

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Limavady's walking carol service

Image of the day



Barbara Smyth (Society Steward at Limavady Methodist) leads the short service.

Limavady's walking carol service

The Annual Ecumenical Walking Carol Service took place on Monday night across four churches in Limavady.

This annual event was started in 2017 by Harry Boyle from Christ Church and was quickly adopted by other churches within the town. Harry and the churches were overwhelmed on Monday night when approx. 300 people gathered in St Mary's Church to start the 2023 Walking Carol Service.

December 14, 2023



Each church leader read from the scriptures at Drumachose Presbyterian Church



December 14, 2023



A scripture reading and two carols were sung at each of the churches, St Mary's, Limavady Methodist, Christ Church C of I and Drumachose Presbyterian Church with a light supper in the Drumachose Presbyterian Church Hall afterwards.

Members and Clergy from the churches who took part in the 2023 Walking Carol Service were Steven Callaghan (Mayor CC&GBC) Canon Aonghus Mayes (Christ Church), Rev David Brownlow (Drumachose Presbyterian), Monsignor Bryan McCanny (St Mary's Chapel), Barbara Smyth (Limavady Methodist), Major Sue Whitla (Salvation Army), and Harry Boyle (Christ Church and Organiser of the Walking Carol Service)

People and places

50 years service to St Patrick's Cathedral

The services of Vincent Doherty who has been the cathedral's electrician for over 50 years were recognised this month.

Always there to offer help and solutions, no matter the day. Once even making an emergency call out on Christmas Day. With his family present the Dean and the Cathedral team were able to celebrate his years of service and thank him for all he's done for the cathedral. "Many thanks for everything Vincent" was the message.

From Johannesburg to Killyleagh

The Revd Eben Grobbelaar has been appointed Priest-in-charge of the Parish of Killyleagh in the Diocese of Down.



Eben is currently incumbent of St George's Anglican Church, Parktown, Johannesburg. He is pictured above visiting the diocese in June as part of the SOMA mission team.

The service of introduction will be at 7.30pm on Wednesday 31 January.



Retiring from Kingston

After morning Service in the chapel of Kingston College, Mitchelstown in the Church of Ireland in Cork,

December 14, 2023

Cloyne and Ross Bishop Paul Colton made presentations to Canon Tom Sherlock, to mark his retirement as chaplain to Kingston College, and also to Mrs Hazel Sherlock. In the photo (l-r) Carole Bradley (Warden), the Bishop, Canon Tom Sherlock, Mrs Hazel Sherlock and Jacqui Sherlock. Retiring from Kingston

Limerick & Killaloe Council meets



The first meeting of the Limerick & Killaloe Diocesan Council for this new triennium took place last Thursday night at the Woodlands Hotel, Adare.

North Belfast primary school marking 50 years at the heart of the community



Teachers at St Thérèse of Lisieux Primary School, Belfast.

A primary school in North Belfast is marking 50 years at the heart of the community with a number of special events planned.

When St Thérèse of Lisieux Primary School first opened its doors in September 1973, it was recognised as an annex of Holy Family Girls Primary School, and was based on the Somerton Road. It was only in January 1974 that the school was officially recognised as its own maintained school.



L-R) Principal of St Thérèse of Lisieux Primary School, Siobhan McTaggart, with teacher Patricia Mulholland

In 1973, the school opened with just 64 pupils in attendance but this number quickly increased year on year. By September 1984, 303 pupils were enrolled in the primary school, and the need for a larger premises was more apparent than ever.

In 1988, staff and pupils moved into the school's new building, located at the corner of the Antrim Road and Chichester Park North, where it remains to this day. As the school marks its 50th year, 444 children are enrolled.

To mark their 50th anniversary, St Thérèse of Lisieux are planning a number of events and commemorations, including a community open day in the new year. The school's principal, Siobhan McTaggart, said they are asking

December 14, 2023

for any past-pupils to send across mementos or memories of their time at the school to include in a display that will be created by current pupils.

Courtesy of Belfast Live and Justin Kernoghan, photographer.

TRC welcomes publication of Independent Review of Education report

The Transferor Representatives' Council has welcomed the publication today of the report of the Independent Review of Education in Northern Ireland.

The Council's Chairman, Dr Andrew Brown, said: "The TRC welcomes the publication of this important report and will consider its recommendations over the coming weeks.



December 14, 2023

“Every child and young person living in Northern Ireland has a unique and incredible potential. We again express our thanks to all principals, teaching and non-teaching staff, and school governors who give their time and commitment to help children to learn and thrive, and encourage their mental, physical and spiritual development.

“Our education system serves one of the youngest populations in Europe and ensuring that it is fully funded must be a high priority for all in government. We look forward to continuing to work with colleagues across education to seek the best for our schools, families and communities.”

News reports

Archbishop of York unseated by a Chorister Bishop - just for one day

The Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell, was unseated from his throne at York Minster’s Saturday Evensong Service (9 December), by Edward Sangwine, aged 12, who was appointed as the cathedral’s Chorister Bishop for 2023.

Edward succeeds Eliza Haddow who in 2022, was installed as the Minster’s first Chorister Bishop since 1537.

Chorister Bishop Edward was supported by his “canons” - Sam Blackstone aged 13 and Thomas Titchener and Edward Gawthorp both aged 12. The boys wore their robes

December 14, 2023

of office and each received a book of prayers. Chorister Bishop Edward, received a bishop's mitre, cope, pectoral cross and a pastoral staff, hand-carved in the Minster Stoneyard and first used by Eliza last year. Edward moved to the Archbishop's Cathedra (his throne), to give a short address on behalf of all the choristers and children



everywhere. He also gave a prayer of blessing for the people.

The choristers were part of an ancient ceremony, inspired by the Gospel of St Matthew. Jesus said to his disciples that to enter the Kingdom of God, one must become “as a child” (Matthew 18.3). Jesus wanted to teach his disciples lessons about humility and belonging to the Kingdom of God by placing children at the centre of his ministry and work.

December 14, 2023

Commenting on the tradition, Archbishop Stephen said: "This tradition of a child bishop is a reminder that we are all God's children and all equal in the sight of God. The church can seem to be a very hierarchical place but the reality is that the church and the message of the Kingdom of God belongs to everyone, perhaps especially to the children. Part of the vision and strategy of the Church of England is to grow younger and more diverse; welcoming choristers – and allowing them to unseat me – is but one way in which their voice can be part of the story of the church and of God's Kingdom."

About Chorister Bishops

Originating in Medieval times, the ceremony was an important annual tradition in many cathedrals. On the 6th December, the Feast of St Nicholas, a chorister was elected bishop while others acted as canons carrying out all the offices except the mass, until Holy Innocents' Day (28th December). The ceremony was restricted in many cathedrals in the later Middle Ages but at York Minster, the chorister bishops retained wide powers throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, collecting monies from around the Diocese and distributing gifts to the poor. Lists of the 'young bishops' exist from 1416 until 1537 when the custom was suppressed by Henry VIII. In recent years, the ceremony has been revived in a number of English cathedrals creating a unique occasion for children's voices to be heard.

Church News Ireland

In the media

Agreement on fossil fuels at COP28 - LinkedIn News

A major deal, calling for a "transition away" from fossil fuels, has been accepted by delegates at COP28.

The final text comes after an initial draft text was rejected, forcing the UN's annual climate conference to overrun as delegates entered intense negotiations over the deal.

Language around a "phase out" of fossil fuels does not appear in the final draft, despite delegates from the EU and others pushing for it. Instead, the text calls for countries to transition away "from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner ... so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science," Sky News reports. A previous draft text had called for a "phasing down" of coal use. The EU, UK, US and Canada, Australia and many island nations rejected that draft, while Saudi Arabia was reportedly fighting for its acceptance, with Iraqi and Russian support.

Issues around moving Pro-Cathedral from north to south of Liffey - Breaking News ie

Issues around moving the Pro-Cathedral from north to south of the River Liffey continued to be worked upon following an announcement six months ago that

December 14, 2023

Archbishop Dermot Farrell proposed a change despite opposition to the move.

Last month, Dublin City Council called on Archbishop Farrell to attend a meeting with them to explain why he wants to move the Catholic Pro-Cathedral from the north to the south of the city.



The Pro Cathedral on Marlborough Street may be about to lose its current status and become a basilica said the Irish Times.

At a meeting of the Council's Central Area Committee, a motion was passed opposing the "downgrading" of St Mary's Pro-Cathedral to a basilica. It is due to be discussed again this coming week.

The motion was brought by Independent councillor for the north inner city and a former Lord Mayor of the capital,

December 14, 2023

Christy Burke, asking the “Archbishop into City Hall in December as to why his office has had no consultation with local residents, service goers or Committee members” about the proposal.

The Pro-Cathedral, which has been in existence for almost 200 years north of the River Liffey in St Mary’s on Marlborough Street, may be about to lose its current status and become a basilica, while St Andrew’s Church on Westland Row, south of the Liffey, would become the capital’s cathedral under a current diocesan plan.

Plans on the relocation are due to be presented to Rome by the end of the month to ascertain if the move is given the go-ahead by Vatican authorities. The announcement by the Archbishop was made last June.

However, a spokesperson for the Archbishop’s office said over the weekend that they have “not received any communication from Dublin City Council” on the issue.

The spokesperson continued that “the issues around this proposal are still being considered carefully” by the Archbishop and the project group that he has set up, ahead of any recommendation being made to Rome.

“The parishioners of both St Mary’s and St Andrew’s have been consulted and their views will be taken into account,” the spokesperson noted.

“Both churches will play a central role in the future pastoral strategy of the Archdiocese for outreach to the city. The

primary issue to be considered is serving the mission of the Church in proclaiming the Gospel in Dublin into the future.”

Archbishop Farrell said he believes the capital should have a “properly designated cathedral” and that it should be complemented by a church on the other side of the Liffey whose “status and dignity are formally recognised and supported”.

The proposed relocation is being explained for “logistical reasons” as there are strong grounds for considering that St Andrew’s might better serve the cathedral function, with St Mary’s changed to a basilica.”

The Archbishop has set up a project group with representatives of both St Mary’s and St Andrew’s parishes to develop proposals, supported by expert and technical advice.

St Mary’s has provided a focal point for the archdiocese, but it was always envisaged that, at some point, a cathedral building would be required that had both the space and the facilities to accommodate the full range of diocesan liturgical and pastoral ministry.

For a variety of reasons, that never happened but “the limitations of the St Mary’s building and complex remain,” the Archdiocese previously pointed out.

In a statement the Archdiocese previously highlighted that Dublin city has changed and developed.

December 14, 2023

“While St Mary’s is located in an area undergoing renewal and development, on the south side of the Liffey recent and planned commercial and residential development have created a whole new dimension of city life.

“St Andrew’s Church, Westland Row, which was built shortly after St Mary’s, is well placed to engage with the vibrant residential, commercial and cultural heart of the city,” the statement concluded.

Central Static Office figures show that while Catholicism remains the most popular religion in Ireland, its influence has fallen substantially. From a high of 85 per cent in 2011 it now stands at 69 per cent.

Poem for today

Advent 1955

by John Betjeman

The Advent wind begins to stir
With sea-like sounds in our Scotch fir,
It's dark at breakfast, dark at tea,
And in between we only see
Clouds hurrying across the sky
And rain-wet roads the wind blows dry
And branches bending to the gale
Against great skies all silver pale
The world seems travelling into space,
And travelling at a faster pace
Than in the leisured summer weather

December 14, 2023

When we and it sit out together,
For now we feel the world spin round
On some momentous journey bound -
Journey to what? to whom? to where?
The Advent bells call out 'Prepare,
Your world is journeying to the birth
Of God made Man for us on earth.'

And how, in fact, do we prepare
The great day that waits us there -
For the twenty-fifth day of December,
The birth of Christ? For some it means
An interchange of hunting scenes
On coloured cards, And I remember
Last year I sent out twenty yards,
Laid end to end, of Christmas cards
To people that I scarcely know -
They'd sent a card to me, and so
I had to send one back. Oh dear!
Is this a form of Christmas cheer?
Or is it, which is less surprising,
My pride gone in for advertising?
The only cards that really count
Are that extremely small amount
From real friends who keep in touch
And are not rich but love us much
Some ways indeed are very odd
By which we hail the birth of God.

We raise the price of things in shops,
We give plain boxes fancy tops
And lines which traders cannot sell
Thus parcell'd go extremely well

December 14, 2023

We dole out bribes we call a present
To those to whom we must be pleasant
For business reasons. Our defence is
These bribes are charged against expenses
And bring relief in Income Tax
Enough of these unworthy cracks!
'The time draws near the birth of Christ'.
A present that cannot be priced
Given two thousand years ago
Yet if God had not given so
He still would be a distant stranger
And not the Baby in the manger.

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

December 14, 2023