

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – C'est la France**

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Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

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## Image of the day - C'est la France



Réaliser ensemble l'impossible. C'est la France.

BBC News: Paris's Gothic jewel Notre-Dame to reopen five years after fire

[<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c937r4k5rvno>]



Today's photo theme highlights the Street Pastors of Coleraine during this past week's festivities.

## News

### Chris Gray to direct the Charles Wood Girls' Choir

**The Chair and Board have announced that Chris Gray, Director of Music at St John's College Cambridge, has accepted the role of Director of the CW Girls' Choir for the 2025 and 2026 Festivals.**

“Chris is one of the finest choir trainers in the UK, renowned for his work with young voices, and we look forward to his return to Armagh next year”. Chris is originally from Bangor, Northern Ireland.

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Applications are now open to join the Charles Wood Girls Choir for the 2025 Charles Wood Festival, taking place during the 9th-15th August 2025 in Armagh, Northern Ireland.

To apply and for more details, visit website: [charleswoodsummerschool.org/charles-wood-g](https://charleswoodsummerschool.org/charles-wood-g)



## Presbyterian Church appeal for Rwanda

**Local congregations across Ireland have always been at the heart of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's (PCI) annual world development appeal (WDA).**

This year, churches in local communities across Rwanda in West Africa are also at the heart of this year's appeal, as it seeks to strengthen and support them in the fight against food insecurity.



Primarily for Irish Presbyterians, the world development appeal takes place in the run up to Christmas and New Year, and normally raises between £300,000 and £500,000 to support life-changing sustainable development projects in some of the poorest communities and disadvantaged places in the world.

Banbridge minister the Rev Liam Rutherford, who convenes the development appeal, explains: “For more than 40 years the Irish Presbyterian church’s

500-plus congregations have been assisting the work of their church relief and development partners – Tearfund and Christian Aid, in a number of countries across the world. This year’s appeal is entitled ‘Hunger pains, scarcity to abundance’ and the lead project is a Tearfund programme in Rwanda. When we think of Rwanda, we automatically think for the genocide that took place there in 1994. Since then, it has had to start from scratch and now 30 years on, it is one of the more stable countries in Africa.

“When I went with the Tearfund team to Rwanda in March we found a beautiful greenhous of a country. However, some 90 per cent of the population are involved in subsistence farming and as much as half of the population live in poverty. Food insecurity is a big issue. This is not helped by climate change which is making farming more uncertain.

“On the ground, Tearfund is working to address this issue through the main churches including the Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda (Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (PCR)).”

Mr Rutherford adds: “In a country that is 94 per cent Christian, the Rwanda church (PCR) has more than 4,000 congregations and two million members, and this year’s appeal will seek to strengthen the church through Tearfund’s church community transformation programme.

Chris Thompson, Tearfund’s NI director, confirms: “Each of the CCT projects is improving food security and increasing the resilience of communities. At the heart of each project is the local church and we are so grateful to the Presbyterian church for its faithful partnership with us through the world development appeal.”

Presbyterian moderator the Rev Dr Richard Murray says his church’s world development appeal money will greatly improve food security in Rwanda.

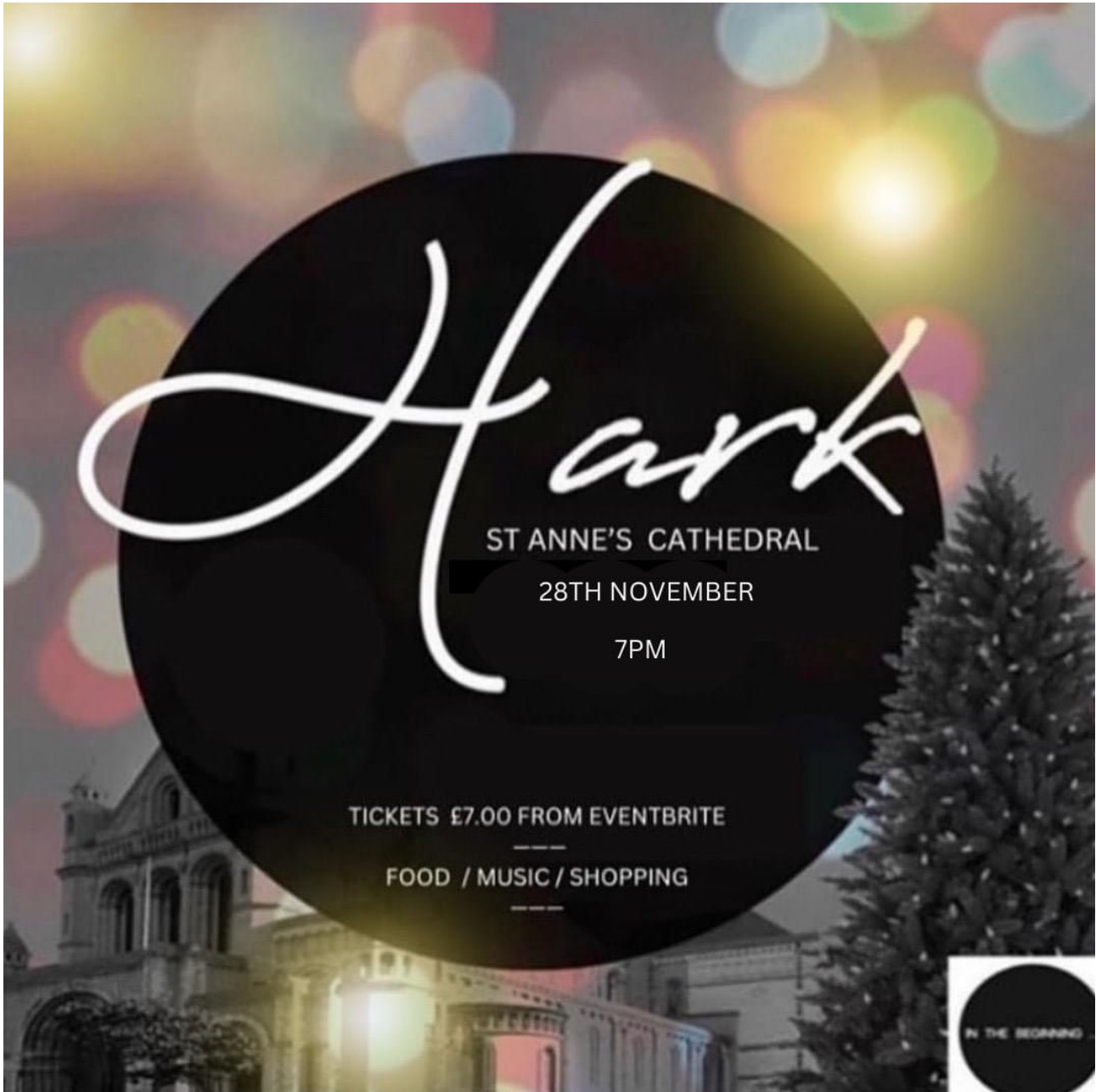
“Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 9:11 that ‘You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.’ The annual world development appeal



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is an important opportunity to look beyond ourselves, to reach out and support those in need. For many years we have been able to respond with generosity which can only lead to increased hope.”

## Cathedral Calls



## Priory Singers are getting excited with music for Advent and Christmas

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**Getting excited! It's less than two weeks until we're at Belfast Cathedral to welcome the festive season in music and verse, with a programme featuring delights such as the Hallelujah Chorus, Christmas music from TV ads, as well as works by much-loved local composers, including the choir's founder, the late Dr Harry Grindle.**

Accompanying the choir will be Jack Wilson, Master of Music at the Cathedral, and instrumentalists including a brass quintet – we can't wait to hear them! Audience members will have the opportunity to join in with the festive spirit, not just with the seasonal staples of mulled wine and mince pies, but also through the singing of well-known favourite carols to get into the Christmas swing.

Car parking is available on site! Tickets can be purchased at the door, or pre-ordered on Eventbrite at [\\\*\  
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-priory-singers-music-for-advent-and-christmas-tickets-1097484247929?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=ebdsshcopyurl \\\*\](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-priory-singers-music-for-advent-and-christmas-tickets-1097484247929?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=ebdsshcopyurl)

## **Hark a Christmas Craft Fair at Belfast Cathedral**

**Come along on Thursday at 7pm as Belfast Cathedral is transformed for Hark, a Christmas Craft Fair which brings together stalls from local creators, great food, and festive music under the roof of our beautiful cathedral.**

Come and get into the festive spirit at this unique community event. For a sneak peek at the stalls which will be present, and for a link to tickets, check In The Beginning.

## **Discover how Chester Cathedral became a Cathedral of Sanctuary**

**By Rev Dr Jane Brooke, former Canon Missioner and Vice Dean, Chester Cathedral.**

I was appointed as Canon Chancellor and Canon Librarian at Chester Cathedral with a responsibility for education in 2010 and then from 2019 as Canon Missioner and Vice Dean with a responsibility for outreach in the community. I consider hospitality and 'welcoming the stranger' in all its forms to be a basis for Christian living, and cathedrals historically have been places of sanctuary.

I was keen, along with others, to encourage everyone to be welcomed into the cathedral and so a group of faithful volunteers established a 'Place of Welcome' where there were games and activities available with coffee and tea at no charge, to be a place where people could come to the cathedral, feel safe, feel welcomed and could chat with others. The cathedral doors can be daunting and a challenge for some to enter, so we needed to think of other ways of engaging the communities. After some years, we thought we had worked sufficiently in the city to apply to become a Cathedral of Sanctuary.

### **The journey**



The Performance Artist & Theologian in Residence, Claire Henderson Davies, arranged public workshops in 2017 and 2018 in the evenings in the cathedral. They provided general information and discussion: the first was attended by Syrian families, which was a big step for them to enter a cathedral, and the second was a series of presentations from those who supported sanctuary seekers. From these workshops the Jacob's Ladder group was formed which then developed later into the Chester City of Sanctuary Group.

I was concerned that there were many groups in Chester working exceptionally well on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers but that there was no collaboration or unity. In 2019, I contacted Councillor Richard Beacham with regards to action being taken to unite all the groups concerned with refugees and asylum seekers in Cheshire West and Chester. Consequently, a Cheshire West & Chester strategic



group for refugees and asylum seekers was set up. Fifteen organisations that support sanctuary seekers are members and there were quarterly meetings held and chaired by myself.

Through this, a comprehensive leaflet has been written giving contacts of all local groups and a synopsis of how they support sanctuary seekers. And, I had the privilege of speaking with the Chair of the City of Sanctuary at the Chester Council meeting to support the borough becoming a Borough of Sanctuary: it was passed unanimously.

## **The cathedral community**

Chester Cathedral is clearly not a parish church but there are regular attenders who have a desire to reach out into the community and to support refugees and asylum

seekers. Whenever there was an opportunity, I wrote in the newsletter and advertised it to the congregation.

As a result, some members volunteered at the local Unity Centre with one commenting, 'I had regular contact with the Unity Centre, particularly the English for speakers of other languages classes, and developed a considerable respect for the role of the centre and breadth of expertise available through its activities.'

Further, in collaboration with Chester City of Sanctuary, clothes for 0-3 year olds, sewing machines and bicycles were donated to refugees by members of the congregation. Congregation members volunteered to help with reading at a school where over 20 refugee children were attending.

A series of study group sessions on the biblical understanding of refugees took place online using a resource by Inderjit Bhogal titled Hospitality and Sanctuary for all (2021): it was attended by 20 people from local churches as well as the cathedral congregation.

## **Chester Cathedral activities**

Chester Cathedral linked with the Unity Centre to welcome five families for a tour, and tea, and gave a book as a gift. As expected, we all gained far more by the conversations we had than we gave. The cathedral hosted an event, 'Unlocking Education for Women', where Afghanistani girls from a local school read poetry about their memories and personal hopes and aspirations in the cathedral. A beautiful scarf mosaic created by refugees, asylum seekers and artists in Glasgow stunned visitors with its colour and

expertise.



## Learning about faiths

With the support of Chester Council Diversity Fund a series of talks and visits were arranged to learn more about and from faith communities. The events included twenty five people visiting Blacon Mosque to observe prayers and ask questions of the Imam. During Interfaith Week, in partnership with the Lord Mayor, a discussion event with several speakers took place in the Town Hall. Two Rabbis spoke informatively about their own faith perspective. At a meeting held in the Town Hall, a Muslim speaker talked of her faith as a mother. A Rabbi introduced Passover to local communities and explained the significance. An open discussion was held for the diocese with a Bishop, Imam

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and Rabbi. The cathedral also holds an annual event for Holocaust Memorial Day for year 8 students.



# CHESTER CATHEDRAL



## Annual exhibitions for national Refugee Week

The cathedral is well placed to offer space for events and we were very pleased to offer both the inside and the outside for national Refugee Week in different years.

For example, exhibitions created by the City of Sanctuary included art produced by sanctuary seekers and an Iranian music event. Films were shown to learn more about the experiences of refugees. Nadine Daniels, the Church of England's National Refugee Coordinator, preached at the cathedral main service. The exhibition was visited by 600 people in the six days. A unique art installation of 'Flags of Welcome' made a path in the cathedral grounds, created by 1200 visitors including Inderjit Bhogal, the Founder and President of City of Sanctuary, who preached at the service at the end of the week (2021). Material flags with sewn statements were hung from trees, inviting people to consider the situation of refugees.

The cathedral chapter appointed a vergger committed to supporting refugees and asylum seekers as a Cathedral Champion. The cathedral chapter has defined a Refugee Statement of Intention, and this is published on the website.

Given the above activity, the cathedral chapter decided it could apply for the status of Cathedral of Sanctuary because there had been good engagement with the guidelines and criteria of learning, embedding and sharing. We were excited to share our activity with the assessors who offered advice and ideas for developing the cathedral further.

The award is far from the end, it is only part of the journey, but it gave a moment of success and raised public awareness in Chester concerning refugees and asylum seekers.

## Sanctuary Sunday

Sanctuary Sunday is marked at the end of Refugee Week and aims to promote the Church of Sanctuary programme, building cultures of welcome, hospitality and safety in our churches. This year Sanctuary Sunday was on 23 June 2024.

For more details and resources, see the Church of Sanctuary website.

This article was first published in the Methodist Recorder.  
Photo: Joopercoopers at English Wikipedia

[\[https://ctbi.org.uk/how-chester-cathedral-became-a-cathedral-of-sanctuary/\]](https://ctbi.org.uk/how-chester-cathedral-became-a-cathedral-of-sanctuary/)

## Clergy and ministry

### New Dean of Residence and Chaplain to Trinity College Dublin

**The Archbishop of Dublin has appointed Canon Paul Arbuthnot as Dean of Residence and Chaplain to Trinity College Dublin. Canon Arbuthnot will take up the post on January 1 2025. He is currently Vicar of the Parish of**

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## **St Ann with St Stephen and St Mark.**

Originally from Carrickfergus, Co Antrim, Canon Arbuthnot spent his childhood as a chorister of St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. He was educated at Downshire School, Carrickfergus, Belfast Royal Academy and read History at Trinity College Dublin. During his time as an undergraduate and postgraduate he was a Lay Vicar of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.



He was made deacon in 2010 and ordained priest in 2011 in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. He served his curacy in St Paul's, Glenageary. He subsequently became Precentor of St Albans Cathedral in Hertfordshire and Sacrist of Westminster Abbey. On his return to the Church of Ireland in 2018 he became Rector of Cobh and Glanmire Union of Parishes and was elected a Chapter Canon at St Patrick's Cathedral in 2021.

Read more here: <https://dublin.anglican.org/news/2024/11/29/new-trinity-college-dublin-dean>

## Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

### Book launched on St. Brendan's Roman Catholic Church Birr

**On Friday November 29th the Feast of St. Brendan of Birr, Bishop Fintan Monahan launched a new publication “A place in our hearts” a history of St. Brendan's Roman Catholic Church Birr written by Brian Kennedy well-known local historian and teacher.**

Brian is well known in Midland historical circles and was chairperson of Birr Historical Society for over 10 years. Generations of locals will remember Brian from their days in St. Brendan's Community School, where he has taught English and History for over three decades. He studied History, English, and Philosophy at U.C.D. where he subsequently obtained his Higher Diploma in Education. Frequently, Brian's guided historical walks of Birr's historic core draw up to 150 patrons and have become a staple of Vintage Week and Arts Festival, each August. He also delights in giving historical tours of Birr Castle Demesne where he shares his great knowledge of the Parsons family's 400-year association with the demesne. The Launch was part of an Ecumenical even Song.

## In the media

### **NI churches tell of sadness as MPs back assisted dying - Belfast Telegraph**

**Ralph Hewitt reports there were emotional scenes both inside and outside the Commons as the Bill was voted on.**

Religious leaders in Northern Ireland expressed “deep disappointment, sadness and regret” that assisted dying could be legalised in England and Wales.

A majority of MPs, including Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, supported a bill that would allow terminally ill adults with a life expectancy of less than six months to end their lives.

Amid emotional scenes in the Commons, politicians on both sides of the debate made impassioned arguments for and against what has been described as a “major social reform”.

Encouraging or assisting suicide is currently against the law in England and Wales, with a maximum jail sentence of 14 years.

MPs voted 330 to 275 — a majority of 55 — to approve Kim Leadbeater's Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill at second reading.

Fifteen members of the Cabinet, including the PM, Chancellor Rachel Reeves and Northern Ireland Secretary Hilary Benn, voted for the Bill.

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Meanwhile eight voted against, including Health Secretary Wes Streeting, Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner, Foreign Secretary David Lammy, Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood and Women and Equalities minister Anneliese Dodds.

Former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak voted in support, while Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch voted against.

Nine of Northern Ireland's 11 sitting MPs voted against the bill. Only SDLP MP Colum Eastwood backed it.

The bill has not yet reached the stage of becoming law but will now move on to further parliamentary scrutiny.

Any future change will not come into force in Northern Ireland as it is a devolved matter.

Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Rev Dr Richard Murray, and the church's council for public affairs, Rev Daniel Kane, said it was a “watershed moment” for society.

“We have consistently affirmed the importance and innate dignity of every human life from conception to death as precious and a gift from God,” they said.

“The preservation, protection, and dignity of human life are moral and precious values that cannot, and should not, be altered by legislative change.

“This morning's vote is a watershed moment for the UK, both culturally and spiritually, which has shifted the value that society places on life itself.”

The Church of Ireland said it does not accept legislating for assisted suicide “is the best way to help those suffering”.

“The only inevitability of such legislation seems to be its progressively widening scope,” it said. “Instead, our governments should work to ensure the best possible palliative care is available to all regardless of their location or financial situation, so that no-one need to fear suffering in death.”

There were poignant scenes in the Commons as the debate unfolded over five hours. DUP MP Carla Lockhart told the Commons about her late father Kenneth, who died in June last year after battling cancer.

“Terminally ill for five years with a painful and aggressive cancer, yet a faith that sustained him and a health service that sought to support, care, comfort and preserve his life,” she said.

“Consultants and medical staff who went over and above to ensure that he got every opportunity to see his family, and particularly his grandchildren, grow up.

“Did I want to see my dad suffer? Absolutely not, but equally those difficult times provided us with an opportunity to care for and express a love for a person whose life we valued.

“The root of my conviction is this — life in all its forms is of inherent worth and value, and while I have come to that conclusion — partly because of my faith — like everyone across the House, I have listened carefully to the evidence in coming to my conclusion on the danger this bill represents.”

Speaking after the vote, Ms Lockhart said it represents another step towards the nation changing “how we view and value the lives of the our fellow citizens”.

Opposition and pro-change campaigners had gathered outside Parliament from early yesterday, and supporters of the bill wept and hugged each other outside as the news of the vote came through. Meanwhile, one of the bill's most high-profile supporters, Dame Esther Rantzen, said she is “absolutely thrilled” with the result.

Labour MP Kim Leadbeater, who put forward the bill, has said a new law would give society “a much better approach towards end of life” and said there is “plenty of time to get this right” in the face of concerns it is being rushed through. While Mr Eastwood voted in favour, SDLP leader Claire Hanna abstained.

Alliance's Sorcha Eastwood, UUP MP Robin Swann, TUV leader Jim Allister and independent unionist Alex Easton all voted against the bill.

The DUP's five MPs — Gavin Robinson, Ms Lockhart, Gregory Campbell, Sammy Wilson and Jim Shannon — also voted against. Sinn Fein's seven MPs did not vote due to the party's Westminster abstention policy.



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Ms Leadbeater has said it would likely be a further two years from then for an assisted dying service to be in place.

## **The result of the assisted dying vote was announced – then silence - Daily Telegraph**

**MPs struggled to process the outcome of what may well prove to be the most consequential ballot they will ever cast.**

Nick Gutteridge, Chief Political Correspondent

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/11/29/result-assisted-dying-bill-vote-commons-silence-mps-ballot/>

## **The Commons has voted for assisted dying – we are not the same country we were yesterday - Daily Telegraph**

**Tim Stanley, Daily Telegraph - The debate clarified the deep divides within both main parties – between libertarians and conservatives, progressives and socialists**

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/11/29/assisted-dying-not-same-country/>

# 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](mailto:houstonmckelvey@mac.com)

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# Church News Ireland

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**Link in Monday through Saturday from  
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