some people in the faculty that I was not close with before the trip. I am satisfied with the trip and I had a great time in Dublin!

Overview of Saturday by Marleen

And so the unavoidable day was finally there, surprisingly sudden and way too fast, the last day of our trip in Dublin. Even though some of us partied hard the night before, we got out of bed early to go sightseeing one last time before it was time to go home. This time we decided to leave the city centre for what it was and venture into Ireland's countryside. After almost missing our bus we were lucky to claim the best seats: upstairs right behind the windscreen. We were full of energy and excited to cast our eyes upon the country beyond Dublin for the first time... until we found out the bus stopped every twenty meters for another bus stop. Our frustration increased with every time the bus decelerated, and by the time we could finally see the beautiful hills and seashore of Ireland we were already one hour further in time. When we finally arrived at our destination we were welcomed by a cold but refreshing wind. After some deliberation we decided to venture on the 'cliff path loop' and started following the green arrows. It was the right choice. A sometimes easy, sometimes not so easy, walkable path led us up through the hills, along bright yellow flowers until finally we could see the straight cliffs crashing into a beautifully calm ocean that stretched as far as the eye could see. We enjoyed our lunch on a bench that was marked by the words "Find God in all things" that fitted very well with the angelic-like environment. Even though we could have spent much longer in that wholesome place, we had to catch our bus to the airport. And thus we waved the sea goodbye and embarked on a trip back to the hostel. Another bus, another two hundred stops we thought, but this time we found ourselves a Max Verstappen bus that drove as fast as the speed limit allowed – right through tree branches and past bus stops. No need to say that we were back much faster!

Our trip to the airport and the flight back to Amsterdam went smoothly and without any delay, and thus it was 21:30 when we waved each other goodbye in the train station at Schiphol: all exhausted but our heads filled with wonderful memories of the trip.





