



Muskegon Irish American Society

# NEWS



Spring 2024

## Annual Spring Event

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

*Celebrating a Century of Ireland and U.S. Relations*

With Vice-Consul Pádraig Manning



Pádraig Manning, Vice Consul and Deputy Head of Mission at the Consulate General of Ireland, Chicago, will be our guest speaker. His topic will be *Celebrating a Century of Ireland and U.S. Relations*.

Pádraig first joined the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs in 2019, working in the Embassy of Ireland in London. He then worked in the Irish Department of Education, before returning to the Department of Foreign Affairs to take up the role of Third Secretary in 2021.

In Dublin, Pádraig was assigned to the Ireland, UK, and Americas Division, where he worked on the Irish Government's response to Brexit, North South cooperation, and the Shared Island Initiative. Before joining the civil service, Pádraig worked in the European headquarters of an American e-commerce company in Cork. He holds a BA from the University College Cork and an MSc from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

We are very fortunate to have him join us for our annual Irish heritage dinner. You do not want to miss it!

**WHAT:** Muskegon Irish American Society Annual Event - Guest Speaker, Pádraig Manning

**WHERE:** Knights of Columbus, 2915 Fairfield St. Norton Shores, MI 49441

**WHEN:** Tuesday, May 7, 2024

Social Hour: 5:30 pm

Dinner: 6:00 pm

**COST:** \$20 per person, plus a cash bar (cash only, **no** credit cards)

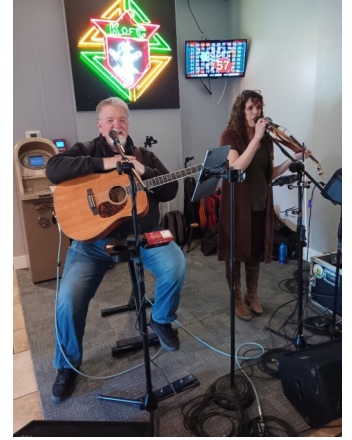
**RESERVATIONS REQUIRED:** Reservations are required by **May 1st** to Kathleen Marek (231) 759-7344

(If no answer, PLEASE leave a message!)





**Pub Party:** Sunday, February 4th. Attended by close to 80 members and guests



**2024 St. Patrick's Day Parade:** Saturday, March 16th in downtown Muskegon







## 51st Annual Flag-Raising & Luncheon

A great event was held on St. Patrick's Day with the 51st Annual Flag-Raising! Hosted by Max McKee at the Muskegon Mart Dock, members and guests learned about the *Strength and Perseverance of the Irish* in a touching essay written by Kathleen Marek. Following an explanation of the Irish flag, attendees were piped outside by Duncan Allen to view the raising of the flag. Back inside, guests raised a glass as Bruce Duff offered a farewell toast! A wonderful lunch was thoroughly enjoyed by all at the Knights of Columbus. It was a grand day to be Irish!







## Who was St. Brigid and why is she inspiring many 1,500 years after her death?

Devotees of St. Brigid are commemorating the 1,500th anniversary of her death on Thursday, the feast day of the so-called matron saint of Ireland, who's been gaining a modern following. Many of the festivities are taking place in and around the town of Kildare, where Brigid founded a prestigious abbey and inspired a host of colorful, miracle-filled legends. Other commemorations are taking place across Ireland and around the world. In a sense, Brigid is on a roll. The commemorations come a year after Ireland began honoring her with an annual public holiday — the first Irish woman to be recognized with one. The first major commemoration took place Sunday with the return of a relic associated with Brigid, about a millennium after her remains were removed from Kildare for safekeeping. Thursday's events included light shows and artistic performances along with a call for a worldwide moment of silence, a "Pause for Peace," at noon local time.

While St. Patrick has long been the saint most identified with Ireland, Brigid has gained a growing following in the 21st century. Devotees draw inspiration from Brigid the saint — and from Brigid the ancient pagan goddess, whose name and attributes she shares — as emblematic of feminine spirituality and empowerment. This comes amid growing disenchantment with the patriarchal and historically dominant Catholic Church.

### WHO WAS BRIGID?

Brigid was the name of a prominent goddess worshipped by ancient pagan Celts — the namesake of the saint who lived in the fifth and sixth centuries. Brigid the goddess was associated with everything from poetry, healing and metal crafting to nature, fertility and fire. She was honored on the mid-winter holy day of Imbolc, still commemorated on Feb. 1, which also became St. Brigid's Day. (Imbolc marks the approximate midpoint between the winter solstice and spring equinox.)

St. Brigid's father is said to have been a ruler, her mother enslaved. Though Brigid's life story has been embellished by legends, she is believed to have been the abbess of a monastic settlement of men and women that became a center of arts and learning and that gave the town its name, Irish for "church of the oak." One legend says that when the local king agreed to give her only enough land for her monastery that could fit under her cloak, she miraculously spread it across the surrounding countryside. St. Brigid traveled, preached and healed. She's often depicted with images of fire and light and is associated with fertility, care for living things and peacemaking. According to another legend, Brigid gave her father's jeweled sword to a needy man for him to barter for food.

Brigid was believed to have been buried at her monastic church in Kildare. Around the ninth century, her remains were moved to the northern town of Downpatrick in hopes of avoiding the pillages of Vikings and others. That shrine was later destroyed by English troops during the Protestant Reformation. Various churches on the European continent claim to have relics of St. Brigid. This includes a bone fragment from Brigid's skull, which tradition says was brought to a church in Portugal by three Irish knights. A fragment of that relic was returned in the 1930s to Brigidine Sisters elsewhere in Ireland and is stored in a small metal reliquary, shaped like an oak tree, an image associated with Brigid. That's the relic that was returned to Kildare on Sunday.

### WHY IS BRIGID GAINING A 21ST-CENTURY FOLLOWING?

Brigid's moment is happening as many Irish are disillusioned with traditional Roman Catholicism and its patriarchal leadership amid a secularizing culture. Even many devout Catholics are dismayed over scandals including the cover-ups of sexual abuse. Whether devotees honor Brigid primarily as a saint, a goddess or some combination of both, they see Brigid as emblematic of feminine spirituality, environmental care and artistic creation. Brigid's Day is "an invitation to stop the pointless millennia old war of Christianity versus paganism" and see "the wisdom and beauty in both lineages," wrote Melanie Lynch, founder of Herstory, which campaigned in support of the new national holiday.

David Mongey, chair of Into Kildare, the local tourism board, said Brigid remains highly relevant.

"What amazes me is, 1,500 years later, she's still remembered with love in Kildare and Ireland," he said. "Her words, her wisdom and her actions mean more today than they ever did, when you think about how we treat our land ... how we treat each other and how we treat ourselves."

<https://apnews.com/article/st-brigid-1500-ireland-catholic-pagan-explain-a6a41566acca80033c3514f180d6443e>

## 2024 Dues

**Just a reminder...**your 2024 dues need to be paid as soon as possible! Our dues remain a bargain at \$25 per family, and are essential to support our club's programs and the newsletter.

Mail your check payable to "Muskegon Irish American Society" to:

Bruce Duff, 2973 Ridgeview St., Muskegon, MI 49445

