

Church News Ireland



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Image of the day

4 Corners Festival Wonderful Wander

Introducing Wonderful Wander starting at Writers' Square beside St Anne's Cathedral on Saturday 8

This year's Wonderful Wander, delivered in association with the North Belfast Heritage Cluster, begins in Writer's Square opposite St Anne's Cathedral on Saturday 8 .

From here we go on a comparatively short walk, but one which takes in the massive changes that this historically important part of our city has experienced over the years, ranging from different waves of migrants making Belfast their home, through to the recent influx of students in response to the latest of many physical developments in the area, in response to and producing demographic, cultural, political and religious changes.

Along the way we will see the significant implications for some of the places of worship of all kinds in the area.

And as ever this will be peppered with stories, poems and perhaps even songs, led by David Campton and Mylie Brennan, but bring along your own stories to share as we wander along.

We finish with refreshments at Girdwood Hub.

Join us at 1:30pm on Saturday February 8th.

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For more information, click the link below 📌 <https://www.4cornersfestival.com/festival-events/wonderful-wander-2/>

News

Washington churches respond to plane crashes

Families of the victims of the mid-air collision over Washington between a plane and a military helicopter visited the crash site on Sunday, walking along the bank of the River Potomac, near Washington, DC.

All 64 people on board the American Airlines jet, and three personnel on the army Black Hawk helicopter, died in the collision on Wednesday evening. Among the victims were young ice skaters, their coaches, and members of their family, who were returning from an event in Wichita, Kansas. The plane was just minutes away from landing when the collision occurred.

On Sunday evening, it was reported that the bodies of 55 of the 67 victims had been recovered and searches were continuing to find the remaining 12.

Shortly after the incident, **a Roman Catholic parish priest, Fr Frederick Edlefsen**, rushed to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport to be with waiting families. He said in a TV interview afterwards: “A tragedy like this not only provokes grief, but it’s a very intimate grief. It was

probably one of the most intense grief moments and situations I've ever seen in my own almost 24 years of priesthood."

An artist, Robert Marquez, has erected 67 crosses close the scene. He drove from his home in Texas to create the memorial.

Prayers have been said for the victims and their families. **The Dean of Washington National Cathedral, the Very Revd Randy Hollerith**, said on Thursday: "Today, many families are experiencing profound grief, their lives for ever changed by this tragedy. We hold in prayer all those who were waiting to welcome loved ones, friends, and colleagues who will never return. We remember and give thanks for our fallen army personnel who train under the cover of night to protect us."

The Pope sent a message to President Trump, in which he commended "the souls of the deceased to the loving mercy of Almighty God, and offers his deepest sympathies to the families who are now mourning the loss of a loved one".

The crash was the deadliest air crash for nearly 25 years in the United States.

A second air crash in the US occurred on Friday, involving an air ambulance in Philadelphia. All six people on board, including a child returning home to Mexico after receiving life-saving treatment in the US, were killed, as was at least one person on the ground.

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Calling all musicians to Christ Church Derry

Are you a musician looking for a beautiful venue to showcase your talent? Christ Church (Derry/Londonderry) is inviting performers from all genres to take part in our First Wednesday Recitals!

We welcome soloists, duos, and ensembles to fill our stunning space with 50–60 minutes of music. These are paid performances, and we're excited to feature a wide variety of styles and instruments.

So far, we've enjoyed performances by soprano and tenor soloists, folk singers, organists, pianists, flutists, and many more. Now, we're on the lookout for new and returning artists to continue the tradition from August 2025 onwards.

Get in touch to discuss available dates:
Ben McGonigle: brmcgonigle@gmail.com
Jim Kelley: james.kelley@talktalk.net

Please share this post with your musical friends and networks to help us spread the word. We can't wait to hear from you.

Education

DUP minister meets library chiefs over 'transgender' books for children

DUP minister meets library chiefs over 'transgender books for children' furore, Noel McAdam writes in the Belfast Telegraph

Library chiefs have met with a DUP minister following a row over transgender books aimed at children which have appeared on local shelves.

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons voiced concerns and demanded a face-to-face meeting after complaints from members of the public and politicians.

Mr Lyons warned: “Libraries should be a place where parents do not need to worry about whether books their children may pick up are age-appropriate.”

But Libraries NI chief executive Jim O'Hagan and Library Board chair Bonnie Anley stressed they are required to “meet the needs of the entire community” and, in a statement, the library bosses said they are required to provide a range of material “reflecting the diversity of the population”.

It's almost a year since the issue was first raised by TUV leader Jim Allister (now North Antrim MP) and his DUP Upper Bann counterpart Carla Lockhart, saying urgent action was needed to remove the books.

After the meeting, however, Mr Lyons urged parents to make any concerns they have known directly to the library service.

“I met with the chief executive and chair of Libraries NI to highlight my concerns and discuss the policies, procedures and guidelines in place to manage book stock across all library services,” he said.

“Whilst the matter of book stock is an operational issue for Libraries NI, I reiterated my view that books should be age-appropriate and for libraries to be a safe place for both parents and children.

“The chair and chief outlined to me the procedures in place for dealing with concerns or complaints about specific books. I would encourage parents who have concerns to utilise that procedure and make views known.”

Mr Allister said he was shocked that children's books such as 'Introducing Teddy' had cartoon characters “switching gender... Another book, 10,000 Dresses, has a little boy being told by his mother that boys do not dress up in dresses. The mother is then vilified...”

Sinn Fein MLA Colm Gildernew accused Mr Allister of “an unwarranted and disgraceful attack on an entire section of our children”.

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Looking for a half-term adventure that's truly out of this world?

Discover how the Moon and Sun can power a greener future when you join us for a cosmic day of talks, activities, and hands-on fun.

As part of the NI Science Festival you'll meet leading experts, hold a piece of real Moon rock, and learn practical ways to tackle eco-anxiety.



Date: 13 Feb, from 12:00



Location: 2 Royal Avenue, Belfast



Booking: <https://ow.ly/jOzH50UQYvB>

Cathedral Calls

Malachi Cush and Friends in Concert - Home of Saint Patrick Festival 2025

As part of the 2025 Home of Saint Patrick celebrations, Saint Patrick's Cathedral (RC) presents Malachi Cush and Friends in concert.

This special concert will mark the launch of our Saint Patrick's Day Festival for 2025. Performed in the majestic setting of our Saint Patrick's Cathedral this is sure to be a night not to be missed.

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In this special year of the Jubilee of Hope, we join with Archbishop Eamon Martin in thinking of all those who have left our shores in a search of a more hopeful future. Join with us as we invoke the spirit of St Patrick through enchanting Celtic classics and spiritual songs of old.

Event Details Starts at 7:30PM

St Patrick's RC Cathedral, Armagh, BT61 7QX
Sunday 9th March 2025 7:30PM. Ticket price 25 pounds

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/st-patricks-cathedral-parish/malachi-cush-and-friends-in-concert-home-of-saint-patrick-festival-2025/2025-03-09/19:30/t-eadedmp>



St Mary's Edinburgh Sounds of the Shows

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Bringing the West End to the West End! The Cathedral Consort are giving their next concert, Sounds of the Shows, with tunes from Phantom of the Opera, Les Miserables, Wicked and the Lion King.

Wednesday 26th February, 7:30pm, £20/15. Tickets available here: www.cathedral.net/event-details-registration/sounds-of-the-shows

Chorister changes in Derry



The music staff write - On Sunday morning in St Columb's Cathedral, there were mixed emotions as we celebrated Clark McClintock's final Sunday as a Boy Chorister.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to Clark for his loyal dedication and service to the Cathedral Boys' Choir. This isn't a farewell for good,



though; starting next week, Clark will be joining the Gents in the back row.

We also took a moment to honour Janelle, Clark's mother and one of our dedicated Boy Chorister Supervisors, for her invaluable support over the past ten years since her eldest son, Elliot, began his journey with the Boy Choristers.



As we bid farewell to one Head Chorister, we joyfully welcomed another! Congratulations to Ben Langan for receiving the Head Chorister medal from Clark. We also extend our warmest congratulations to James Langan, our new Deputy Head Chorister, and to Noah Dickson and Cavan Wrighton, who have stepped into the roles of Corner

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Boys.

Clergy and ministry



The graphic features a dark stone wall background. At the top, the words "CHURCH OUTSIDE THE WALLS" are written in large, colorful, hand-painted letters. Below this, the text "humbler church" is in white, and "Bigger God" is in a larger white font. Three portraits of bishops are arranged horizontally: Archbishop Anne Germond on the left, Archbishop Linda Nicholls in the center, and Bishop Victoria Matthews on the right. Each portrait has a caption below it. At the bottom left, the Trinity College University of Toronto logo and the text "Faculty of Divinity" are displayed.

CHURCH OUTSIDE
THE WALLS

humbler church
Bigger God

Archbishop
Anne Germond

Archbishop
Linda Nicholls

Bishop
Victoria Matthews

Trinity College
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Faculty of Divinity

Canadian insight on Church Outside the Walls: Past, Present and Future

Join Trinity College, Toronto, Faculty of Divinity on Thursday, February 6 at 7 pm ET (via Zoom) with leaders from The Anglican Church of Canada for sharing and thoughtful discussion on “Church Outside the Walls: Past, Present and Future”

Where did challenges lead the Church into important new conversations and ways of being?

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How are Canadian Anglicans being called to engage with the world outside our walls?

Where do you sense the Holy Spirit is leading us in the coming ten or twenty years?

What is your guidance for divinity students and the newly ordained in our changing situation?

More information & registration: <https://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/events/church-outside-the-walls/>

One day conference on Irish High Crosses at Glenstal Abbey

On 15 February next, the historic and beautiful Glenstal Abbey in Limerick will host a one-day conference, exploring how Irish sculptors and artists have portrayed the key instruments of Christ's Passion over the millennia, between the seventh and the seventeenth centuries.

As the central symbol of the Christian faith, the Cross has been depicted in a variety of ways by artists since the early Christian period.

The contributors, Professor Rachel Moss, Professor in the History of Art and Architecture at Trinity College Dublin; Dr Megan Henvey, an Associate Fellow in the Department of History of Art at the University of York; and, Dr Colmán Ó Clabaigh, a monk of Glenstal and a medievalist specialising in the monastic and religious history of late medieval Ireland, will examine the art historical, historical and

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theological aspects of the Irish High Crosses and will trace the enduring influence of these iconic monuments.

The conference will run from 10.00am through to 4.30pm on 15 February at Glenstal Abbey, Murroe, Co Limerick, V94 A725.

This conference costs €70, with lunch and refreshments provided. Further details on talks and speakers may be found Glenstal.com. For bookings, please contact 061 621 005 or events@glenstal.com.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books



C of E theme for Lent and Easter 2025: Living Hope

This Lent we are encouraged to put down deep roots of hope by connecting with God who is with us at all times.

The Church of England's Lent theme for 2025 is Living Hope. You can read all about this theme and the available and upcoming resources at [cofe.io/LivingHope]

Resources for churches will include:

Booklets for adults and children and family resources.

Logos and design guidelines so you can use the theme in your designs.

Digital Labs webinars and blogs tailored to the theme.

Downloadable resources including activity sheets for children, social media graphics, and flyer, poster and PowerPoint templates all available

on [AChurchNearYou.com]

Lent reflections content outline to help you plan services and small group content.

Special Webinar: 'Living Hope' Resources for Lent and Easter

Date & Time Feb 5, 2025 03:00 PM

Description - Join us for a special webinar as we explore this year's Lent and Easter resources for churches. The Church of England's Lent theme for 2025 is Living Hope.

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In Lent we journey with Jesus on the difficult and thorny road that leads all the way to the cross on Good Friday – and beyond, to the transformation of Easter Day. God invites us to bring to him our own journey through everyday life. In the disappointment of daily setbacks and the pain of deeper hurts, we discover that God is present with us. And God promises a future where all things are healed and made new. Living Hope offers us the opportunity to deepen our hope in God and be part of what God is doing to bring hope in the world.

This webinar will explain more about the theme, reflections and resources that will be available for churches. We'll explain what the various printed and digital resources are and how you can access them. We'll also be available to answer any questions you might have about making the most of Lent and Easter and the Living Hope theme.

Sign up below to attend the webinar on Zoom. If you can't attend on the day, you can still sign up and you'll receive a recording of the webinar after the event. Read more about Living Hope at cofe.io/LivingHope

Heritage

Charles Frederick Allison

Charles Frederick Allison, the famous Ulster-Scots Canadian merchant, philanthropist and college administrator, was born on Burns Night in 1795.

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Allison was born into a family of Ulster-Scots heritage, his grandfather Joseph emigrating from Ulster to Canada in the late 18th Century due to unfortunately impressing a taxman with silver spoons at dinner.

The taxman thought if the family could afford silver spoons they could certainly afford more taxes, and so they promptly left Ireland.

Allison initially was a store clerk before joining an expanding mercantile firm run by his cousin William Crane, soon becoming partner. The business exported timber to Liverpool as well as trading in imported commodities and agricultural produce.

In the mid 1830s, Allison converted from his Anglican faith to the Methodist denomination, joining a congregation that had aims to open an educational institution but lacked the appropriate funding. In 1839, Allison solved this problem by purchasing land in Sackville, New Brunswick, and donating £100 per year for ten years to fund its operation.

Subsequently, the college was named after him. Mount Allison University, as it is now known, was the first university in the British Empire to award a baccalaureate to a woman, and the first in Canada to award a Bachelor of Arts to a woman.

Allison is buried at the Lower Sackville Methodist Cemetery where a fitting memorial stands in honour of his time and effort to furthering education in New Brunswick.



In the media

Ireland's spiritual mother faces secular reinterpretation - Christian Pure

In Ireland, Feb. 1 marks the beginning of spring and the celebration of “Lá Fhéile Bríde” — St. Brigid’s Day. For Irish Catholics, the day has always been significant, as St. Brigid is one of Ireland’s three patron saints alongside St. Patrick and St. Colmcille.

Since 2023, the feast day has been a public holiday in the Republic of Ireland, branded by the Irish government as “St. Brigid’s Day/Imbolc bank holiday.” (Imbolc was a pagan festival that marked the arrival of spring.) The day has been



used to promote the successes of Irish women and generated a variety of celebrations of St. Brigid, typically reimagined as a pre-Christian goddess.

In a Jan. 30 statement, government minister Patrick O'Donovan encouraged members of the public to participate in a series of events, omitting any reference to Christianity or Catholicism.

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It is not uncommon of the Irish government to diminish the faith today, but the secular appropriation of the story of St. Brigid has caused some reaction.

The government information pointedly ignores the Christian St. Brigid, asserting: “With roots in the ancient Celtic festival of Imbolc, which marked the arrival of spring, St. Brigid’s Day is an opportunity to celebrate growth, renewal, and light. In Celtic mythology, Brigid was a triple goddess — of healing, fire, and of poetry.”

Catholic commentator Father Owen O’Gorman told CNA: “It’s a real problem with the secularization of the feast days; it’s not just St. Brigid — St. Patrick’s Day has obviously become quite secularized. The onus is then on the Church to enable people to connect with the real St. Patrick rather than the plastic St. Patrick.”

Highlighting the importance of St. Brigid, O’Gorman drew a parallel with Sister Clare Crockett, an Irish religious sister who he says walked in the steps of St. Brigid.

“We often talk about founding fathers of a nation or church — St. Brigid is our founding mother. When we look at Sister Clare, whose [cause for canonization] has just been opened in Spain, she re-proposes St. Brigid’s life to a new generation, a young generation of women who have been through a secular culture. Sister Clare herself was immersed in that culture for so long and found it difficult to extract her heart from it.”

O’Gorman continued: “There is a very positive message of spiritual motherhood. St. Brigid is the spiritual mother of our nation; we honor her by praying through her intercession by

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spreading the cult of St. Brigid, her devotion, imitating her virtues, her spirit of hospitality, her spirit of generosity, and her love of Christ. If we consider Clare Crockett, I believe she will be another great figure for the people of Ireland and women of Ireland, but also internationally. Already we can see the connection with her among a younger generation.”

Sinéad Strong is founder of Catholic Mothers Ireland, an organization that has drawn upon the life and example of St. Brigid as a source of strength. The group’s events have included a St. Brigid’s Day Mass for the parents of miscarried and stillborn babies.



“What draws me to St. Brigid is her simplicity, her service to the poor, sick, and elderly,” Strong told CNA. “One of her

patronages is newborn babies, which is important to me as a mother of seven children. It was a blessing to call on her intercession on her feast day for those suffering having lost their babies.”

O’Gorman pointed to the origin of St. Brigid’s eponymous cross as an example the saint’s evangelization and empathy toward others. He explained how Brigid made a cross out of reeds as a tool for evangelization and for the salvation of a dying pagan chieftain.

“It was her simple tool that led to the conversion of a dying man,” he said.

Every year Catholic Mothers Ireland brings together mothers and children to learn how to make St. Brigid’s crosses, which are then blessed by a priest on the feast day.

“I am always struck by the enthusiasm of the children in learning this beautiful tradition and listening to the stories of St. Brigid and also how the older children take the time to help the younger children,” Strong said.

Strong sees St. Brigid as a role model for Catholic mothers striving every day to pass on their faith, traditions, and Irish heritage in a world that is trying to extinguish it.

“It is particularly impressive — given the state’s attack on motherhood as well as the continued attack on our faith — to see Catholic mothers’ strength of will and great virtue in going against the flow of society.”

Strong said she believes that attempts to recast St. Brigid as a New Age Celtic pagan goddess “is a blatant attempt to diminish the strong faith once held in this country.”

“It is yet another festival to bring Ireland back to its pagan ways. The goddess they celebrate is not St. Brigid,” she said.

Christine O’Hara is a teacher in Colaiste Chríost Rí in Cork. She has on prominent display in her classroom a quotation attributed to St. Brigid: “Christ dwells in every creature.” O’Hara told CNA that for her the saint is a forbearer of St. Teresa of Calcutta, who herself spent time as a religious in Ireland. “St. Brigid said to find Christ in the poor, to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked — that is my work.”

O’Hara pointed to St. Brigid’s work as founder of her abbey in Kildare. “She was concerned about the poor; her compassion and her hospitality really stood out as the faith spread,” she said.

Father Jaimie Twohig from Cork points to the story of St. Brigid’s cloak and its parallel in the Gospel. “St. Brigid’s cloak spread so far when she asked for land to build her convent, and [she] was told she could have as much as her cloak covered,” Twohig explained. “You know it was a small cloak, but it miraculously spread over a vast quantity of land.”

Armagh Auxiliary Bishop Michael Router has drawn a clear parallel between the lessons of the current era and the times in which St. Brigid lived, writing in the current edition of the Irish bishops’ newsletter, Intercom, that “there is no doubt that Brigid was a woman of strength, courage, and deep faith who was so impressive and strong that she acquired the authority and breath of influence that was almost unheard of for a woman at that time.”

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“She gained that authority and influence because of her fearlessness and her willingness to champion the cause of those who had no voice and to tackle the injustices that existed in the society in which she lived. The example of St. Brigid highlights the need for the resurgence today of a spirituality and faith based on love and compassion in a world that is so self-centered and materialistic.”

From Christian Pure

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

Church News Ireland

www.churchnewsireland.org

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

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