

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Che occasione speciale!

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Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

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Image of the day



Chе occasione speciale!

A special moment for Their Majesties as they privately met His Holiness Pope Francis at the Vatican on Wednesday.

The King and Queen were deeply touched by The Pope's kind remarks about their 20th wedding anniversary and honoured to be able to share their best wishes to him in person.

PALM SUNDAY BREAKFAST FOLLOWED BY PROCESSION

13TH APRIL 10AM

ALL SAINTS'

CENTRE



Jellybean



Jellybean is coming for breakfast on Palm Sunday

This Sunday at All Saints, Clooney, in Londonderry a very special guest Jellybean the donkey will lead people from Sunday School to Church following a delicious Palm Sunday Breakfast in the All Saints' Centre at 10am.

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The parish invitation concluded, “We hope you can make it, bring your family and friends to help us celebrate Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem”.

Cork zoom meeting with leader of vital work in Sierra Leone



Thanks has been expressed to all the clergy and parishioners of Cork Diocese who are fundraising for the Liloma appeal which will support our vital work in Sierra Leone.

To find out more about the work their fundraising will make possible, a group of clergy and students met on Saturday morning for a Zoom meeting with Christian Aid’s Allieu Bangura from Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Allieu explained that the money raised will help more than 200 families rebuild their lives and find new sources of income after being displaced from their farmland following the arrival of a huge palm oil plantation.

The impacted families will be given farming tools (hoes, pick axes and watering cans) as well as rice and cassava stems, so they can continue to grow food to feed themselves and their children, as well as sell any surplus for an income.

Attending Saturday's information session were members of the Cork Diocesan Council for Mission (Rev Terry Mitchell, Rev Adam Pullen, Rev Clodagh Yambasu, Rev Tony Murphy and Rev Andrew Coleman) as well as students from Cork Diocese taking the Christian Studies Certificate.

“Our work is only possible because of the support and leadership of people such as these and we are hugely grateful to them for their interest in our work”.

Great weekend in Castlewellan for Down & Dromore youth

“A huge thank you to all the church groups and leaders from Down & Dromore who made our recent Big Diocesan Youth Weekend such a great success and an important time for our young people”, writes Josh Thornbury, Down & Dromore Diocesan Youth Development Officer

Josh continues - 140 of us settled into Castlewellan Castle on Friday evening, 4 April, with a dozen parishes represented. Thanks to some great weather, we had a full day of activity on Saturday including archery, laser tag, sports, and team challenges. We had great fun connecting with others and expending a lot of energy!

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The main focus of the weekend was, of course, to spend time in worship and explore core elements of the Christian faith together. Our guest speaker, Revd Ross Mungavin, taught us excellently from Psalm 23, reminding us that Jesus is the shepherd that we all need at every stage of our lives. Bishop David also dropped in for a visit and made it into the group photo.

Billy Fyffe who leads the Killough Kids and Youth Outreach took a session on Sunday morning and several young people expressed their desire to either follow Jesus for the first time or to recommit themselves to the life to which he calls each one of us.

We're already looking forward to 2026!

Photo gallery at -

[\[https://www.downanddromore.org/news/2025/04/a-great-weekend-in-castlewellan\]](https://www.downanddromore.org/news/2025/04/a-great-weekend-in-castlewellan)



Youth Ministry audit finds hope and challenge

Results show substantial engagement but greater need for more volunteers.

A major survey from the Church of Ireland Youth Department (CIYD) has highlighted the need for more volunteers to give their skills and energy to help young people grow in faith and have fresh opportunities through the wide variety of youth work in our Church.

In late 2023, as youth work activities began to recover from the effects of Covid, CIYD commissioned an audit of youth work occurring under the auspices of the Church of Ireland, across the entire island of Ireland. This was the first survey of its kind since 2008, and had the aims of enabling CIYD to:

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- have an accurate picture (post–Covid) of the number of young people in activities in parishes within dioceses;
- utilise this information to report to funders; and
- utilise this information to provide support to youth work happening in parishes around the country.



Dublin and Glendalough Youth Council's Winter Madness event in Holy Trinity Rathmines.

The survey was undertaken between March and July 2024 with parishes invited to complete an online survey, which was accompanied by an additional short survey with Diocesan Youth Officers and Youth Councils. Here are some of the main results:

- over 6,058 young people aged 11 to 18 involved in parish–based youth activities;
- more than 2,825 young people involved in diocesan youth events and activities;
- parish–based youth work is led by 1,860 adult volunteers and 42 paid youth workers;

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- diocesan youth work involves 538 adult volunteers and seven paid members of staff.

The survey received responses from 288 of the Church's 450 parish units. If the same trends are extrapolated to cover all parishes, it is estimated that over 15,000 young people are served by youth ministry across the Church of Ireland as a whole – increasing to 25,000 when the work of uniformed youth organisations within our parishes is included.

However, the number of parishes which are offering youth work has decreased since 2008, which can be attributed to a 44 per cent reduction in the number of volunteers (down from 3,347 in the previous survey). The need for help with recruiting volunteers and supporting and encouraging volunteers who are already serving is appearing as a new training need.

Bishop Pat Storey remarked: “As President of CIYD, I am grateful for this youth ministry audit. It tells us what we need to know and challenges us to continue to invest in our young people. If young people are to grow up in the household of faith, and continue to serve God all of their lives, it takes vision, commitment and resources.

“Every organisation is struggling to attract volunteers – but youth ministry is the perfect avenue for our energy and investment, and actually is a joy! We are passing on the baton of vibrant faith in a God who loves us and who will always pursue us. What could be more fulfilling than that?”



The Survey of Youth Work in the Church of Ireland is available on the CIYD website at www.ciyd.org and the Church of Ireland website at www.churchofireland.org/resources – and will form part of CIYD’s presentation at this year’s General Synod, taking place in May.

Christian charities respond to Myanmar catastrophe, as emergency donations reach £10 million

Christian charities have formed part of a £10 million emergency donations drive to support those devastated by the Myanmar earthquake.

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CAFOD, Christian Aid, Tearfund and World Vision UK have joined forces for the Disasters Emergency Committee's Myanmar Earthquake Appeal, after a 7.7 magnitude earthquake left over 3471 people dead.

The appeal's £10 million total includes donations from King Charles and Queen Camilla, who are regular supporters of the DEC's appeals, as well as public and corporate donations.

Through churches on the ground, CAFOD and Tearfund have been providing shelter and supplies to those who have lost their homes and livelihoods.

The country, which borders China, Thailand and India, already faced extreme poverty, due to years of internal conflict.

Tearfund's local partner in Myanmar, said: "We are exhausted, people are exhausted, hungry and grieving, yet they push forward, helping one another, searching for survival. Trying to render kind words to each other and clinging to hope. The resilience of the human spirit is as visible as the destruction around me.

"Despite the devastation, we are seeing incredible acts of solidarity among the people. Neighbours are helping each other. Volunteers are stepping in to provide first aid, comfort the grieving, and care for children who have been separated from their families.

"Even those who have lost everything are offering whatever support they can, something like food or a place to rest. The

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resilience and kindness of the community in this crisis are truly inspiring, but the need for external support remains urgent.”

Irish Methodist Story of Growth

The next in the Methodist Church in Ireland’s ‘Stories of Growth’ series comes from our North Eastern District.

COASTAL began with family brunches held in homes, prayer and worship evenings, and occasional meetings. Intentional Sunday gatherings starting in June 2023.

→ Read the story in full here: bit.ly/storiesofgrowth



Churches in Britain are experiencing a ‘Quiet Revival’, according to new research by the Bible Society

New data reverses held beliefs that Christianity is declining in Britain. Instead, engagement with church is increasing, particularly amongst Gen Z.

Over 13,000 people were surveyed on church involvement. Data was compared to a near-identical study of a similar sample group in 2018.

Across all age groups, church attendance increased 56% between 2018 and 2024. Most notably, attendance among Gen Z (ages 18-24) has quadrupled, from 4% to 16%.

Under the previous survey, the largest churchgoing demographic was the over-65s. Now, a similar number of young adults are attending church, as pensioners were in 2018.

The most dramatic finding was that the number of young men joining churches now outstrips the number of young women joining churches. Previously – young men had been the social group least likely to engage with church.

The report identifies both a greater openness to faith and spirituality, and to churchgoing in general, even among non-churchgoers. Younger people are particularly warm to spirituality, with 40% of 18–24-year-olds saying they pray at least monthly and 51% saying they’ve undertaken a spiritual practice in the last six months – the highest of any age

group. Among non-churchgoing 18-24-year-olds, curiosity about Christianity is also higher than average, with 34% saying they would attend church if invited by a friend or family member and a quarter (25%) saying they would be interested in discovering more about the Bible.

Whilst recent years have seen male influencers promote traditional values as a form of masculinity, Dr Rob Barward-Symmons, Senior Research and Impact Manager at the Bible Society, tells Premier the increase in young men in church is more organic.

“These trends that we're seeing amongst young adults, of feeling lost, anxious, and isolated, for some, is leading them to these quite harmful, toxic spaces that we've heard a lot about.

“But this research shows that [young people] are seeking that meaning and that healing. They're finding community in the church, and that's really drawing them there.”

One explanation for the increase in churchgoing could be an increasingly ethnically diverse UK population, with Christianity a strongly held religion for many migrants. Yet the data indicates that faith is growing across a range of social cross-sections.

Director of Research at the Bible Society, Dr Rhiannon McAleer, told Premier: “The stereotype is that churchgoers are predominantly old, white and female. Increasingly, that is no longer the case. We're seeing increasing ethnic diversity, but also large numbers of younger people from all ethnicities.”

Across all age groups, the mental and social benefits of church attendance were recorded. Over 60% of Christians who are part of a church say they feel a sense of belonging in their local community. For non-churchgoers, this drops to 25%.

Rather than a decline in Christianity, researchers say the true decline is in nominal Christianity – whereby people attach the label of ‘Christian’ to themselves as a social norm, but rarely participate in day-to-day mission.

“People who identify as Christians are much more likely now to be active in their faith,” said Dr Barward-Symmons.

“That's not just going to church, that's praying, reading the Bible, and believing in an active, interventionist God who cares about their life.” See - Media this issue of CNI

Education

Unpacking the Passion at Foyle College

Our GCSE and A-Level Religious Studies students enjoyed engaging in thought-provoking and interactive “Unpacking the Passion” workshops, ahead of their upcoming trip to the promenade production of the Walled City Passion.

We sincerely thank our Chair of Governors, Archdeacon Robert Miller, and former pupil, Jonathan Burgess, for facilitating both workshops, and professional actors,



Matthew McLaughlin, Stephen Bradley and Laura Douglas, for their performances.

Campbell College Wellbeing Week 2025: Park Run

We had a fantastic start to our Wellbeing Week on Saturday with the Stormont ParkRun.

It was wonderful to see so many students, parents, staff, and governors come together for a morning of community



spirit and physical activity. Your enthusiasm and participation truly set the tone for the week ahead!

All jazzed up at Wallace High

Congratulations to Year 12 student Ben on being awarded a full scholarship to attend the Skidmore Jazz Programme in Saratoga Springs, Upstate New York, this July.



Ben is sponsored by Jazz Alliance/Jazz Juniors and feels incredibly privileged to attend a course that has launched the careers of so many jazz greats – from David Lyttle himself to Andreas Varady and the composer of the Soul soundtrack, Jon Batiste. As part of the course, Ben will also attend the Saratoga Jazz Festival, which features performances by Cory Wong, Trombone Shorty, and Gregory Porter.

Ben has dreamed of becoming a jazz clarinetist since he began learning the clarinet in P5. In 2021, he joined Jazz Juniors – a free programme for absolute beginners from across Ireland, where students learn to improvise under the expert guidance of David Lyttle. The groups have made extraordinary progress and now perform free concerts at the MAC Theatre in Belfast every Saturday from 2:30–4:30pm.

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This award is a tremendous opportunity for Ben, and we wish him every success.

Cathedral Calls

CHARLES WOOD FESTIVAL & SUMMER SCHOOL

THE CHARLES WOOD GIRLS' CHOIR

SATURDAY 9TH TO FRIDAY 15TH AUGUST 2025

A week-long residential summer course for girl choristers aged 12-18

Intensive, fun training in singing and choral music

Work with top choral director Christopher Gray (St John's College Cambridge)

Sing in some of Northern Ireland's most impressive spaces

Enjoy a range of social events, including a cinema visit

COURSE FEE £350
Deadline: Friday 25th April 2025

Fully residential course in Armagh with all meals and accommodation provided in The Royal School Armagh. Experience a week of Choral Singing under Christopher Gray with Services, Concerts, Workshops and fun activities.

For more details of how to apply visit www.charleswoodsummerschool.org

FIND US ON Registered Charity Number: NIC102656

sponsored by **ulster**TM

The Charles Wood Singers

SUNDAY 10TH TO SUNDAY 17TH AUGUST 2025

Experience the Charles Wood Festival with the Charles Wood Singers

A week of Choral Singing under Artistic Director David Hill with Workshops, Masterclasses and Lessons

Choral Course

Fully residential course in Armagh, Northern Ireland

FULL FEE: £450

Closing date for applications: **Friday 25th April 2025**

Applications are welcome from all those:

- aged 18 or above on 10th August 2025
- who are grade 8 standard or above
- with previous experience of choral singing
- who can demonstrate sufficient levels of enthusiasm and skill, including sight-reading, to meet the challenge of an intensive week of musical study

For more details and to apply visit www.charleswoodsummerschool.org

FIND US ON Registered Charity Number: NIC102656

CHARLES WOOD FESTIVAL & SUMMER SCHOOL

Charles Wood Festival and Summer School Applications still open

“Join us in Armagh this summer for an unforgettable week of music, friendship, and inspiration at the Charles Wood Festival & Summer School.”

The Charles Wood Singers Choral Course
Sunday 10th – Sunday 17th August 2025 Led by David Hill

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Full Fee: £450 – Deadline: Friday 25th April

The Charles Wood Girls' Choir (Ages 12–18)

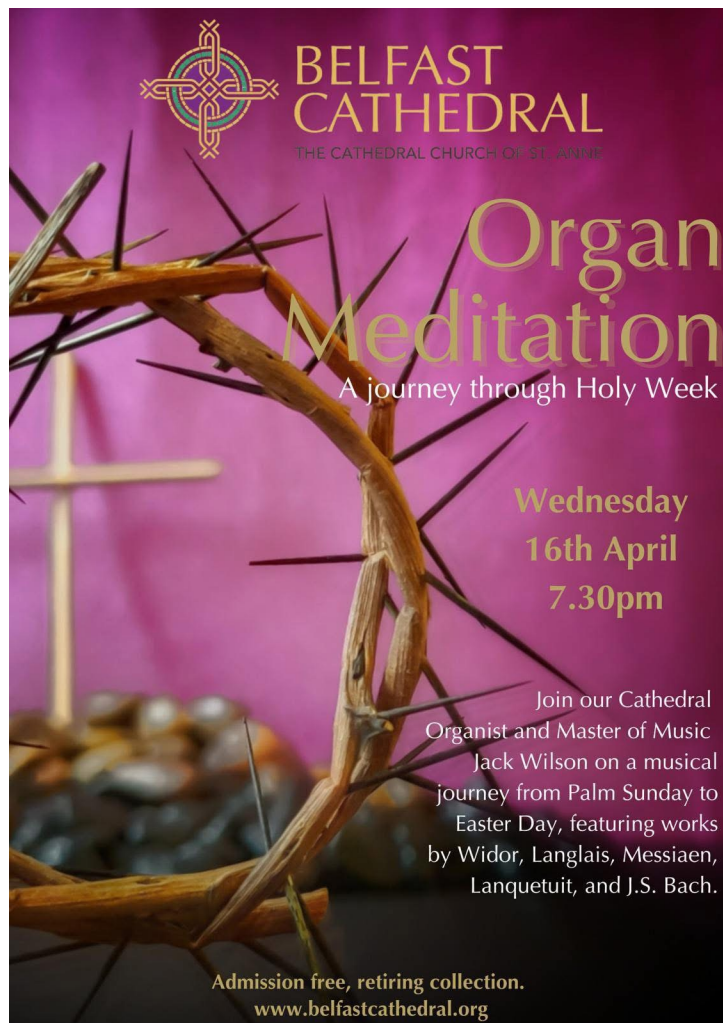
Saturday 9th – Friday 15th August 2025 Led by Christopher Gray

Fee: £350 – Deadline: Friday 25th April

All courses are fully residential in the beautiful city of Armagh, Northern Ireland. These world-class choral courses should cost £1,000 and £800 but thanks to generous support and funding, you can experience the Charles Wood Festival & Summer School for a fraction of that price!

For full details and to apply, visit:

www.charleswoodsummerschool.org



BELFAST CATHEDRAL
THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. ANNE

Organ Meditation

A journey through Holy Week

**Wednesday
16th April
7.30pm**

Join our Cathedral Organist and Master of Music Jack Wilson on a musical journey from Palm Sunday to Easter Day, featuring works by Widor, Langlais, Messiaen, Lanquetuit, and J.S. Bach.

Admission free, retiring collection.
www.belfastcathedral.org

Belfast organ meditation on the theme of Holy Week

**Next Wednesday
Belfast Cathedral
Organist Jack Wilson
will be playing an
organ meditation on
the theme of Holy
Week, featuring the
cathedral's
magnificent Harrison
and Harrison organ.**

Admission is free for this 7.30pm performance, to include works by Widor, Langlais, Messiaen, Lanquetuit and J.S. Bach. All most welcome.

Clergy and ministry

Christian Aid Supporter Conference near Donegal town

Christian Aid Ireland writes - We're still buzzing after Saturday's Supporter Conference at Laghey Parish Church near Donegal town.

We were delighted to be joined by supporters from Donegal, west Tyrone and Sligo. This was the first time we've held a supporter conference in Donegal and we hope it will become an annual event.

Our **Chief Executive Rosamond Bennett** spoke about our work to combat poverty and inequality around the world, while our Church and Community Officers Dee Huddleston and Michael Briggs spoke about this year's Christian Aid Week focus story which comes from Guatemala.

We're grateful to everyone who came along. Special thanks to the Ven David Huss, Rector of the Donegal group of parishes for allowing us to use the hall, and the parishioners of Laghey Parish who kindly provided the tea and refreshments.

In the media

Catholics set to exceed Anglicans for first time since Reformation due to younger churchgoers - The Catholic Herald

Catholics are on course to outnumber Anglicans in Britain, with the growth spearheaded by younger churchgoers who outnumber their Anglican brethren by more than two to one, a report by the Bible Society reveals.

A “quiet revival” in UK Catholicism appears to be occurring, especially among those age groups referred to as Generation Z and younger Millennials, reports The Times of London, while noting that Catholics are rapidly catching up with Anglican numbers across all age groups.

It means that Catholicism could soon overtake Anglicanism to become the country’s largest denomination of worshippers for the first time since the English Reformation initiated by King Henry VIII in 1527. Anglicans could even slip into third place behind Pentecostals among churchgoers aged under 35 years of age.

“Our report does not challenge the well-established fact that fewer people in England and Wales are choosing to identify as Christian,” Dr Rhiannon McAleer, director of research at the Bible Society, said. “However, it is the first large-scale study to concentrate not on self-declared Christian identity but on actual Christian practice. By this measurement, the Church is in an exciting period of growth and change.”

The findings come against a backdrop of rampant secularisation across the UK, in which Christians now make up the lowest ever proportion of the population, slipping below half for the first time in 2021 to 46.2 per cent, mainly driven by the growth in people with no religion, according to census figures.

But despite such bleak statistics where the country's religious denominations are concerned, the new report by the Bible Society suggests that the proportion of people in Britain attending church actually grew by more than half between 2018 and 2024.

The report found that 12 per cent of respondents, equivalent to 5.8 million people, said they attend church at least once a month in 2024, up from 8 per cent, or 3.7 million people, in 2018, with the largest increase among those under 25 years old.

The director of research acknowledged that the growth in congregations was “not a flood” rather more of a “quiet revival”, adding that in the past many who ticked the “Christian” box in surveys or censuses did so because they felt nominally or culturally Christian, but without actually practising his or her faith or attending church.

So while the average Briton is still more likely than ever to be a non-believer, according to the new report, those who do still identify as Christian appear to be “practising their religion more intentionally”, with an increase in the number who say they attend church at least once a month, reports The Times.

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According to YouGov surveys commissioned by the Bible Society, which looked at more than 13,000 people in 2024 and 19,000 people in 2018, the growth in attendance has mainly been seen in Catholic and Pentecostal churches. The increase among younger people has been found especially with young men.

According to the surveys, in 2018 Anglicans made up 30 per cent of regular churchgoers aged between 18 and 34 – including all adult members of Generation Z and the youngest cohort of Millennials – while Catholics made up 22 per cent and Pentecostals 10 per cent. By 2024, Anglicans made up just 20 per cent of this group while Catholics made up 41 per cent. Pentecostals are now not far behind Anglicans at 18 per cent.

According to the Pew Research Center, anyone born between 1981 and 1996 is considered a Millennial, and anyone born from 1997 onward is part of the new generation termed Gen Z.

In 2018 the survey found that across all ages, 41 per cent of those who attend church at least once a month were Anglican, 23 per cent were Catholic and 4 per cent were Pentecostal. By 2024, the Anglican share had fallen to 34 per cent, the Catholic share is “now close behind” at 31 per cent, while the Pentecostal share has risen to 10 per cent, the Bible Society report shows.

Figures collated by the Catholic Church in England and Wales also show a rise in attendance at Sunday mass since the pandemic, notes The Times, rising from 390,000 in 2021 to 555,000 in 2023, though they also indicate these are

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down from pre-pandemic figures of 702,000 in 2019. Catholics have already overtaken Protestants in Northern Ireland, data from the 2021 census shows.

The Times quotes Stephen Bullivant, a professor of theology and the sociology of religion at St Mary's University in London, who says Catholicism was doing "least worst" out of the major Christian churches as it "benefits from a steady stream of churchgoing immigrants to a much greater degree".

In 2018, only 4 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds said that they attended church at least once a month. In 2024 this had risen to 16 per cent, particularly driven by those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The Catholic Herald - April 9, 2025 at 10:30 am

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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

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Church News Ireland

www.churchnewsireland.org

**Link in Monday through Saturday from
early morning**

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