

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Remembering those we love

Image of the day



Remembering those we love

Christmas can be a difficult time of the year for those who have lost loved ones or have been affected by trauma.

The Wave Trauma Centre in Belfast responded by inviting all members of the WAVE family to come along to WAVE Belfast on Thursday evening (14th Dec) at 6pm to join them as they remembered together.

“In the trees beautiful wind chimes were hung to represent those traumatised. The choir sang, we listened to poetry, lit candles and remembered. What an utterly beautiful evening. The candles are still burning and your loved ones are still remembered as the evening draws to a close...

COME IN AND REMEMBER THOSE YOU LOVE

Christmas can be hard for families who have lost a loved one.

This year the WAVE Trauma Centre in Belfast is holding a special event to remember those killed or injured in the 'Troubles', and those who have experienced trauma.

Thursday 14th December, 6pm – 8pm

WAVE Garden of Hope, 5 Chichester Park South, BT15 5DW

Let us come and remember together. There will be a special tree in the garden with almost 4000 lights to remember the dead and another tree with wind chimes in memory of those who were injured or who have experienced trauma.

Hot dogs and mulled wine will be available and guests will have an opportunity to light a candle in memory of their loved ones. The Towards Inclusion Choir will also be taking part.

Please RSVP

adminhq@wavetrauma.org
or tel: 028 9077 9922



VSS
Victims & Survivors Service

COMMUNITY FUND

WAVE
trauma centre

The invitation offered by WAVE

...The power of people standing side by side, was emphasised tonight again in the WAVE garden of hope as scores of people gathered to remember all lost through the Troubles and those traumatised. At a really tough time of the year, people gathered to see 3,800 lights illuminated.”

People and places



Letterkenny prepares for their Christmas Carol Trail

There will be a truly festive atmosphere in the heart of Letterkenny before Christmas as the town hosts its tenth carol trail.

This year's event will take place on Friday, 22 December starting at Trinity Presbyterian Church Letterkenny at 7.30pm.

December 16, 2023

This unique festive event is organised by @Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce, Letterkenny Cathedral Quarter and Letterkenny CDP and the carol service is facilitated by Trinity Presbyterian Church, St. Eunan's Cathedral, Letterkenny and Conwal Parish Church.

All are welcome to come along and participate in what should be a very memorable evening. The Bishop of Raphoe Most Rev Alan McGuickan, has been a regular attendee of our carol trails and this year we have invited his Church of Ireland counterpart the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, the Right Reverend Andrew James Forster to our tenth carol trail.

The carol trail will begin with Christmas Carols and readings at Trinity Presbyterian Church on Letterkenny's main street at 7.30pm.

The group will then make its way up Church Lane in a candlelit procession which is being put together by Letterkenny CDP and the Cathedral Quarter.

The carol service will end at Letterkenny's oldest building, Conwal Parish Church at the top of the Church Lane for more carols and a short reading and there will be a special rendition of 'O Holy Night' from singer Jean Curran.

The evening will finish with tea and mince pies in Conwal Parish Church Centre.

This year's event is bittersweet as it is first carol trail without the late Derek Fleming. Derek, who was the organist in Trinity Presbyterian Church was highly instrumental in establishing this joyful festive tradition as he arranged what

December 16, 2023

carols would be sung. He also played the organs at each of the respective churches.

This unique event promises will be a very special evening and hopes to give people the chance to take time and reflect on the real message of Christmas 'goodwill to all',. "So, come along on Friday, 22nd December and enjoy a very special night in Letterkenny's Cathedral Quarter."



Community services applauded at Derry Cathedral and supported by Prince and Princess of Wales

There was rapturous applause for members of the PSNI, NI Fire and Rescue Service, the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and other emergency services, in St Columb's

December 16, 2023

Cathedral in Londonderry, on Monday evening, but the warmth of the ovation paled in comparison to that which followed the performances of Foyle Down Syndrome and



Ebrington Primary School Choirs. Their joint rendition of 'Jingle Bell Rock - featuring Conor Collins on saxophone - may not have brought the house down but it brought the huge congregation to their feet.

The cathedral was packed almost to overflowing for the annual 'Joint Emergency Services North West Community Carol Service'. Indeed, so large was the attendance that the cathedral ran out of orders of service.

This year's service was supported by the Royal Foundation of the Prince and Princess of Wales. Among those in attendance were the Lord-Lieutenant for the County of Londonderry, Ian Crowe MBE and his wife, Christine, and



the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District, Cllr Patricia Logue and her husband James.

The Lord-Lieutenant shared a message from Her Royal Highness, The Princess of Wales, with the congregation, in which she recognised those who had gone above and beyond to help others throughout the year - and especially to help children. The Princess says foundations we lay in early childhood shape the rest of our lives and the adults we become.

This evening's service was one of 12 Community Carol Services taking place across the UK this year, hosted by Lord-Lieutenants and supported by The Royal Foundation.

The service was led by the Dean of Derry, Very Rev Raymond Stewart, who was assisted by the four local Church leaders: the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster; the Bishop of Derry, Most Rev Dr Donal

December 16, 2023

McKeown; the chairperson of the North West Methodist Mission, Rev Dr Stephen Skuce; and the Moderator of the Derry and Donegal Presbytery, Rev Gordon McCracken. The congregation included senior officers of the three main 'blue light' services, among them the recently-appointed Chief Constable of the PSNI, Jon Boutcher.

Music was provided by the Cathedral Girls' Choir, directed by Nicky Morton, and accompanied by Dr Derek Collins on the organ.

Charities we help make real difference to people in our communities

Very Rev Stephen Forde reveals why will be helped by the annual Stout collection - Dean of Belfast

It's hard to believe that it is a whole year since I, as the Dean of Belfast, last stood on the steps of St Anne's Cathedral, wrapped up warm in the distinctive black cloak which gives the Belfast Black Santa Sit-out its name.

At the launch day for this year's Christmas Sit-out, as in previous years, the television cameras arrived, and the press photographers took their creative shots.

On the steps of the cathedral I was assisted by some of the senior clergy in Belfast and the mayor of the city, Councillor Ryan Murphy. Why do I do this as Dean of Belfast? Surely it is because, deep down, we all recognise that Christmas cannot just be about ourselves.



This year, the Black Santa Appeal will be supporting local charities in three areas of special need in our communities today. The cost-of-living crisis is real for so many families across our province. For too many families the weekly wage no longer meets essential needs.

When people have to choose between heat and food we know that there is real need in 2023. The charities that Black Santa will support this year are working on the front line of this need.

The second area of support, from Black Santa in 2023, is for those charities working to help the families and individuals most impacted by drug abuse.

December 16, 2023

Drugs are readily available in cities, towns and rural communities. Drugs destroy families, and drugs destroy lives. And too often drug addiction leads to families gathered around the graveside of someone taken from them too young.

Those charities which understand and can make a real difference will be in line for special assistance from this year's appeal.

And finally charities supporting those who lost loved ones through the Covid pandemic, which still casts a long shadow over too many lives. With the support of ordinary people from far and wide, this year's appeal will be able to help most those local charities whose passion is to help others.

We all know that the season of Christmas is truly about giving. May this year's sit-out be a true expression of the generosity of our community to our community.

News reports

Pope Francis calls for global treaty to regulate artificial intelligence

Pope Francis has called for an international treaty to ensure artificial intelligence is developed and used ethically, arguing that the risks of technology lacking human values of compassion, mercy, morality and forgiveness are too great.



Francis added his voice to increasing calls for binding, global regulation of AI in his annual message for the World Day of Peace, which the Catholic Church celebrates each January 1. The Vatican released the text of the message

For Francis, the appeal is somewhat personal: Earlier this year, an AI-generated image of him wearing a luxury white puffer jacket went viral, showing just how quickly realistic deepfake imagery can spread online.

The pope's message was released just days after European Union negotiators secured provisional approval on the world's first comprehensive AI rules that are expected to serve as a gold standard for governments considering their own regulation.

Artificial intelligence has captured world attention over the past year thanks to breathtaking advances by cutting-edge

systems such as OpenAI's ChatGPT that have dazzled users with the ability to produce human-like text, photos and songs.

But the technology has also raised fears about the risks the rapidly developing technology poses to jobs, privacy and copyright protection and even human life itself.

Francis acknowledged the promise AI offers and praised technological advances as a manifestation of the creativity of human intelligence, echoing the message the Vatican delivered at this year's UN General Assembly where a host of world leaders raised the promise and perils of the technology.

But his new peace message went further and emphasised the grave, existential concerns that have been raised by ethicists and human rights advocates about the technology that promises to transform everyday life in ways that can disrupt everything from democratic elections to art.

He insisted that the technological development and deployment of AI must keep foremost concerns about guaranteeing fundamental human rights, promoting peace and guarding against disinformation, discrimination and distortion.

His greatest alarm was devoted to the use of AI in the armaments sector, which has been a frequent focus of the Jesuit pope who has called even traditional weapons makers “merchants of death”.

In the media

Rugby giant and ‘true gentleman’ ‘led the sport through some of its most defining moments’, funeral told - Belfast Telegraph

Sydney Millar has been described as “one of Ballymena’s true gentlemen” as family, friends and sporting colleagues through the years gathered in his hometown for a service of thanksgiving for the life of the former rugby star.

Mr Millar, former chairman of the International Rugby Board (now World Rugby) and former player and coach with the British & Irish Lions, died on Sunday aged 89.

He played 37 times for Ireland over a dozen years, making his Test debut in 1958. He made even more appearances for the Lions, playing 39 times over three tours between 1959 and 1966.

Mr Millar then coached the Lions during their controversial South Africa tour in 1974, in the apartheid era, during his three-year period as Ireland manager. He also served as Lions manager on their return to South Africa in 1980 and as Ireland coach during the team’s 1987 World Cup challenge.

As an administrator, Millar became Ulster Rugby Union president in 1985, IRFU president in 1995, Lions chairman in 1999 and IRFU chairman in 2003. He was inducted into the International Rugby Hall of Fame in 2009. He has also



been awarded a CBE, MBE and France's highest honour, the Légion d'honneur, during his career.

Tributes at West Church Ballymena were led by long-term friend and rugby colleague Ian McIlrath.

"To most of us he was just Syd," he said.

"He enjoyed the most outstanding career in all aspects of the game.

"On leaving Ballymena Academy at 16 he joined the Merchant Navy, then into a job which took him all over the world, often away from home for months on end.

"It probably moulded him into the tough human being he became, going on to work for Procter & Gamble, Shell and

December 16, 2023

Scotts of Toomebridge, where he became managing director in a successful business career.

“And somewhere along the way, on a Saturday when he was free, he married Enid.

“He was a proud son, husband, father, grandfather and, only last year, great-grandfather.

But it was in the sport of rugby where the name of Syd Millar became famous and Mr McIlrath read out a tribute from the current chair of World Rugby, Sir Bill Beaumont: “Syd Millar was a giant of the game on the world stage.

“He was as influential in the boardroom as he was as a player, a coach or as a manager.

“He was a natural leader, someone who cared deeply about the sport, the people, the values and the future.

“He led the sport through some of its most defining moments. He was an inspiration to me and many others and will be sadly missed.”

Rev Daniel Kane told mourners: “Sydney was born on May 23, 1934, the eldest of six children. He spent a happy childhood here in Ballymena which he shared with his brothers, Jimmy and Trevor, and sisters, Audrey, Reba and Bee.

“He met Enid Blelock in Portrush in the summer of 1951 and their courtship continued until they married in the summer of 1961. Newlywed life for the young couple began in

Portadown, by which time Syd was a full-time member of the Irish squad and played for the British & Irish Lions.

“In 1962, two blessings arrived at the same time. Enid was heavily pregnant and Syd was selected for a short, four-month tour to South Africa with the British & Irish Lions. It was during this time that Enid’s strength of character and resolve was revealed as she insisted that Syd would go on tour and she would look after domestic matters. And that’s exactly what happened. Syd returned to find Peter half-reared. Jonathan was born the next year and Lesley followed soon after.

“In the late 1970s Syd’s playing and coaching days were coming to an end.

“His rugby commitments were now more centred on administration through Irish and World Rugby.

“Few people get the opportunity to sip cocktails on the Royal Yacht Britannia, dine in palaces and be in the company of such esteemed world leaders as the late Queen and Nelson Mandela.

“Along with Enid, their journeys together took them around the world, visiting famous cities and attending the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games — occasions most of us can only dream of.

“On the international stage his contribution to rugby has been described as nothing short of phenomenal. But Sydney never lost the run of himself. He didn’t let any of it

go to his head. He kept his feet firmly on the ground. He always remained very understated and low-key.”

The final words were left to Syd’s son Johnny, who told the congregation: “They say that in life you should never meet your hero, as they will always disappoint. Dad was our hero — and he didn’t disappoint.”

Shane MacGowan musical funeral defended by priests after cleric brands it 'a scandal' - Belfast Live

The funeral was staunchly defended by Fermanagh priest, writer and broadcaster, Fr Brian D’Arcy, who said Fr McCafferty’s criticism was “fairly par for the course” from the Belfast cleric

Two of Ireland’s best-known priests have defended the star-studded, three-hour musical service at Shane MacGowan’s funeral last week after it was branded a “scandal” by another cleric.

The funeral Mass was attended by celebrities including Johnny Depp, Nick Cave and Bob Geldof, and featured an array of musical performances that had guests dancing in the aisles of the church.

It was described as a “scandal” by Fr Paddy McCafferty, who told Belfast Live that the spectacle was “an abuse of what Mass is and what the Catholic funeral liturgy is all about”.



Fr Ray Kelly dazzled screens on Dancing with the Stars

“It was an abuse of the liturgy and it showed a completely askew understanding of what we actually are doing when we celebrate a funeral Mass,” he said.

However, the funeral was staunchly defended by Fermanagh priest, writer and broadcaster, Fr Brian D’Arcy, who said Fr McCafferty’s criticism was “fairly par for the course” from the Belfast cleric.

“I thought the funeral was brilliant,” he told the Irish Mirror.

“The first Mass was the Last Supper, the first Mass was a crucifixion on Calvary. None of them were very liturgically proper.



“The people of Ireland kept the faith by having Masses on mountainsides when it was banned, and Mass rocks here and there.

“People keep their faith in the presence of Jesus and the Eucharist in different ways,” said Fr D’Arcy.

Church News Ireland

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Antrim youth fellowship's second Advent video

Tune in to the second video from Next Steps, the youth fellowship of All Saints' Parish, Antrim, celebrating the second week of Advent.

The young people are creating a video for each week of the season coming up to Christmas and are showing these at the start of each service during Advent and posting them on the parish social media.

The Rev Peter Blake, who is co-ordinating the project, said: "We hope that this will be a great way of encouraging engagement with this important season in our church and wider community!"

Link at - [<https://connor.anglican.org/2023/12/11/antrim-youth-fellowships-second-advent-video/>]

Christmas 2023 in Cork, Cloyne and Ross

The United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross will hold over 170 services throughout the 12 Days of Christmas and the days leading up to the Christmas Festival.

The following list gives details of church services in the parishes and chaplaincies across the diocese. The list is

December 16, 2023

organised by parish/location. If you would like to see a list organised by date/festival please visit our website.

[\[https://churchofirelandcork.com/2023/12/13/christmas-2023-in-cork-cloyne-and-ross/\]](https://churchofirelandcork.com/2023/12/13/christmas-2023-in-cork-cloyne-and-ross/)

For further information on specific services you can contact your local clergy here - . [\[http://cork.anglican.org/places/\]](http://cork.anglican.org/places/)



Tune in to Belfast Cathedral Music

Jack Wilson Director of Music and Darragh paid a visit to BBC Blackstaff House this week, where they met with the presenter John Toal to talk about the Christmas Services and the Music Department here at Belfast Cathedral.

Tune in to hear them both this coming Sunday 17th December, at 7pm on BBC Radio Ulster!

Choral dates

16.12.23 The annual **Carols by Candlelight Service at St. John the Evangelist, Sandymount** will take place on Saturday 16th December at 4pm. The service will feature the nine lessons and carols of Christmas. There will be a voluntary collection for the Capuchin Day Centre.

16.12.23 – **Cappella Caeciliana: The Magic of Christmas**, The Portico of Ards

16.12.23 – Annual Christmas Concert, Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Rowlagh Church)

16.12.23 – A Dublin Gospel Christmas, Draíocht, Blanchardstown

16.12.23 – Setanta Choir, An Táin Arts Centre, Dundalk

16.12.23 – Handel's Messiah, The Lough Church

16.12.23 – Christmas with Cuore, St Andrew's Church, Westland Row, Dublin

17.12.23 – A Festival of Nine Readings & Carols with MusiCórum conducted by Geoff Spratt, Honan Chapel, UCC, Cork

Christmas has come early...

Lucy Walker is such a talented composer - beautiful melodies, sensitively harmonised. Her new 'Away in a Manger' with The Choirs of Pembroke College, Cambridge. Was released recently. You can stream and download here: <https://AnnaLapwood.Ink.to/InTheStillnessAW>

Poem for today

Circle Of Life

by Carly Nasch

Life is a carousel, always going forward, never going back.
Existence is a hard thing to keep when you stop trying.
To live a life, you must want to live.
To want to live you must find a way.
When all hope is lost, you must stand tall.
When all others retreat, you must prevail.
You are the conscience inside your head.
You create your own destiny.
Life is a very hard thing to keep
When your life does not always go the way you plan.
Fight for your life and the right to keep dreaming.
If you feel you were gifted, share your gift.
If you feel you were cursed, fix it.
As you get older, your life becomes a challenge.
Who are you?
What do you want in life?
What will you be?
What is your purpose in life?
If you worry, these things will turn into burdens.
But if you hold on to them in the back of your mind,
All of the answers will come in time.
Life is a carousel, always going forward, never going back.
Look to the future, not to the

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Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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