

Church News Ireland



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Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

Image of the day - Advent storm wreath

Long before we in Ireland had heard of Storm Darragh the Episcopal parish of St Michaels and all Angels in Issaquah WA had started making their Advent Wreath.

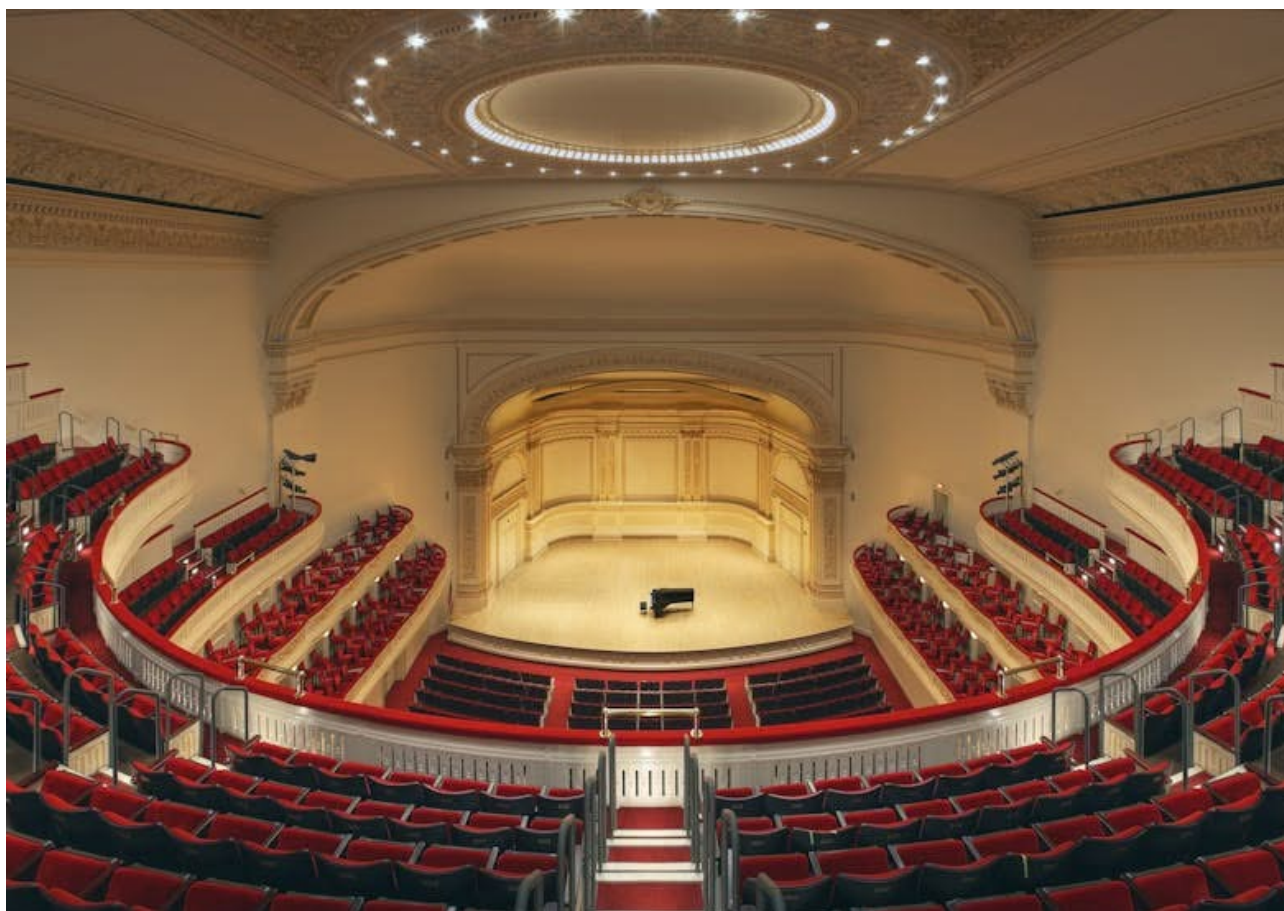


“Much of the greenery came from downed trees on the church property following the ‘bomb cyclone’ we all experienced about 2 weeks ago”.



The parishioners were creative. As well as the 6-foot diameter Advent wreath, they put up sconces, strung blue streamers, and balanced oil lamps. The church looks amazing! You may view more of their handiwork and insights to their worship and service at - [\[https://stmichaels-issaquah.org/photos/photos-advent-2024-set/\]](https://stmichaels-issaquah.org/photos/photos-advent-2024-set/) And if Darragh was bad - have a look at this windstorm clean up - [\[https://stmichaels-issaquah.org/photos/photos-nov-19-windstorm-clean-up/\]](https://stmichaels-issaquah.org/photos/photos-nov-19-windstorm-clean-up/)

News



Methody Chapel Choir to sing in Carnegie Hall, New York

Methodist College, Belfast, rightly says, “We are hugely honoured and excited that our Chapel Choir has been invited to take part in the One World: The Music of Sir Karl Jenkins on Monday 20 January 2025 in Carnegie Hall, New York.

“This is a huge privilege for our pupils to have been selected and just one of the life changing opportunities our pupils get to experience at Methody.

“As part of the trip we would love to connect and potentially host an Alumni event. If you are a Collegian and you are based in New York or the USA and this is something you would be interested, please complete the form below:



Christmas Crib festival at Portstewart Methodist

Portstewart Methodist Church Christmas Crib festival where cribs from all around the world were on show at the weekend as well as incredible quilts , stunning detailed work celebrating the birth of our Lord.



Portrush Christmas Tree Festival supporting Women's Aid and Portrush Youth Club

Holy Trinity Church in Portrush is currently hosting a Christmas Tree Festival to raise funds for two great causes.

The church on Portrush's Main Street features some very inventive and interesting Christmas trees, representing all aspects of the town's community.

Raising funds for Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid and Portrush Youth Club, the festival runs on Friday and Saturday, December 13 and 14 from 12 noon to 6.30pm and again on Sunday, December 15 with a closing carol service at 4pm.



New Chairperson for ECI

The Committee of ECI, made of representatives appointed by the supporting churches recently elected Mr Jim Farrell as their new chairperson.

Jim (Photo above) is a member of Raphoe diocese and is part of their Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation committee in Co Donegal. He is passionate about ecology and promoting environmental sustainability at local level. He is an experienced facilitator and has delivered many workshops and training courses both in the profit and not-for-profit sector.

Jim succeeds Archdeacon Andrew Orr who has been chair of ECI since 2014. During this time, ECI has worked with over 100 congregations, continued to award certificates and awards, and has seen the great success of the ECI Climate Justice candles.

Most recently ECI has been supporting churches through their small grant scheme.

Andrew will continue to serve on the ECI committee as one of the Church of Ireland representatives.

Arklow Shipping Silver Band's festive performances spread Christmas cheer

With the Christmas season now in full swing, the Arklow Shipping Silver Band has been busy setting the tone for festive cheer with a rousing series of performances and more still yet to come, Eoin Mac Raghnaill writes in Wicklow People.

Entry €5
Kids Free

Afternoon Teas €8
OAP/Students €5

Christmas Tree Festival

St. Mary's Church, Nenagh
Wed 11th - Sun 15th Dec

Wednesday to Friday 1pm - 5.30pm
Saturday 11am - 6pm
Sunday 11am - 6pm followed by Carol Service at 6.30pm

Whether you need inspiration for your own Christmas Tree or just want some time out from the hectic season, this is a wonderful opportunity to admire over 80 decorated trees, relax with **Afternoon Teas**, vote for your **Favourite Tree**, buy some **Seasonal Produce, Bric-a-Brac** and a **Raffle** ticket for wonderful prizes. Come along and enjoy this unique Festival in Nenagh - All welcome.

Pre-booking is essential for school groups (special opening Wednesday to Friday mornings)
For more information or bookings please email nenaghchristmastreefestival@gmail.com

Proceeds in aid of Nenagh Union of Parishes and Mírmeara Autism Class at Kiladangan National School, Puckane, Co Tipperary

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The band enchanted audiences recently at St Saviour's Church for the annual Christmas Fayre, where, despite a chill in the air and the occasional downpour, a hearty crowd gathered to soak in the joy of their Christmas program, with melodies of cherished carols and festive classics transforming the church into a haven of warmth and holiday spirit.

Band members' busy festive schedule then brought them to the Arklow Christian Community Church on St Mary's Road for a carol service that was shared over live broadcasts on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, making it accessible to everyone.

Showing no signs of slowing down, the band will continue their performances at the Bridgewater Shopping Centre on Saturday, December 21 (2.30 to 4 pm), for a recital that has become a beloved tradition and draws large crowds eager to experience the magic of live brass music while doing their Christmas shopping.

The following day the band will perform at the annual carol service in Sts Mary and Peter's Church, and at 7.30 pm, the band will bring their joyous melodies to a carol service at the Arklow Methodist Church, inviting everyone to share in the spirit of togetherness and celebration.

"As the Arklow Shipping Silver Band continues its cherished tradition of spreading Christmas cheer, we extend our heartfelt good wishes to all," a band spokesperson said.

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“Our gratitude goes out to the public for their unwavering support and kind encouragement throughout the year. Here’s to a season filled with music, warmth, and community spirit!”

Gallery of photographs at -

[\[https://m.independent.ie/regionals/wicklow/arklow-news/arklow-shipping-silver-bands-festive-performances-spread-christmas-cheer/a419065033.html?origin=app\]](https://m.independent.ie/regionals/wicklow/arklow-news/arklow-shipping-silver-bands-festive-performances-spread-christmas-cheer/a419065033.html?origin=app)

Straffan parishioner hangs peace dove for people devastated by war

A Straffan parishioner is hanging a ‘dove of peace’ on her Christmas tree this festive season to draw attention to the humanitarian crises caused by conflicts around the world and the efforts of Christian Aid to support those most in need.

Lilian Webb, who lives in Naas and attends Straffan Church of Ireland, supports Christian Aid with her donations. She is hanging the peace symbol on her Christmas tree this year to show her solidarity with all those whose lives have been devastated by war across the world, including people in Gaza and those who have fled civil war in Sudan.

Christian Aid supports people impacted by conflict in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria. The charity also supports refugees from Sudan who have fled to South Sudan to escape a civil war that has created the world’s largest humanitarian crisis. Refugees living in displacement camps in South Sudan



Lilian Webb, who lives in Naas and attends Straffan Church of Ireland, supports Christian Aid with her donations

struggle to survive on the meagre rations they receive, and the support services in place are no match for the scale of the need. Christian Aid works through local partners to help some of the most vulnerable at Wedweil refugee camp in South Sudan

Among the tens of thousands to have reached Wedweil camp are Shede, her six-year-old daughter and her granddaughter, also aged six. Although Shede and the girls have reached the relative safety of Wedweil, their fight for survival is not over. Food shortages and sky-high inflation make food and everyday essentials unaffordable.

Thanks to funding from Irish Aid and the Scottish Government, Christian Aid and its partner Smile Again Africa

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Development Organisation (SAADO) made a small cash grant to Shede, helping her buy nutritious food and essentials such as cooking pots. To date, the charity has supported 4,550 people at Wedweil in this way.

Christian Aid Ireland Chief Executive Rosamond Bennett thanked Lilian for helping to raise awareness of the devastating impact of war. She said: “We’ve all seen the terrible images of war on our TV screens this year and it’s important, especially at Christmas, that we remember the countless people impacted by conflict. Here at home, we’re looking forward to our Christmas celebrations but for the refugees in South Sudan who have escaped with only the clothes on their backs, there’s no room for comfort and joy. Thankfully, aid agencies like Christian Aid and our local partners are helping some of the most vulnerable to survive and thrive.”

For more information and to support Christian Aid’s work this Christmas, please visit caid.ie/Christmas

ACN Ireland’s emergency campaign for Christians of Aleppo

Charity Aid to the Church in Need, Ireland – which supports thousands of vulnerable minority Christian communities in 140 countries – is making an urgent appeal for prayer and support for the Christian community and all residents of Syria, in the midst of

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recent upheaval that has seen President Bashar al-Assad reportedly flee.

The ACN appeal follows the recent offensive by anti-government rebel groups. Please see how to donate below.

The Syrian capital Damascus fell to the anti-Assad forces on Sunday, and pictures showed many civilians celebrating in the street despite the uncertain future.



Larne Churches Together

Invite everyone to our

CHRISTMAS WALK OF LIGHTS
Monday 16th December

Starting at 7pm from:
Old Presbyterian Church (Meeting House Street)
& travelling to:

St Cedma's Church of Ireland
First Larne Presbyterian Church
Broadway Christmas Tree

Refreshments provided afterwards in
First Larne Presbyterian Church

Bring your own torch

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Michael Kelly, Director of Public Affairs for ACN Ireland, warned that anxiety is spreading among the small Christian community. “Some of the rebel groups are known for imposing strict interpretations of Islamic law in areas under their control.

“Around 25,000 Christians are living in Aleppo and now face an uncertain and challenging future.

Our project partners are appealing for support and prayers in this very difficult moment. Let us unite in prayer for peace, protection, and hope for all citizens of Aleppo,” Mr Kelly said.

The counteroffensive by the Syrian army had brought devastating airstrikes on the city. Civilians in Aleppo were trapped in a city once again struggling to survive, haunted by the ghosts of over a decade of war. However, initial reports suggest the city is re-opening.

According to Ms Marielle Boutros, ACN Project Manager for Syria, “Basic services are paralysed, with only two hospitals operating for critical cases. Food supplies are insufficient, prices have soared, and the population faces the dual threat of bombings and insecurity on the ground,”

Religious congregations and Church leaders are staying in Syria to serve their people, and the local Church is working tirelessly to console and assist the most vulnerable. However, the situation remains critical, and fears for safety are growing among the residents.

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“There is a constant climate of fear. People are trapped; no one can enter or leave the city. An Armenian doctor was killed by a sniper, and a bus trying to leave for Hassake was also attacked,” Ms Boutros said. “Basic services have collapsed: schools are not operating, and banks have stopped functioning, leaving people without access to their salaries.”

ACN is actively responding to this crisis through emergency aid projects and is appealing for €350,000 to fund:

ADORO
CHRISTMAS 2024

ALL
Bells
IN
Paradise

DIRECTOR ASHLEY FULTON MBE

WED 18TH DEC 2024 - 7.45PM

ST MARK'S PARISH CHURCH,
ARMAGH

£17.00

Proceeds in aid of church funds

Buy tickets at www.bit.ly/adoro24armagh
or from St Mark's Parish Office, 44 Victoria
Street, Armagh, phone: 028 3752 3197

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Medical assistance to support hospitals treating critical cases and elderly and chronically ill patients.

Aid for displaced people, providing food, mattresses, and blankets to displaced families both in Aleppo and other areas.

Alternative solar and electrical energy.

Support for Christian schools in Aleppo.

According to Philipp Ozores, Secretary General of ACN International, "People are deeply frightened. The airstrikes, along with the strict control of the rebel factions that have

BLACK
Santa
SIT-OUT

LISBELLAW
PARISH CHURCH

TUESDAY 17
DECEMBER 2024
6:30AM - 6:30PM

ALL PROCEEDS TO
WOMEN'S AID FERMANAGH
AND PARISH FUNDS

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taken the city, have turned survival into a daily struggle. This is a moment for unity and action. ACN urges the Christian community around the world to unite in prayer for Aleppo, asking for peace, protection, and hope for all citizens.”

ACN is Ireland’s leading charity protecting the rights of Christians and supporting the suffering and persecuted Church. Last year, it supported almost 6,000 projects in some 140 countries. For more information on ACN, regarding its work or to offer support, please call +353 (1) 837 7516 and/or email info@acnireland.org. You can also write to ACN Ireland, St Joseph’s, 151 St Mobhi Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 9, D09 HC82.

How you can help:

Pray: Ask your parish, community and family to pray for Aleppo, and for peace in Syria.

Donate: Your contributions will provide vital resources for food, shelter, and medical care. To donate click [here](#).

Cathedral Calls

ALG choir sings at St Patrick’s Cathedral

The ALG choir performed its annual concert at St Patrick’s Cathedral in Dublin at the weekend (8 December), in aid of Depaul Ireland.

Clients, family and friends were in the congregation as the choir and musicians impressed with a selection of festive

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tunes and some solo performances, all led by choir director Anna-Marie Curran.

This annual event supports Depaul Ireland whose mission is to end homelessness and change the lives of those affected by it.

So far, the ALG choir of the Law Society has raised €15,000.

The cathedral event is one of ALG's Christmas fundraising initiatives for its community partners.

The Cathedral Church of Saint Patrick,
Armagh

A Service of Carols & Readings

sung by the Armagh Diocesan Singers

Sunday 15th December 2024
at 3.15 p.m.

Everyone welcome



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Later in the week a Christmas bake sale and coffee mornings was held in aid of St Joseph's Co-ed Primary School in East Wall, Dublin 3.,

Clergy and ministry

New priest joined Tipperary this past weekend

Fr. Killian Heney, from the Parish of Knockavilla/Donaskeigh, was ordained as a RC Priest by Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly on Sunday December 8th at St. Michael's Church in Tipperary Town.



It was a very special day for Fr. Killian and his family and indeed for the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly.

Fr. Killian celebrated his first Mass in the Church of the Assumption Knockavilla.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

New PCI podcast episode

New PCI podcast episode #87 - **Present to God** as his people as we read the Bible

In this latest episode of the PCI podcast, Andrew Dickson (PCI Congregational Life Development Officer) explores being present to God as we read the Bible with David McCullagh, Rosie Donaldson and Richard McChesney.

<https://audioboom.com/posts/8620105-087-bible-engagement>

Present is a denomination wide initiative inviting and encouraging congregations and their members to make themselves fully present to God who is ever present to us.

Find out more and watch a video about the Present initiative here www.presbyterianireland.org/present

In the media

Peace on disputed earth: Historic interface event could be Belfast's best festive season moment - Belfast Telegraph

“This is so significant... We're making history, I really do believe that.”

A group of over 100 people gathered in west Belfast for a rather unique Christmas event to kickstart the festive season on Monday evening.

Standing between the two sets of gates on one of the infamous interfaces along Belfast's peace wall, the man at the centre of the crowd said: “This place is synonymous with separation and here we are united as one. This is about togetherness, about love. Christmas is about the time when love came down.”

It was made all the more poignant by the fact that Storm Darragh had, a few days earlier, toppled the very section of the peace wall opposite where the group had gathered.

“They've got a good shot at me from the top of Divis now,” joked Pastor Johnny McKee, of New Life City Church at the start of what was a carol service organised jointly by groups on either side of the gates.

A Bible reading was then made by a former IRA prisoner.

A brass quartet from the Ulster Orchestra provided the music.

There was no fanfare, no fuss, no police presence. An innocent passer-by would have been totally oblivious as to the significance, so normal it all seemed.

It had the feeling of any old community beginning their Christmas festivities on a night that was remarkable only by the fact it could never have happened in years gone by.

This was the fourth year it has happened, held using the geographically appropriate building of Pastor McKee's church, which sits right on the wall, but organised in partnership with the Falls Residents Association, Falls Community Council, St Peter's Cathedral and St Comgall's Ionad Eileen Howell.

There was a walk from St Peter's to New Life City Church beforehand.

It was “about a 50:50 split”, according to Pastor McKee, in terms of attendees coming from either side of the wall.

“We're part of what's known as the Falls-Shankill Forum,” he explained. “We talk about interface areas and about how to just develop relationships.

“So for the last four years, we've been doing a cross-community carol service. There are so many groups that have been involved in this year.

“We just meet, sing Christmas carols, do some readings and then we'll go in for some food afterwards. That's it.”

They were there to remember the birth of Jesus, who was around at a time when there was violent dissent and uprisings from within his Jewish community against their Roman leaders.

So it's not surprising that he spoke about how to relate to supposed enemies.

He said: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that."

Religion — or, rather, Christianity — has much to answer for as regards the role it played in stoking tensions as the Troubles erupted in NI.

Monday evening seemed the absolute antithesis of that blood and thunder message.

And much more like Jesus.

In that sense, it's hard to disagree with Pastor McKee when he concluded the night by saying: "We're still in a bit of a mess here, but we believe the answer to that mess is Jesus."

Maybe it's nights like this one that are what peace and reconciliation look like; when both sides of our community here realise there are a lot of "Good Samaritans" across the wall.

"We know the significance of this place," Pastor McKee told me. "It's a peace line and there's a reason for these gates.

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“There's been enough damage that has been done. We're just trying to spread the love, spread the joy and what better time to do it than at Christmas time?”

A survey in 2019 found that, while 76% of those living near our peace walls wanted them to be removed within the lifetimes of their children, only 19% agreed that they should be taken down immediately.

We've got a way to go before the work started, rather uninvitedly, by Storm Darragh last weekend can be continued.

But a night like Monday seeming as normal and unremarkable as it did is certainly a step in the right direction.

“One brick at a time,” smiled Pastor McKee.

BT 11.12.24

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**

Please recommend to your friends
