

Church News Ireland



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Image of the day – A quilted Advent



CNI admits to cheating a wee bit - the quilts are mainly for Christmas... But when our friend Harry sent these photographs of an exhibition in Portstewart Methodist Church... Enjoy...

News

Black Santa Sit Out in Clogher

Once again the rector, Rev'd William Jeffrey is planning to sit outside Lisbellaw Parish Church on Tuesday 17th December 2024 for twelve hours, from 6.30am to 6.30



pm to raise funds once more for Women's Aid Fermanagh and for Lisbellaw Parish.

The church will remain open during those hours to allow space at a very busy time for all from the community to come in and spend a while in reflection/ prayer. "It would be great if you could support this venture. Thank you!"



Bishop visits Stanton Healthcare

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On a visit to Stanton Healthcare Bishop McGuckian and Fr O'Hagan were welcomed by members of the Board and staff.

They were given an insight into the valuable service for pregnant women in need of supports of many different kinds.

Northwest Methodist Mission Homeless Awareness Week

Northwest Methodist Mission would like to thank everyone who joined them for a morning breakfast in honour of Homeless Awareness Week.

“A special thank you to Mayor of Derry City & Strabane District and all our board members , supporters, staff, and volunteers for your presence and encouragement. Your support helps amplify the voices of those with lived experiences and strengthens our collective effort to address homelessness. Together, we are fostering hope and creating change!”

School Aid for Romania from St Columba's Knock

Thank you to all those who supported Lucy Armstrong's refreshments for School Aid Romania on Sunday morning which raised £556!



Lucy is travelling to Romania with a team from Methodist College next month and this money will be used to assist the project they will be supporting.

St Thomas' Church, Mount Merrion, 150th anniversary

Parishioners of St Thomas' Church, Mount Merrion, celebrated the 150th anniversary of the consecration of their church and the work of God in that place on Advent Sunday (December 1).

The service honoured the connections which sprang from the church and, as the preacher the Revd Ruth Elmes, who



is herself connected to the church pointed out, the milestone



anniversary is not about celebrating the stability of the stonework but rather about giving thanks for the work of God past, present and in years to come.



The theme of connection started with the Bishop of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe the Rt Revd Michael Burrows who presided. The Church of St Thomas was consecrated by Archbishop Richard Trench on Thursday November 26

1874 and served as a Chapel-of-Ease to Taney Parish where, much later, Bishop Burrow's late father, Canon Walter Burrows, was incumbent.

In 1956 the Parish of Mount Merrion was created out of Taney Parish and the Revd Trevor Hipwell was the first Rector of the parish, instituted on June 24 1956. The Revd Ruth Elmes is a relative of Canon Hipwell. Canon Trevor and Jill Hipwell's daughters, Ruth Hyland and Rebecca Moore also attended the service.

Dame Sheila Hancock: 'If Christ were alive today, he'd be cancelled'

'She has found peace in the simplicity of her Quaker faith.

"The Catholicism is gone," she says, "I don't believe in that at all." She values the "prayerful silence" of Quakerism, she says in the show, and stresses that the life of Jesus is still very important. She also suggests that in today's atmosphere of cancellation. "Christ wouldn't have lasted a minute because he said exactly what he thought, he'd have been cancelled."

"I do believe, with all my heart, that you've got to say what you believe and take the risk of getting into trouble," she tells me. "But it's easy for me to say that, because I don't have a career that I have to be careful of. I'm gonna be gone soon." There's no sign of that: the tough, gutsy, passionate Dame Sheila Hancock is still very much with us.'

Cathedral Calls



Massive support for Derry Joint Emergency Services Carol Service

The sound of rapturous applause filled Londonderry's brightly decorated St Columb's Cathedral on Monday evening during surely the most joyful event in its annual calendar, the Joint Emergency Services Northwest Community Carol Service.

The thundering ovation was prompted by the outstanding renditions of some favourite Christmas carols by the choirs of Ebrington Primary School and Foyle Down syndrome



Trust, and a solo performance by the latter's talented saxophonist, Conor Collins.

The cross-community Service was led by leaders from the main local churches, and the musical worship was led by the Cathedral's Boy and Girl choristers, under the direction of Mr Nicky Morton.

As usual, the event attracted a host of dignitaries, including The Lord Lieutenant for the County Borough of Londonderry, Ian Crowe MBE CStJ, and his wife, Christine; the Deputy Mayor of Derry City and Strabane, Alderman Darren Guy; and the PSNI Chief Constable, Mr Jon Boutcher.

Welcoming the congregation, the Dean of Derry, Very Rev Raymond Stewart said the service recognised the work and



contribution to society of the NI Ambulance Service, NI Fire & Rescue, the PSNI, St John Ambulance, Foyle Search and Rescue, Air Ambulance Northern Ireland, British Red Cross and other emergency services. Members of some of these organisations gave readings at this evening's service.

The Dean also welcomed the four church leaders, the Bishop of Derry, Most Rev Dr Donal McKeown, the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster, Rev Peter Morris of Carlisle Road and Clooney Hall Methodist Churches and the Moderator of Derry and Donegal Presbytery, Rev Susan Moore, all of whom took part in the service.

Dean Stewart said this year's offertory collection was in support of Foyle Women's Aid. "This is a group that provides a very important service here in the city and the community," the Dean said. "In this festive season, when many are enjoying each other's company, sadly in some homes this is not the case. Reports of domestic abuse increase at this



time of the year. This means the work of Foyle Women's Aid increases, and they have to find the resources to meet



these needs."

Bishop Andrew described the annual Carol Service as one of the highlights of the Season of Advent. It was an opportunity, he said, to say 'thank you' to the men and



women, staff and volunteers in our emergency services, many of whom were in the congregation. "I think it is an extraordinary thing," the Bishop said, "to put other people's safety at the top of your priority list, and today we say 'Thank you' for what you do.

"A moment or two ago, we read about the coming of Christ into the world, represented by light. It says, 'The light shines in the darkness.' Many of you bring light into dark places through the work that you do and the love that you show."

After the Carol Service, the congregation were invited to make their way the short distance to St Augustine's Church, on the City Walls, to enjoy refreshment and fellowship.

Former Cathedral Organist recognised for his service to Cork

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Colin Nicholls, organist of St Fin Barre's Cathedral from 1981-2007, has been announced as Cork Person of the Month for December in recognition of over forty years of service to Cork's musical landscape and his significant philanthropic involvement with the Rotary Club of Cork across two decades.



December Cork Person of the Month Colin Nicholls pictured seated with his wife Angela. Also included L/R: Manus O'Callaghan, Awards Organiser; George Duggan, Cork Crystal; Alzbeta Belkova, The Metropole Hotel; Ian O'Driscoll, Masterkabin. Picture by Vitaliy Makhnanov.

The Cork Person of the Year awards scheme writes:

Colin moved to Cork from London in 1981 and is most well known for serving as organist and master of the choristers at St Fin Barre's Cathedral for over 26 years. In this role he was widely regarded for his immense knowledge and understanding of the Anglican tradition. His role included composing musical pieces, maintaining a high standard of choral music, repairing organs, recruiting choir members and organising special ceremonies such as the legendary Christmas service of Nine Lessons and Carols, which has become a mainstay of Cork's festive calendar.

Colin currently serves as conductor of the 60-singer strong East Cork Choral Society, a choir for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass that performs in venues right across the country. He recently conducted the choral society as it performed Handel's Messiah in St Peter and Paul's Church on November 30th, and is currently preparing the choir for a rendition of Elgar's Dream of Gerontius which is set to be performed at the opening concert of the 2025 Cork International Choral Festival.

He also acts as director of the College of Clerks Choral in Youghal, an ancient institution originally established in 1464.

Acutely aware of the importance of fostering the next generation of musical talent in Cork, he has in the past served as official accompanist for the annual Feis Maitiú competition in string and woodwind, a music and drama Festival held at Father Mathew Hall in the centre of Cork City.

His musical contributions also extend to academia. A graduate of Trinity College of Music in London, he went on to lecture in organ studies at the Cork School of Music and in harmony at UCC. In acknowledgement of his immense services to music he received an honorary MA from the National University of Ireland.

Outside of music, Colin has been an active member of the Rotary Club of Cork for over 20 years and served as its President in both 2010 and 2012. He is most proud of the ten years he spent running the club's Friendship Night for Seniors and organising its Youth Leadership Development Competition, an initiative that rewards young people with clear leadership potential based on their extra-curricular activities.

On awarding Colin with December's Cork Person of the Month Award, Awards Organiser Manus O'Callaghan expressed his admiration for Colin's decades of commitment to Cork culture and community across the decades.

“Colin has left an indelible mark on Cork's musical landscape across the last four decades. His commitment to his craft is second to none, and through this he has built a significant cultural legacy. Furthermore, his involvement with the Rotary Club of Cork is a credit to his selfless and altruistic character. I'm delighted to honour him with this Cork Person of the Month Award to recognise the exemplary service he has provided to our city and county.”

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Colin's name will now go forward alongside the other monthly winners for possible selection as Cork Person of the Year at the annual Gala Awards Lunch in January, 2025.

Both, Colin and his wife Angela, are still heavily involved in church music in Cork, Cloyne and Ross, acting as organists in Bandon Union of Parishes and Moviddy Union of Parishes.

Clergy and ministry

Canon Jonathan Barry ordained 50 years



Eglantine Parish posted - Congratulations to (LHS) Canon Jonathan Barry - ordained 50 years today.

“It's a pleasure to have Jonathan and Gillian worshiping with us now in All Saints” Rector (RHS)

Commission on Ministry Vocation Retreat 2025

The Vocation Retreat 2025, organised by the C of I Commission on Ministry, will take place in Manresa Retreat Centre, Clontarf, Dublin, from 21–23 February 2025.

The Vocation Retreat is open to all who are exploring a sense of calling to ordained ministry in the Church of Ireland and is intended as a period of reflection and discernment. The guest speaker is the Rt Revd Andrew Watson, Bishop of Guildford, who will address four sessions during the weekend.

The retreat takes place in the context of worship and prayer and there is opportunity for further reflection and conversation.

Places are limited, so early booking is recommended with a deadline of Friday, 24th January 2025.

Those interested in attending may also contact their Diocesan Director of Ordinands for additional information. A leaflet about the Vocation Retreat is provided below along with a booking form.

<https://www.churchofireland.org/news/12653/commission-on-ministry-vocation-retreat>



**Webinars, music,
resources,
broadcasts, and
books**

**Royal Collection
Trust New
exhibitions in
2025**

**In London our new
exhibition *The
Edwardians: Age of
Elegance* will open on
11 April 2025.**

Explore the glamour of
the Edwardian era
through the lives and

tastes of two of Britain's most fashionable royal couples – King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, and King George V and Queen Mary.

In Edinburgh, The King's Gallery will display our popular *Royal Portraits: A Century of Photography* exhibition, which was on in London earlier this year. The exhibition opens on 28 February 2025.

Find out more: <https://bit.ly/49ukgSP>



Hampton Court Palace is on the big screen

Did you spot the magnificent Great Hall and Clock Court in BBC's Wolf Hall - The Mirror and the Light this week?

The new series follows the final of Hilary Mantel's commanding trilogy on the life and death of Thomas Cromwell. However of course, Hampton Court is the main character here. © Playground Entertainment

In the media

[Presbyterian Church in Ireland slams DCU Prof Eoin O'Malley for comparing family of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad to 'Fermanagh Presbyterians' - News Letter](#)

The Presbyterian Church has issued a sharp riposte after a Dublin academic likened the ousted Syrian dictatorial al-Assad family to Fermanagh Presbyterians. Philip Bradfield writes.

The comments were made by Professor Eoin O'Malley, a lecturer in politics at Dublin City University, on Sunday night.

He was commenting on a tweeted photograph of Bashar al-Assad with his parents and four adult siblings.

The father and four siblings in the photo were all wearing dark suits with shirts and ties while the mother and sister were wearing smart business-type dresses.

Prof O'Malley commented: "They look like a family of Presbyterians from Fermanagh."

The academic's father, Des O'Malley, was an Irish minister for justice who took a tough line with the IRA, and came under persistent threat from the group.

His son's comment drew over 130 comments, which appeared to be overwhelmingly critical.

Among them was Lord Weir of Ballyholme, DUP former minister of education.

He said: "What a nasty and bigoted tweet. If you had any respect for anyone else you should remove the comment and apologise for it."

Emeritus Professor of Politics at Ulster University, Henry Patterson, also took issue.

He said: "I have interviewed many Protestant victims of the Provisionals in Fermanagh. This is an insult to them. You should apologise and take it down."

But Mr O'Malley refused.

"I really don't see how it is," he replied. "It's an observation on how ordinary-looking the family is. The target is not Ulster Protestants."

He also told the News Letter he stood by his comments.

“As I’ve said online, my tweet is clearly an observation on how ordinary looking the al-Assad family appeared in the photo,” he said.

“The target of the observation was clearly the al-Assads, and not Ulster Protestants.

“Anyone who knows anything about me or my politics knows that I have nothing but sympathy for Protestant victims of political violence in Northern Ireland.”

However, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland was not impressed. A spokesman said: “We would not want to dignify Professor O’Malley’s offensive attempt at ‘humour’ with a comment.”

Poem for today

Winter Dusk

By Walter De La Mare

Dark frost was in the air without,
The dusk was still with cold and gloom,
When less than even a shadow came
And stood within the room.

But the three around the fire,
None turned a questioning head to look,
Still read a clear voice, on and on,
Still stooped they o'er their book.



The children watched their mother's eyes
Moving on softly line to line;
It seemed to listen too -- that shade,
Yet made no outward sign.

The fire-flames crooned a tiny song,
No cold wind moved the wintry tree;
The children both in Faerie dreamed
Beside their mother's knee.

And nearer yet that spirit drew
Above that heedless one, intent
Only on what the simple words
Of her small story meant.

No voiceless sorrow grieved her mind,
No memory her bosom stirred,

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Nor dreamed she, as she read to two,
'Twas surely three who heard.

Yet when, the story done, she smiled
From face to face, serene and clear,
A love, half dead, sprang up, as she
Leaned close and drew them near.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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

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