

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – Congratulations Cookstown Scouts**

January 10, 2025

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### **News -**

East Belfast Mission meeting challenges of homelessness  
David Pierce's birthday fundraiser for Mothers Union  
New Safeguarding and Education Administrator in Cashel

### **Cathedral Calls -**

From Medieval to Digital at Christ Church Cathedral

### **Clergy and ministry -**

Living Out an Ethos of Welcome and Inclusivity in Clontarf

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

Service for the feast of Epiphany from C of E  
Do you want to do something different this summer?

### **Heritage -**

Former US President Ulysses S Grant visit to Ulster this week in 1879

### **Perspective -**

Can Christianity survive the next 50 years? Angela Tilby

### **Speaking to the soul -**

Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

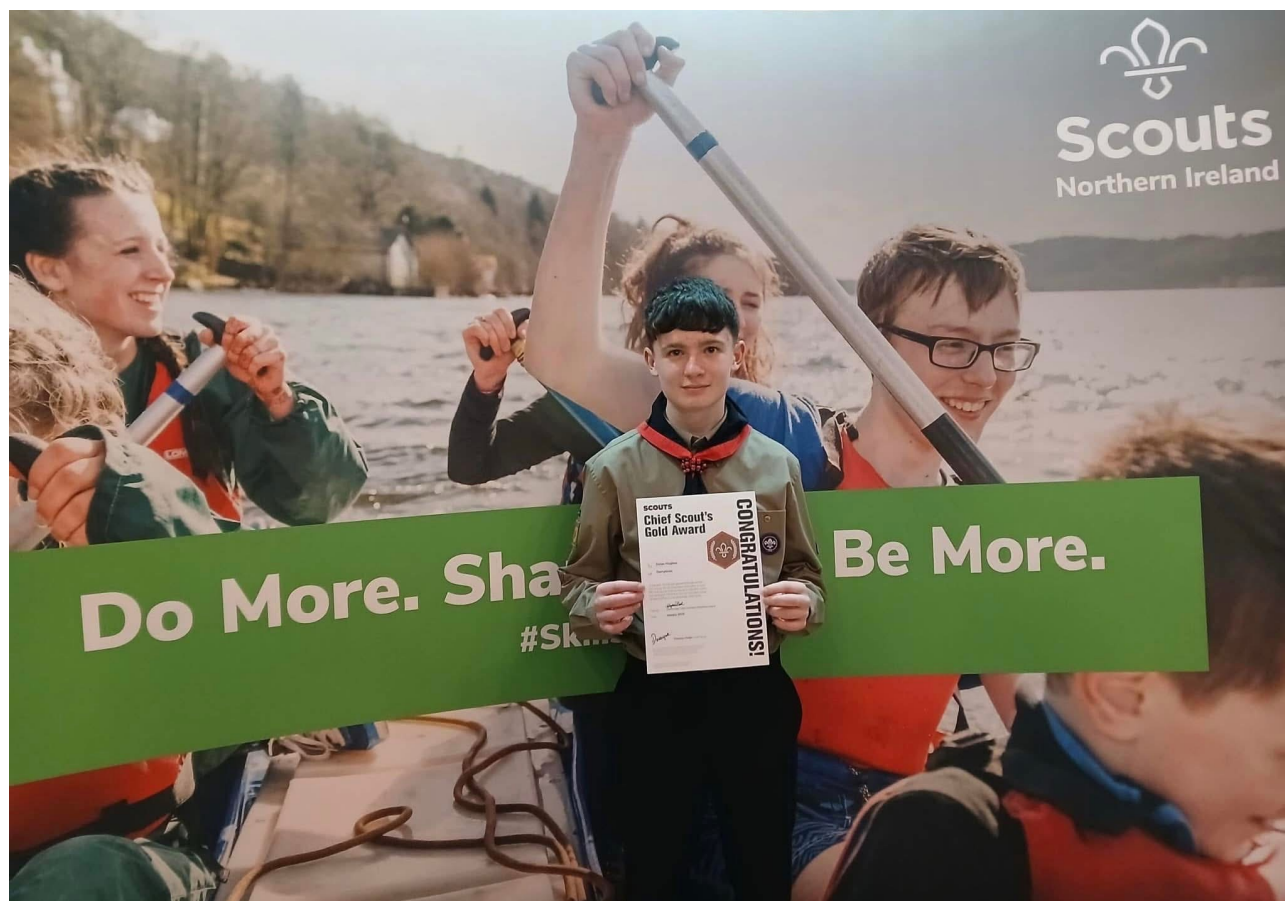
January 10, 2025

## Image of the day



## Congratulations Cookstown Scouts

**Cookstown High school has expressed congratulations to current Cookstown High school pupils Dylan and Luke who attended a ceremony in Belfast City Hall to receive their Chief Scouts gold award alongside past**



**pupils Euan, Jake and Caleb who achieved their Explorers belts.**

Their leaders are past pupil James Greer and staff member Mrs Anderson. These awards are a result of hard work, resilience and determination throughout their scouting journey thus far. All boys are members of Derryloran Parish scouts. VWD in scout speak - Very well done.

## News

### **East Belfast Mission meeting challenges of homelessness**

**EBM writes - In 2024, our Hosford team has been working tirelessly to address the challenges of homelessness. Here's the impact we've made so far:**



**7,301** children accepted as homeless (0-17) January 2023 to December 2023

- 46 people provided with accommodation in our hostel
- 143 clients supported to maintain their tenancies
- 10 individuals accessed private rental accommodation through deposits/rent support
- 39 clients assisted with gas and electricity top-ups
- 46 people received help with household items, painting, repairs, and moving costs

While these efforts make a difference, the scale of the challenge remains evident. Together, we can continue to create lasting change.

## David Pierce's birthday fundraiser for Mothers Union

**David comments -  
“Three of my friends are in Africa right now from St John's Moira.**

“I would have loved to join them. They will soon realise how vibrant and colourful and joyful in faith THE MOTHERS UNION is as in many CHURCH OF IRELAND. Congratulations. That is why they are my nominated birthday charity.

“One of my earliest memories of church was as a young boy in my dad's Rectory in South Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, where at their monthly meeting a member would always bring Chocolate Swiss Roll, for the five children and the members. To this day I always call it 'Mother's Union cake' — feeling positive with Paul Hoey and nine others in Moira, Craigavon, United Kingdom”.





## **New Safeguarding and Education Administrator in Cashel**

**The Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory the Rt Revd. Adrian Wilkinson announced the appointment of Mrs Brigid Barrett as the new Safeguarding and Education Administrator for Cashel, Ferns and Ossory.**

January 10, 2025

She will take up this part-time position in February and will become a regular point of contact for clergy, diocesan readers and others working in the Diocese who require Garda Vetting. Working alongside the Safeguarding and Compliance Officer, she will also be there to support parish panels to ensure that paperwork and processes are in place across the Diocese. As regards education matters, she will be assisting the Bishop in his role as Patron of the 25 Church of Ireland primary schools in the Diocese.

Mrs Barrett comes to this role with vast experience in the area of diocesan administration. For nine years she was Diocesan Secretary for the Dioceses of Elphin and Ardagh and between 2016 and 2021 she was P.A. and Secretary to the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe. In addition, she has



*The Mourne's looking majestic from Annalong.*

*Harry Teggarty*

Church News Ireland

Page 8



January 10, 2025

experience working in both primary and secondary schools in financial and general administration.

The Bishop says, 'I am delighted that Mrs Brigid Barrett has accepted this post. She brings to it a deep understanding of the Church of Ireland and knows the importance of providing supportive administrative assistance to clergy and lay people as they engage in mission and ministry. I hope she will be very happy working as part of our team in the Diocesan Office.'

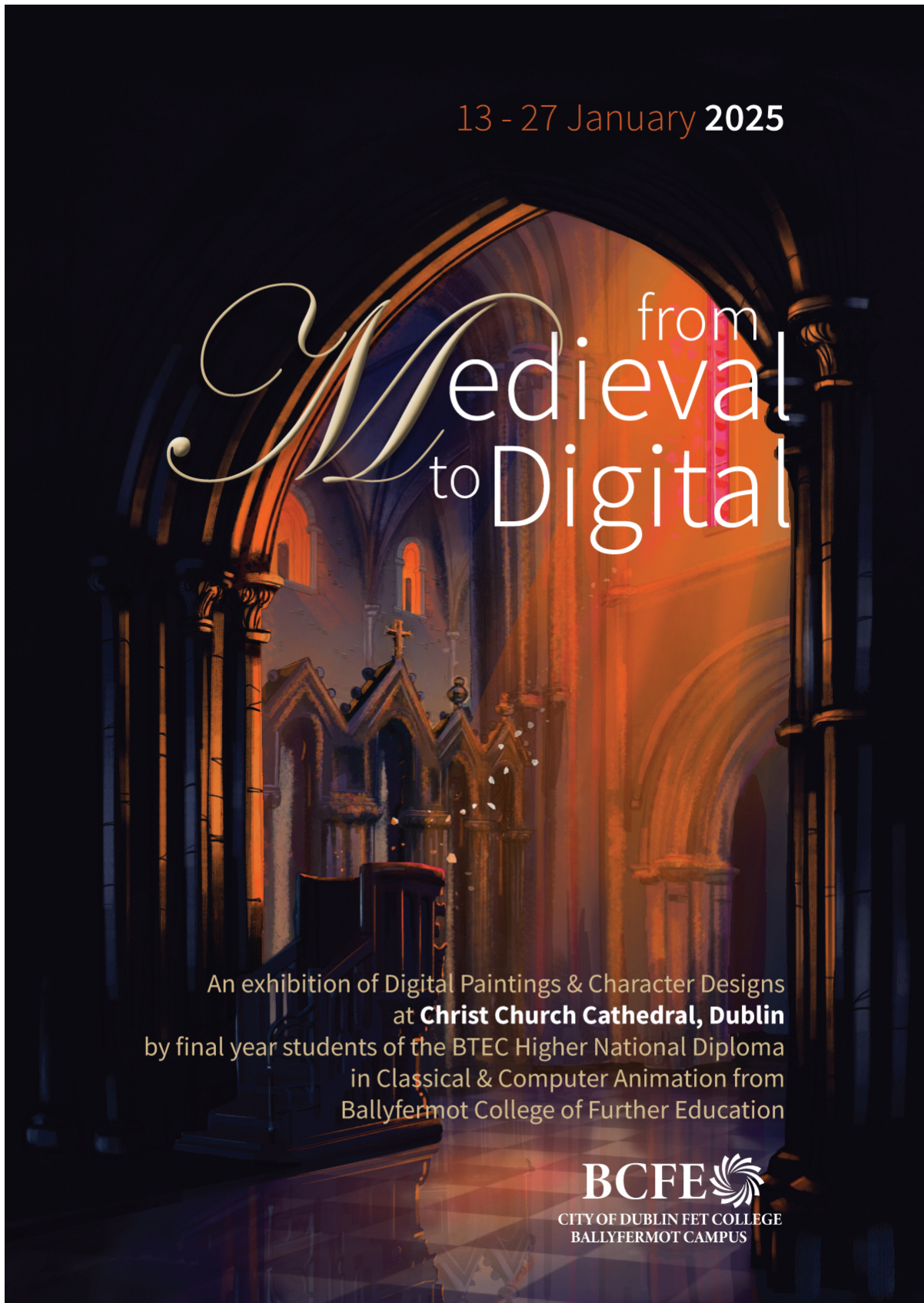
Mrs Barrett adds, 'I am really delighted to be joining the CFO Diocesan staff team and look forward to getting to know and supporting parishes and schools across the Diocese.'

## Cathedral Calls

### From Medieval to Digital at Christ Church Cathedral

#### **An Exhibition of Digital Paintings & Character Designs**

A new exhibition of work by students of the BTEC Higher National Diploma course in Classical & Computer Animation from Ballyfermot College of Further Education in Dublin will run in the South Transept of Christ Church Cathedral from January 13 to 27.



The animation students were briefed to design backgrounds and characters based on a site visit to Christ Church Cathedral.

January 10, 2025

The students produced visual research based on the architecture of the historical building. Their work was further developed as background designs suitable for an animated film. Working initially with traditional media on site and then through digital painting techniques, the students' work captures the special atmosphere at the cathedral, taking visitors on a journey from Medieval to Digital. The students' own historical research influenced the style and content of their work.

The second part of this project required the students to produce character designs based on personalities from around the 16th Century. The resulting designs show a range of characters from royalty to clergy, peasants, animals and even some fantasy characters.



*Famine depiction, Dublin*

This is an exhibition of work by final year students of the BTEC Higher National Diploma course in Classical & Computer Animation from Ballyfermot College of Further Education in Dublin. This project formed part of the Visual Communications module on the Higher National Diploma in Classical and Computer Animation.

Ballyfermot College of Further Education would like to acknowledge the warm welcome and generous support received from Christ Church Cathedral for this project and exhibition.

## Clergy and ministry

### Living out an Ethos of Welcome and Inclusivity in Clontarf

**By Canon Lesley Robinson**

At a time when many people hold little hope for the future of organised religion, here in Clontarf by the grace of God we are experiencing real growth and vibrancy. Hardly a fortnight goes by without an enquiry from a family or individual seeking to join the parish. The answer is always a resounding 'yes' and the welcome received by all newcomers is warm and genuine, starting with the Church Wardens who greet them at the door and extending throughout the entire congregation. Some of these new parishioners are already members of our parish school,



*Parishioners of Clontarf celebrating with Ziva Newman following her commissioning as a Lay Reader in Christ Church Cathedral.*

Greenlanes NS. Others have friends who have recommended us while others still had no connection to the parish previously but have been searching for a spiritual home. A few have started attending after having the funeral of a loved one facilitated in the church despite not having had a connection to the parish before that.

Consequently the numbers at our Sunday services have grown and are now above where they were before the Covid pandemic. Our services strive to be uplifting and inspiring as we seek to convey our heartfelt conviction that God's love in



*A full Irish breakfast between the Sunday services? Yes please!*

Jesus Christ is all encompassing— regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation or any other variable. This kind of inclusivity had lead to our congregation boasting people from around twenty different countries, members of the LGBT community and lapsed members of other denominations in addition to our older, life–long members of the parish.

Old and new blend seamlessly together through regular fellowship, usually over coffee and food. There are refreshments after our main Sunday service each week and established parishioners make a concerted effort to invite



*Happy pilgrims on Retreat at Mt. St. Joseph's Abbey, Roscrea*

and include newer attendees. There is also a designated area for the children to run and play safely together after church.

Throughout the course of each year we have several worship services designed to attract particular groups of people e.g. a Pet Blessing, a Grandparents Service, a Songs of Praise and monthly Healing Services and Family Services. We also have soup lunches in aid of charity after

January 10, 2025

the main service on Palm Sunday and after the Harvest Thanksgiving, a Parish Picnic at the beginning of Summer at which an ice-cream van always makes a highly anticipated visit, and an annual Parish Breakfast between the 8.30 and 10.30 services, giving those two distinct congregations a chance to interact.

One of the most successful regular events since Covid has been the introduction of a monthly Coffee and Chat morning, designed simply to encourage people to come together to chat and socialise. We also have run a residential weekend Retreat in Mt. St. Joseph's Abbey, Roscrea, every year since 2019 which has proved to be a wonderful mix of the spiritual and social, in addition to occasional Quiet Days.

This year, by popular request (following the fun we had on the bus to Christ Church Cathedral for the commissioning of our new Lay Reader, Ziva Newman) we ran a Mystery Tour, with no one knowing the destination other than Rector and the bus driver (it was Newbridge House and Farm in Donabate).

As Rector, I am so thankful to see the movement of the Holy Spirit in the parish, demonstrated not just in the increased numbers but in the genuine and tangible joy and fellowship that abounds, as our weekly Prayer Group holds the parish in prayer. I truly believe in the concept of 'enjoying church' not merely 'enduring church' and this is achieved primarily by the living out of our core ethos of welcome and inclusivity.



# Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

## Service for the feast of Epiphany from C of E

The C of E service on Sunday for the feast of Epiphany and a blessing of chalk was from St Stephen with St John, Westminster led by Rev Graham Buckle. This service focussed on the wise men and featured a blessing of chalk with some familiar doors. Also taking part were some students from the Burdett-Coutts & Townshend CE Primary School.

This weekly online service is live on Sundays from 9am on the C of E website, Facebook or YouTube . It is available for playback immediately after as well.

## Do you want to do something different this summer?

**Check out Exodus online or contact Rachel or Jennifer from Limavady Methodist Church (North Western District - Methodist Church in Ireland) - for further information about their team heading to Poland!**

→ <https://www.exodusonline.org.uk/team-61-2025>

January 10, 2025

## Heritage

**On this week in 1879, former US President Ulysses S Grant visited Ulster, which he described to his wife as "coming home" at the end of a long European tour.**



Grant's great-grandfather, John Simpson, hailed from Dergenagh, near Ballgawley in County Tyrone, where the family had farmed for generations, and left for Pennsylvania around 1760. This ancestral farm has been preserved to the present day and is a popular tourist attraction.

After leaving Dublin on January 6th, Grant had brief stops in Strabane and Omagh before visiting Londonderry, a city "whose history is so well-known throughout America" as he told the Belfast Newsletter at the time. While there, Grant attended a conference on the Ulster-American connection, and participated in a tour of the city's famous Walls.

The following day, on January 7th, Grant left for Belfast, stopping first in Coleraine where he was met by some men who had served under him during the American Civil War.

January 10, 2025

Arriving in Belfast that afternoon, Grant saw that the linen mills near the train depot had paused to allow their workers to see the former President, and they had turned out in their thousands in the rain awaiting his train.

In Belfast, Grant went on a tour of the famous White Star shipyards, met more of his former soldiers (and one of his former rebel prisoners) and gave another speech on the Ulster-American connection, speaking fondly of those from Belfast who had helped build America.

## Perspective

### Can Christianity survive the next 50 years?

**Recent speculation about the future of the Church of England has been part of a wider questioning whether Christianity itself has a future, Angela Tilby writes in the Church Times.**

In a recent Spectator article, A. N. Wilson predicted that within 50 years the great cathedrals of Europe would be no more than “heritage” sites, their meaning incomprehensible to the crowds who visit them.

It would not be a complete end, though. Fine worship and charismatic preaching would still be able to attract a faithful remnant; a small number of grand churches would probably remain viable, and a few of the most famous choirs could

survive. But the culture as a whole would have moved on to the point at which Christianity was largely extinct.

There is an alternative view, which notes the conversion of some significant public figures in recent years and predicts a revival of belief. The historian Tom Holland and the secular Muslim Ayaan Ali Hirsi are examples of former atheists who have embraced Christian faith — partly out of a recognition that the best of Western culture is a product of Christian values, and partly out of despair at the erosion of Christian culture by secular materialism and its consequences for our well-being.

There are also occasional enquirers and converts from popular culture: Nick Cave, for example. We do not live well by bread alone, however well-packaged it might be.

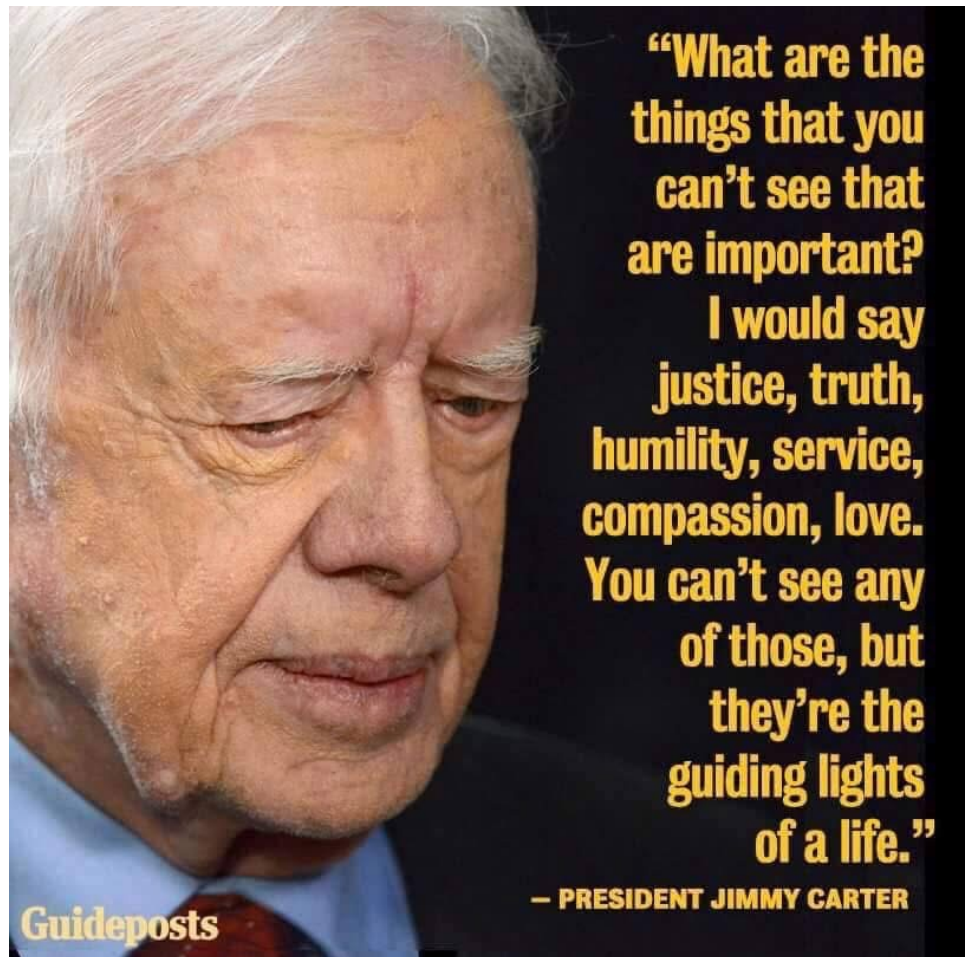
The arguments put forward by Wilson and Holland are not as far apart as they might appear. Both assume that the decline of Christian faith in the West is inevitable, and that the faith will cling on in small pockets as a kind of elitist sport, while becoming inaccessible to most people. In the end, the conversion of a few public well-known faces will make little difference.

There are, of course, many parts of Africa and Asia where Christian faith continues to grow, and where believers manifest forms of faithfulness that do not necessarily coincide with Western liberalism. On the positive side, they may show us how to ward off the effects of secularism and how to survive in a hostile environment. But, they may also challenge our convictions about personal freedom and lifestyle in ways that many could find difficult. See the

January 10, 2025

divergent views within the Anglican Communion on sexuality.

What appears to be threatened is the truce between Christian faith and the values of the European



Enlightenment.

This alliance, taken for granted by liberal-minded Christians, may be more enduring than we might have imagined.

One of the most haunting questions of the New Testament is that of Jesus: “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” A good question for 2025.

The point is not whether Christian faith will survive: it almost certainly will. But it may be a faith that is very different from our current expectations.

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

# Church News Ireland

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