

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – Ordinations at close of  
Methodist World Conference**

## Image of the day



## Ordinations at close of Methodist World Conference



The closing worship service in Gothenburg of the conference included the ordination of 10 deacons and 20 pastors of the Uniting Church in Sweden, the reception of three pastors already

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ordained in other churches and the consecration of the Bishop-President and Vice-President of the Church. Quite an event!

## News

**ALL NATIONS FOOD FEST!  
SPIDERMAN!  
DAVID BRANAGH-CURRY!  
THE FLAMING UKES!  
BOUNCY CASTLES!  
CARL'S FITNESS TRAIL!  
AND MUCH MORE...**

## Greenisland Community Street Party



CHURCH OF THE HOLY NAME, GREENISLAND

**Put the date in your diary, tie a knot in your hankie, clear your sched... do NOT miss the Community Street Party on Saturday 31st August!**

“Help us celebrate Greenisland Parish's 70th birthday in style...”





## Introducing the Farmers' Choir Northern Ireland from Ballymena

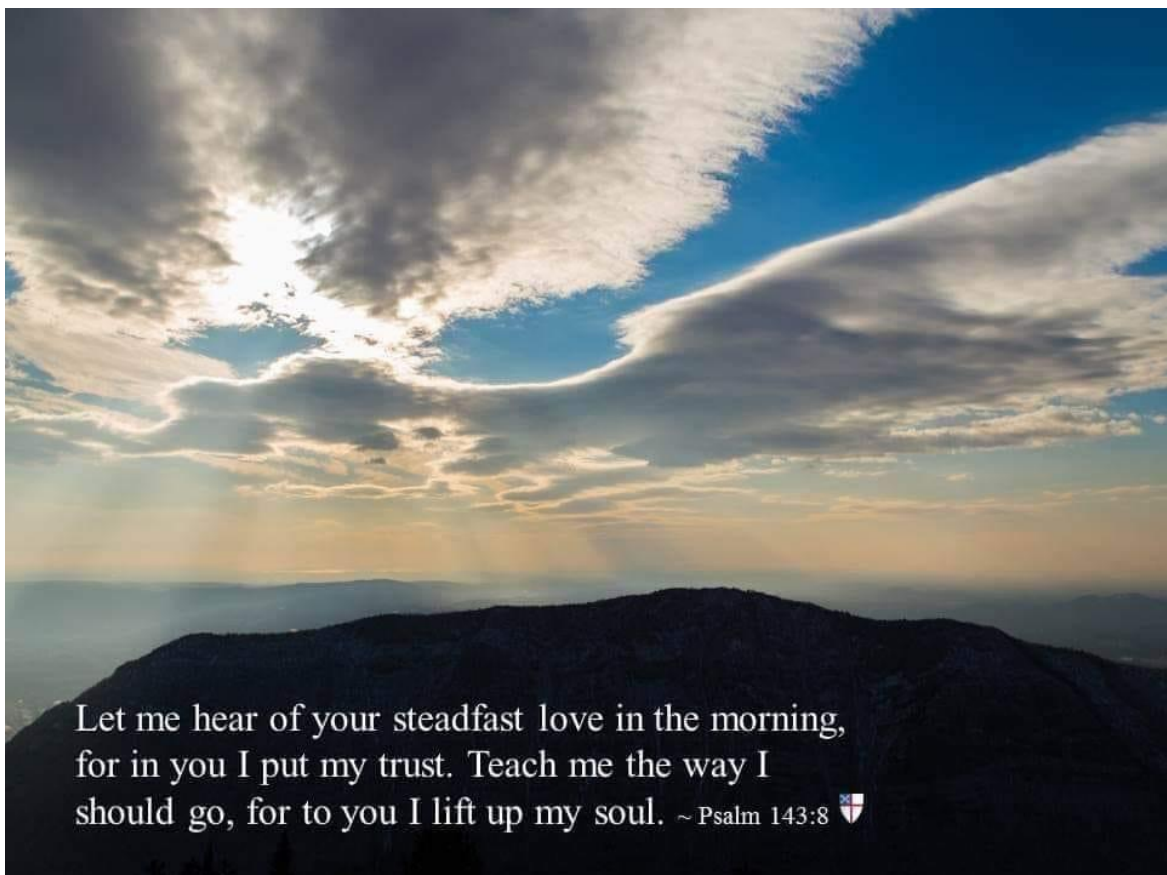
**The Farmers' Choir Northern Ireland was established to address rural isolation and offer a way for people living within rural areas to meet and socialise together.**


Over the years, the social outlets connected with the rural landscape have reduced drastically and the Farmers' Choir allows like-minded people to come together to enjoy singing. Through making music, the choir aims to get back to the values of togetherness and friendship which are vital in all our lives.

The choir consists of 45 members, who meet together in Ballymena fortnightly to sing a variety of songs from country to folk to gospel. The choir hosts two concerts annually, one



at Christmas and one in the Spring. Tickets for these events are highly sought after as the audience is guaranteed a



Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning,  
for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I  
should go, for to you I lift up my soul. ~ Psalm 143:8 



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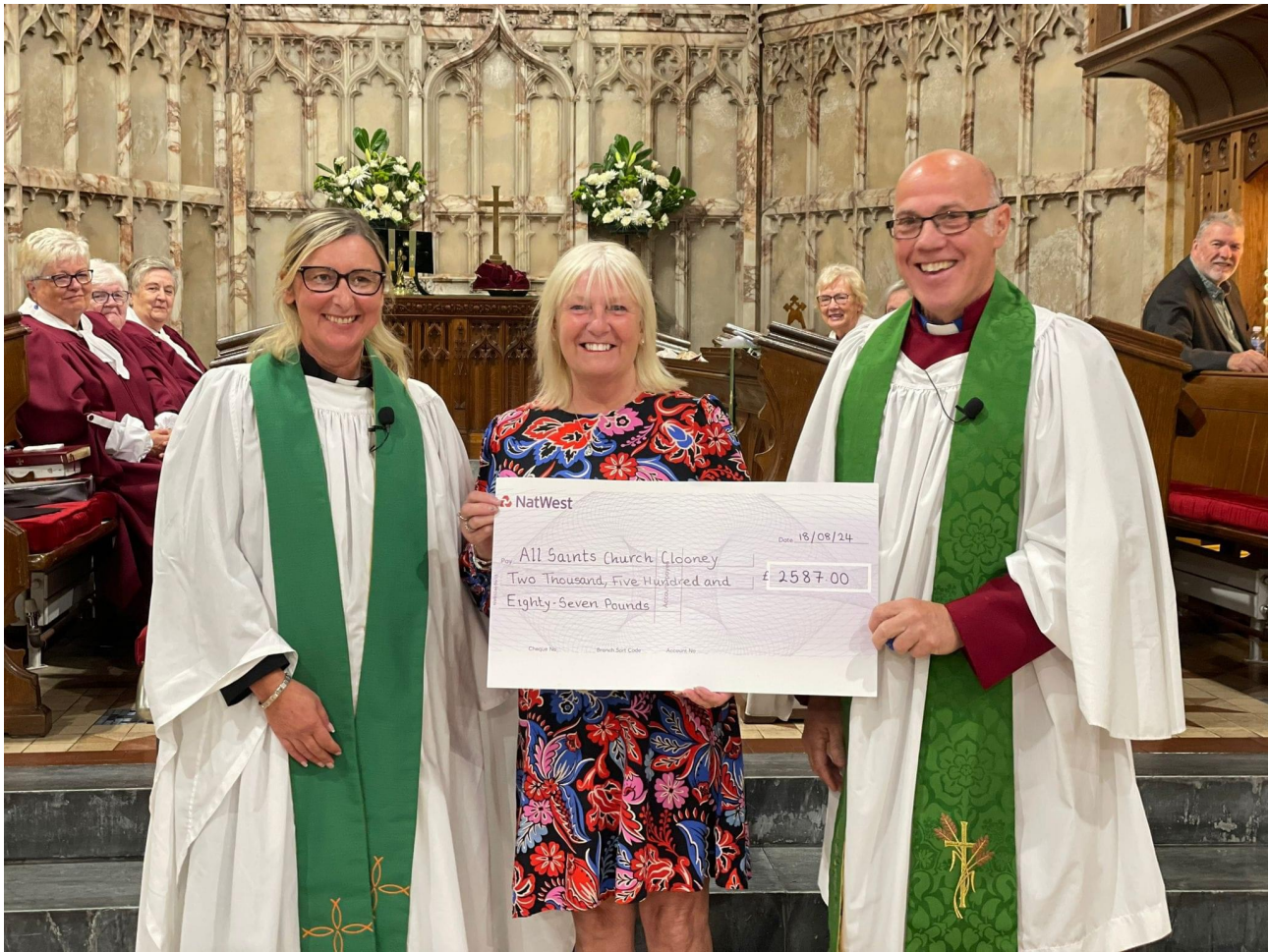
great night of music and entertainment.

Recently, the choir members have sung at many community events including the festival in Armagh this week and they are frequent contributors on BBC Radio Ulster's 'Farming Matters' programme.



## Skydiver Sylvia helps sort out Derry parish organ fund

Sylvia Cadden, who completed a Skydive in July, presented a cheque for £2587 to All Saints Clooney in Aid of the Organ Fund.



Sylvia said "I was overwhelmed by the generosity of the people. The money raised exceeded my greatest expectations. I want to sincerely thank everyone who supported me."

The parish response - "We at All Saints acknowledge that Sylvia is a very brave woman, jumping 10,000 feet and reaching speeds of 125mph. We thank her sincerely and await with anticipation to hear of her next brave endeavour".

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## 31st Charles Wood Festival of Music and Summer School comes to a close

**The Charles Wood Festival showcased an incredible lineup of sacred music and worship by the Charles Wood Singers under the direction of Artistic Director David Hill, Festival Organist Philip Scriven and Organ Scholar Tingshuo Yang.**

It began with a beautiful Morning Service broadcast on BBC



Radio Ulster, followed by a majestic Sung Mass featuring Mozart's Coronation Mass at St Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral. The day concluded with the Stanford 100 Festal Evensong, a fitting finale to this year's festival.



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The organisers said, “Thank you to all who attended, listened, and supported the Festival across all the events over the past week. We look forward to welcoming you again next year for more inspiring music and worship”.

## Cathedral Calls

### News Letter recalls challenge to Down Cathedral in 1953

#### Effect of age and weather impacting on Down Cathedral at Downpatrick (1953)

“On the site of the church founded by St Patrick in the fifth century at Downpatrick, stands the present Cathedral of the Holy Trinity. This cathedral is only 150 years old, having been rebuilt during the years 1790-1817, but in pillars and windows some of the work of as long ago as the twelfth century is retained. In its long history it has suffered as many as ten sacks, but there is still much of historical importance to be seen, and, of course, the legends linked with the site can never be erased by a mere conquest,” remarked the News Letter in 1953.

But sadly the cathedral, noted the News Letter, was in “grave danger” and that “once again the cathedral will suffer destruction, this time from the forces of nature”.

On a visit to the cathedral a News Letter reporter was shown the extent of the damage by the architect, Mr A F Lucy, FRIBA, who had been engaged by the Cathedral

Restoration Committee in connection with the work of restoration.

The News Letter continued: “With him he climbed the tower and inspected the roof. From, this position the full damage to the external fabric of the cathedral can be clearly seen. Two pinnacles on the north side have stones off the top; other pinnacles are off the plumb, and the top five stones need to be taken off and reset Much of the castellated coping is in a defective condition also.

“In the tower many of the stones need to be replaced, while the mullions and jambs of the windows have crumbled under the expansion brought about by the rusting of the iron window frames. These are particularly in need of attention as there is some danger of the windows falling in on the congregation.”



It added: “In the tower windows overlooking the main door, an attempt to save the situation was made in 1914 by a local builder, who erected a wooden beam to hold the mullion secure. This temporary reconstruction has held since



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then, and was praised by Mr Lucy as a piece of very competent 'first-aid'.

“The havoc wrought by woodworm in the trusses, purlins and joists of the roof can be seen. The rafters, while not in such a bad condition, are also in need of replacement or repair with steel plates, if only to halt the spread of the worm. In the church furniture there is little sign of woodworm, but some of the floor-boards in the north and south choir aisles have been weakened by this pernicious insect.”

In brief, the whole cathedral was in a bad state of repair and needs immediate attention. The fund established over a year previously, with a target of £20,000, had raised £9,900. The honorary secretaries and treasurers were Messrs. Samuel and Hugh Love, Market Street, Downpatrick.

The News Letter concluded: “Of the original settlement at Downpatrick little is known. However, there is some hope that in the near future sufficient material will have come to light to enable a reconstruction to be made of part of the history of this period. Excavations are now being carried out to the west of the cathedral, and traces have been found of at least two large settlements. No important finds are expected, however, for some weeks.”

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# Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

## In Praise of Brigit 524-2024

**The year 2024 marks the 1500th anniversary of the death of Brigit of Kildare, a figure who fascinates and inspires countless people to the present day.**

A one-day conference on Saturday 26th October from 9.45am-5pm at Glenstal Abbey will explore her legacy and that of other Women of God through archaeology, history and folklore. It also celebrates the memory of the great Glenstal Brigit scholar and Celticist, An tAthair Seán Ó Duinn OSB.

Talks include:

The Holy Helpers and the Handmaid: Aspects of Devotion to Female Saints in Late Medieval Ireland with Colmán Ó Clabaigh OSB

Brigit in Irish Popular Tradition: devotion, narrative, performance and belief with Professor Bairbre Ní Fhloinn  
Sean Ó Duinn OSB – In Retrospect with Luke Macnamara OSB

The Archaeology of Brigit with Dr Tracy Collins

St Brigit: forging a patron saint in medieval Ireland with Dr Liz Dawson



For more information and for bookings please contact [events@glenstal.com](mailto:events@glenstal.com) or telephone 061 621005.

Bangor Abbey, 7:30pm, Friday 23rd August, 2024  
Admission: FREE (a retiring collection will be taken)

# **Bangor Abbey Organ Recital**

*Orly Watson, Organist*

A programme of original works and transcriptions exploring the virtuoso organ tradition. Music by Bach, Callaerts, Franck, Sibelius, Widor, and others.



Orly Watson (Oxford University, Royal Academy of Music, Royal Irish Academy of Music) is well-known throughout the country as organist, pianist, composer, and accompanist. He has recently worked with Ulster Touring Opera and the Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble, and is official accompanist at Queen's. He has given organ recitals in many venues and performs an extremely broad repertoire with a particular focus on Romantic music.

## Places at Union Theological College

**Clearing places are now open for the BA (Hons) Theology programme for the Autumn 2024 semester**

Prerequisites are:

Three A-Levels (BBC or BBD with a B at AS) or equivalent

No subject requirement

A minimum of five GCSE passes at grade C/4 or better (to include English Language)



**Lunchtime Recitals**  
*Exquisite musical experience  
in the heart of Dublin*

**AUGUST  
2024**

Thursday 1st @13:20	Luke Lally Maguire - Piano
Sunday 4th @12:45	Hannah Shilvock & Viola Lenzi -Bass clarinet & Piano
Thursday 8th @13:20	Francesco Ghirxi -Organ
Thursday 15th @13:20	Jakub Tchorzewski -Piano
Thursday 22nd @13:20	Nick Venner -Piano
Thursday 29th @13:20	Keith Matthews & Luke Lally Maguire -Tenor & Piano

*Tickets 10 euros At the Big Red Door*  
**ST ANN'S CHURCH DAWSON STREET**  
<http://www.stannsrecitals.com/>



## 2025 URC Prayer Handbook

**The 2025 URC Prayer Handbook, which is now available to pre-order for delivery in September, is divided into two sections:**

Sunday prayers, based on the lectionary readings and



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prayers for other special days, and prayers from those interpreting the idea of being ‘immersed in joy’ in whatever way resonated with them. All for public and private worship.

Edited by the Revd Stephen Ansa-Addo and the Revd Sue McCoan, with stunning photos by Jonny Gios.

A5 version - £6.49; A4 lectern/large print version, £11.99 + p&p.

<https://urcshop.co.uk/immersive-joy-the-2025-urc-prayer-handbook/>

## Perspective

### Trump treating Christians as if we were the only “religious voters.”

**Javier A. Viera president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary writes**

When Donald Trump told a gathering of conservative Christians that they “won’t have to vote anymore” if he is elected, he wasn’t only drawing from an authoritarian playbook—he was also participating in a long-standing US political strategy of treating Christians as if we were the only “religious voters.” The Republican Party’s faith outreach over the past five decades has focused almost exclusively on White evangelical voters, who habitually vote in such strong numbers that they make up a far greater share of the electorate than they do the population. The United States’ demographics are changing, however, and the number of Christians is rapidly declining, while the share of people

from other religious traditions and no religious tradition continues to grow. If the Democratic Party is wise, it will recognize this new reality and work diligently to build a truly interreligious coalition. What's more, in Kamala Harris, they now have a candidate capable of doing just that—with integrity and authenticity.

In the former president's widely condemned remarks about Vice President Harris's mixed racial heritage, he ironically touched on the very background that makes her so well suited to build interreligious partnerships; this is a story she's lived her entire life. What Trump intended as an insult tacitly named what can help Harris give visible, tangible expression to America's religious diversity. The daughter of a Hindu and a Christian, she was raised in the Black church, but her mother also taught her reverence for Hindu temples. Later, she married Doug Emhoff, who is Jewish, creating an interfaith home for her new family and two stepchildren. Her life story reflects the lived experience of millions of Americans. Almost 40 percent of people who have married since 2010 married someone from a different religious tradition. The joys and challenges experienced in each of those homes is America in microcosm: in communities all over the country, families are learning how to weave their faith traditions together to create love and abundant life. And that's a very good thing, because confronting the intractable problems that plague us will require sustained work across political and religious differences.

Adapting to climate change, eradicating gun violence, uprooting racism—these issues and more are simply too monumental in scope to address without creating broad grassroots action. In a country where 33 percent of people

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are not Christian, that necessitates interreligious organizing. The good news is that the history of social change is filled with examples of how engagement across religious traditions is not only possible but galvanizes progress. While one of the iconic images of the civil rights movement is Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marching with Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma, Alabama, less is written about the integral relationship between Black organizers in the South and Indian nonviolent resistance against the British Empire. In King's writings, he speaks extensively about the impact that the Hindu principle of ahimsa had on his understanding of how to fight White supremacy in the United States. In 1959, King traveled for five weeks in India to learn beside Gandhi's close collaborators, and the lessons he brought back with him helped to shape the next decade of Black organizing.

Today, India continues to provide examples of coalitions working across religious differences for collective betterment, even in the midst of an increasingly volatile religious context. In fact, the subcontinent offers an excellent mirror to our own politics given the significant parallels between Hindutva and Christian nationalism. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has pushed both Hindu supremacy and strongman tactics in ways that strongly echo Trumpism. Resistance to these tactics has been robust and coordinated. When a delegation from my seminary traveled in India in February, Christian leaders there shared how they were organizing with Sikh and Muslim colleagues to defeat the BJP (Modi's party) in the summer elections. At the time it felt like a distant hope, as Modi was strongly projected to gain a supermajority in the parliament. This June, however, India stunned the world



when the BJP lost its parliamentary majority in a dramatic surge from opposition parties. In postmortem analysis, commentators pointed to religious minorities' collaboration as a significant part of what turned the tide.

If Harris takes the broad coalition of religious communities organizing against such tactics seriously, she has a unique opportunity to nurture a similar coalition here in the United States. While progressive Christians, religious minorities, and atheist or agnostic siblings do not, as individual groups, come even close to being a majority of the US population, together they can help build a governing coalition that can not only win this election but deliver transformational public policy. Moreover, the rise of overt Christian nationalism as a defining feature of the Republican Party provides this fledgling coalition with a common cause, a pressing danger that must be resisted.

Interfaith organizing cannot be accomplished, however, through the same playbook parties have traditionally used to organize Christians. Religious traditions are not fundamentally the same—what motivates voters of one faith will not necessarily be persuasive with another. Harris has already shown a willingness to lean into her own multiple identities instead of attempting to determine a monolithic message—an excellent model for organizers to follow as they collaborate across differences. This joyful embodiment of how diversity can harmoniously coexist is a message that will resonate with the millions of Americans whose work, friendships, and marriages are likewise characterized by interreligious relationships and multiple identities. A candidate who can speak to these identities without asking that one identity be sacrificed in favor of another can send a

powerful alternative message that will resonate with a large swath of the American electorate. This powerful voting bloc has rarely been addressed directly but will recognize the commonalities between Harris's life and theirs.

If she is elected president, I hope Harris will also publicly embrace the multiple religious traditions present in her own family because the spiritual humility produced by interreligious engagement is a stark antidote to Christian nationalism's fundamental arrogance. As a scholar and practitioner of interreligious dialogue, one of the refrains I hear from participants is that engaging across religious difference fashions them to be more accepting of that difference and less convinced that any religious tradition holds absolute truth. Holding a faith claim as essential to one's worldview and one's way of being in the world is different from insisting that it be true for all people. This perspective, which I describe as "confident humility," is powerful and desperately needed medicine for a country that is suffering from a flood of sectarian quasi-Christian beliefs turned into law. From requiring that the Ten Commandments be posted in Louisiana public schools to abortion bans that claim to be grounded in a fundamentally religious belief that life begins at conception, certain Christians have badly misrepresented the role religion should and could play in public life.

These laws are not only unpopular, they erroneously claim to represent universal Christian beliefs and practices. Instead, by embodying an authentic Christian faith that can joyously exist beside her mother's Hinduism and her husband's Judaism, Harris can show the country that a different future is possible—a peaceful cooperation that so

many of us are already living. As a matter of policy, Harris could also draw upon her husband's Jewish tradition and her mother's Hindu tradition when discussing how Christian nationalist laws infringe on millions of people's religious freedom, which also exposes their inherent unconstitutionality. For example, she might point to how most Jews understand abortion access as a religious obligation—even a requirement—when pregnancy risks the life or health of the one who is pregnant.

The Catalan philosopher Joan-Carles Mèlich said, “We forgot the world did not belong to us . . . but the problem wasn't speed or even acceleration. It was the rush. We forget that to inhabit the world one must not be in a hurry, that one must know how to linger in the present.” If Harris can encourage us to fully appreciate the religious and ideological diversities that surround us—to live fully in the present—she has the power to foster deeper relationships and to build a broader electoral coalition. This effort is at the heart of unwinding the political polarization that fractures our communities and restoring civic connection and collaboration. It's also an essential part of nurturing bountiful life.

For these reasons and more, this alternative message from the Democratic Party will resonate deeply with those who yearn for connectedness: We are stronger because of our religious differences, not in spite of them, and we have a unique opportunity as a nation to make that claim a reality.

**Javier A. Viera is president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.**



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(<https://www.garrett.edu/>)



## Poem for today

### The Rock of Cashel

By Aubrey de Vere

Royal and saintly Cashel! I would gaze  
Upon the wreck of thy departed powers  
Not in the dewy light of matin hours,  
Nor the meridian pomp of summer's blaze,  
But at the close of dim autumnal days,  
When the sun's parting glance, through slanting showers,  
Sheds o'er thy rock-throned battlements and towers  
Such awful gleams as brighten o'er Decay's  
Prophetic cheek. At such a time, methinks,  
There breathes from thy lone courts and voiceless aisles  
A melancholy moral; such as sinks  
On the lone traveller's heart amid the piles  
Of vast Persepolis on her mountain stand,  
Or Thebes half buried in the desert sand.

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## Church News Ireland

The publication of Church News Ireland is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD. He may be contacted at [houstonmckelvey@mac.com](mailto:houstonmckelvey@mac.com)

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