

# Church News Ireland



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## Image of the day

### 4 Corners Festival explores the meaning of 'Home' in Belfast

**The 4 Corners Festival returns to Belfast this February, inviting our community to explore the profound meaning of 'Home' through an inspiring program of events running from 31 January to 9 February.**

This year's festival features an exceptional lineup of speakers, musicians, and artists who will help us reflect on what it means to create a truly welcoming city for all.

#### **A Festival of Connection and Community**

The 4 Corners Festival seeks to inspire people from across Belfast to transform it for the peace and wellbeing of all. Through innovative events designed to entice people out of their own 'corners' of the city, participants will encounter new perspectives, ideas, and friendships that bridge our traditional divides.

#### **Festival Highlights**

This year's programme includes performances by two-time Ivor Novello award-winning songwriter Iain Archer, known for his work with Snow Patrol and James Bay, who returns to Belfast for a special homecoming concert at the Lyric Theatre. Acclaimed performer Nuala McKeever presents her powerful comedy-drama Truth, Love or Promise, while



*The Our Common Home Exhibition will launch at 2 Royal Avenue, Belfast, at 4pm on Friday January 31, marking the beginning of its week-long run.*

theological discussions led by speakers like Dr Lorna Gold explore shared responsibility for this earthly home.

**The festival embraces various formats including:**

- Musical performances and songwriting workshops
- Art exhibitions and creative installations
- Theological discussions and prayer services
- Community conversations about reconciliation
- Environmental action projects
- Youth sports activities and workshops

## **Making Belfast Home for All**

Through these diverse events, the festival creates spaces where all can feel at home, where barriers dissolve, and where we can imagine together what it means to build a city that welcomes everyone. Whether you're a longtime resident or new to Belfast, the festival offers opportunities to connect, reflect, and contribute to our shared future.

Events take place in venues across Belfast, making the festival accessible to all corners of our city. All events are free, though some require pre-registration.

For full programme details and booking information, visit the festival website [www.4cornersfestival.com](http://www.4cornersfestival.com).

## **News**

### **Top Episcopal leaders attack Trump's deportation plans**

**Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe and President of the House of Deputies Julia Ayala Harris criticized President Donald Trump's plans for deporting undocumented immigrants on an unprecedented scale in a pastoral letter issued January 21.**

They describe a series of executive orders he signed just after taking office as a "harbinger" of more dramatic actions



*President Trump signs some of the hundreds of executive orders he issued on the first day of his new term. |The White House/Instagram*

soon to come - report by Rev Mark Michael, editor, in ‘The Living Church’.

“We read this news with concern and urge our new president and congressional leaders to exercise mercy and compassion, especially toward law-abiding, long-term members of our congregations and communities; parents and children who are under threat of separation in the name of immigration enforcement; and women and children who are vulnerable to abuse in detention and who fear reporting abuse to law enforcement,” Rowe and Harris said.

The presiding officers cite God’s command to “love the alien as yourself” (Lev. 19:34) and the Church’s identity as a community that “transcend[s](#) the earthly distinctions made among us by the leaders of this world” as the basis for

its vocation to “proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is promised to the persecuted and answer Christ’s call to welcome the stranger among us.”

They urge Episcopalians to advocate on behalf of “Dreamers,” child immigrants whose path to citizenship through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program President Trump tried to end in 2017. They also call on the faithful to stand against mass deportations, and to support border management that is “proportional and humane and respects the right of asylum.”

They ask the faithful to join them in “Speaking out against anti-immigrant rhetoric and actions, including race-based targeting, vigilantism and violence, family division, and detention and deportation without charges or convictions. As Christians, we must stand against these expressions of hatred and fear with a clear witness to our sacred promise to respect the dignity of every human being.”

**In his inaugural address, President Trump pledged that “illegal entry will immediately be halted, and we will begin the process of returning millions and millions of criminal aliens back to the places from which they came.”**

Executive orders signed on January 20 have temporarily suspended the admission of asylum-seekers. CBP One, an app used by immigrants to schedule interviews for admission at border crossings, was shuttered on Inauguration Day. Trump also declared a “state of emergency” at international borders, allowing him to send federal troops to the regions, and ended the program known

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as “catch and release,” which allows asylum-seekers to be discharged from detention facilities while awaiting immigration hearings.

Analysts at NBC News suggest that additional executive orders could be intended to pave the way for the promised mass deportations. These include measures requiring federal agencies to ensure that immigrants resident in the U.S. “do not bear hostile attitudes toward its citizens, culture, government, institutions or founding principles” and a requirement that the Department of Homeland Security establish a registry of undocumented immigrants and require them to be fingerprinted.

The presiding officers close their letter by calling for prayer and donations to Episcopal Migration Ministries’ work of resettling refugees, while offering pastoral assurance to those directly affected by the immigration system changes:

“Across our church, migrants are members of the Body of Christ and part of our congregations and communities, and our common life is richer thanks to their contributions. To our siblings who are at risk of deportation or of being separated from those you love, know that your story is our story, and your dignity is inseparable from our own. We stand with you, and we will face these challenges together.”

<https://livingchurch.org/news/news-episcopal-church/presiding-officers-question-trumps-deportation-plans/?>



# Education

## Pipe salute to Campbell College anniversary

**Thursday marked the anniversary of the passing of the founder, Henry James Campbell (1813 - 1889).**

Henry, who died on 23rd January 1889, left a generous bequest in his will for the establishment of a school. The trustees purchased the land in 1890, and Campbell College welcomed its first students in September 1894.

“To honour his legacy, a lone piper performed on the front steps of the College. Our heartfelt thanks to George (Year 14, Dobbin’s), Pipe Major of the Campbell College Pipes and Drums, for his performance of “Campbell College,” a song composed by Bandmaster and OC Grahame Harris (10321).” Ne Obliviscaris. OC - Old Cambellian. The figure is the personal number of the student.

## Inst student, teacher and poet

**Instonians posted - The Instonian community is deeply saddened by the death of Michael Longley, CBE.**

Renowned for the quiet beauty of his compact, meditative lyrics, Michael was a pupil at RBAI between 1951-58, before returning as a teacher, 1964-69.

Alongside many accolades including the Whitbread Poetry Prize and Queen’s Gold Medal for Poetry, in November

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2022, Michael was awarded the Feltrinelli International Prize for Poetry.

Michael was no stranger to RBAI, returning most recently in April 2023, when he was interviewed by Stephen Nolan as part of RBAI Together.

You can watch the full interview here:

<https://rbaifoundation.wistia.com/medias/auchz984q9>

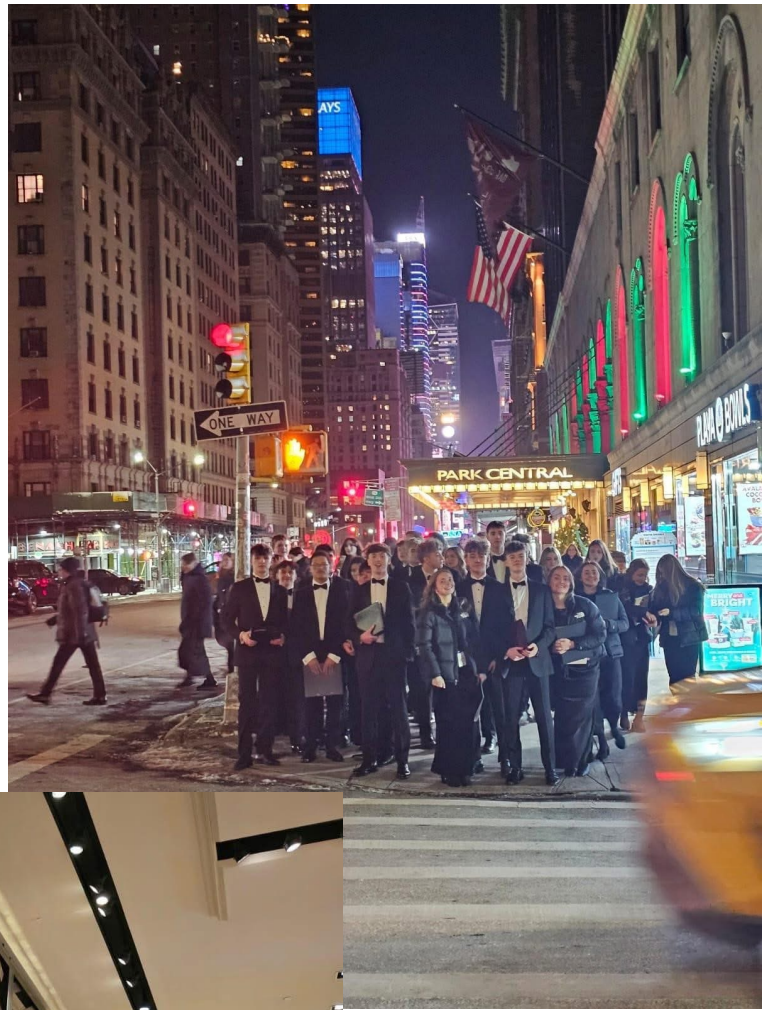
Our thoughts at this time are with Edna, their children, and grandchildren.



## MCB's unforgettable night in NYC

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**On Monday Methodist College Belfast Chapel Choir had the incredible honour of performing at Carnegie Hall, led by the legendary Sir Karl Jenkins, showcasing his spectacular 'One World' piece.**



MCB said - We couldn't be prouder of all their hardwork and dedication. Well done!

## **Church of England launches Flourishing Leaders Framework at National Education Conference**

### **National Society unveils transformative step for the education sector as Flourishing Leaders Programmes launched.**

Educators and young leaders gathered in London for the Church of England's 7th annual Education Conference, which saw the launch of a bold new vision for the sector, the Flourishing Leaders Programmes, aimed at transforming schools into places where both students and teachers can thrive.

Delegates heard how the Flourishing Leaders Programmes could be a transformative step for the education sector. The programmes will build on the Flourishing Together document which sets out a bold, hope-filled vision for flourishing children, educators, and school communities. The document offers a vision for addressing systemic challenges through a focus on purpose, relationships, resources, learning, and wellbeing.

The day included workshops on a range of topics and featured memorable contributions from children and young people of the Twyford CofE Academies Trust, whose leading of sung worship received a standing ovation.

Delegates – including teachers, heads, clergy, governors, and those in education and diocesan leadership – gathered at St John's Church, Hackney. The venue has special

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significance as the parish in which the National Society for Education was founded by Joshua Watson in 1811.

Launching the Flourishing Leaders Programmes, Andy Wolfe, Executive Director of Education for the Church of England, emphasised the vital importance of creating environments where both students and educators can thrive. Drawing on research and long-term vision, he said:

“Flourishing educators are essential for flourishing students. A system where teachers and leaders flourish creates the conditions for young people to achieve their full potential.”

He said that the Flourishing Leaders and Teachers Programmes could positively address teacher retention and leadership development:

“These programmes will support educators at every level, from early career teachers to system leaders, focusing on purpose, relationships, and wellbeing. Already, 900 schools and colleges have committed to piloting these courses, which will commence in autumn 2025.”

## Cathedral Calls

### Whales in Winchester

**Three monumental sculptures of sperm whales, created by artist Tessa Campbell Fraser, will hang from Winchester cathedral's Nave in this immersive art installation.**

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You can experience this brand new exhibition where you'll feel immersed to the depths of the ocean as Winchester Cathedral's nave is transformed to home three whale sculptures.

In this art installation, Campbell Fraser will seek to unravel the interspecies communications between man and animal that are currently at the forefront of scientific research. She will create three monumental (5.2m, 4.6m and 3m respectively) sculptures of sperm whales which will hang from the nave ceiling.

The nave's wooden roof beams were often compared to the timbers of an upside down ship or boat, carrying subliminal associations with the industrial scale whaling which reduced sperm whale numbers to critical levels in the 19th century, when their waxy spermaceti oil famously oiled the wheels of the Industrial Revolution.

The sculptures offer a response to the environment whereby the viewer becomes immersed into an imaginative world of the whale whilst the surroundings reflect man's increasing ecological impact on the world's climate.

The exhibition runs until 26th February 2025

However the programme with the theme of whales has many more events during the year illustrated on the cathedral's web site - like Ocean Commotion -

**[Ocean Commotion interactive family trail](#)**

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There are six characters dotted around the cathedral that need your help! As you journey around the cathedral, mark where they have been washed up on your map and complete various challenges to get them out of deep water, including...

- Steer a boat out of hurricane
- Explore a mermaid's treasure chests
- Stop the waves getting to the beach
- Search for and rescue animals gone overboard
- Pose in the jaws of a whale
- Make a paper whale as a memento

[<https://www.winchester-cathedral.org.uk/event/whales/>]

## Clergy and ministry

### Rural Dean for North East Cork

**The Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, the Right Reverend Dr Paul Colton, is pleased to announce that he has appointed the Reverend Elise Hanley, Incumbent of Cobh and Glanmire Union of Parishes, to also be the Rural Dean of North East Cork.**

Elise succeeds the Reverend Tony Murphy who was rural dean of North East for many years and the Bishop wishes to thank Tony for his dedication to the role.

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Elise commenting on her appointment said, “I thank the Bishop for his appointment and trust, and I look forward to serving in this new role”.

The United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross is organised into four rural deaneries: Cork City, North East Cork, Mid-West Cork and West Cork. North-East Cork Rural Deanery comprises five parishes: Youghal Union, Cloyne Union, Cobh and Glanmire Union, Fermoy Union and Mallow Union. Rural Deans are appointed by the Bishop from among the clergy of the diocese. While rural deans have a particular role supervising the care of church property within their rural deanery area, they may also be assigned other duties by the Bishop.

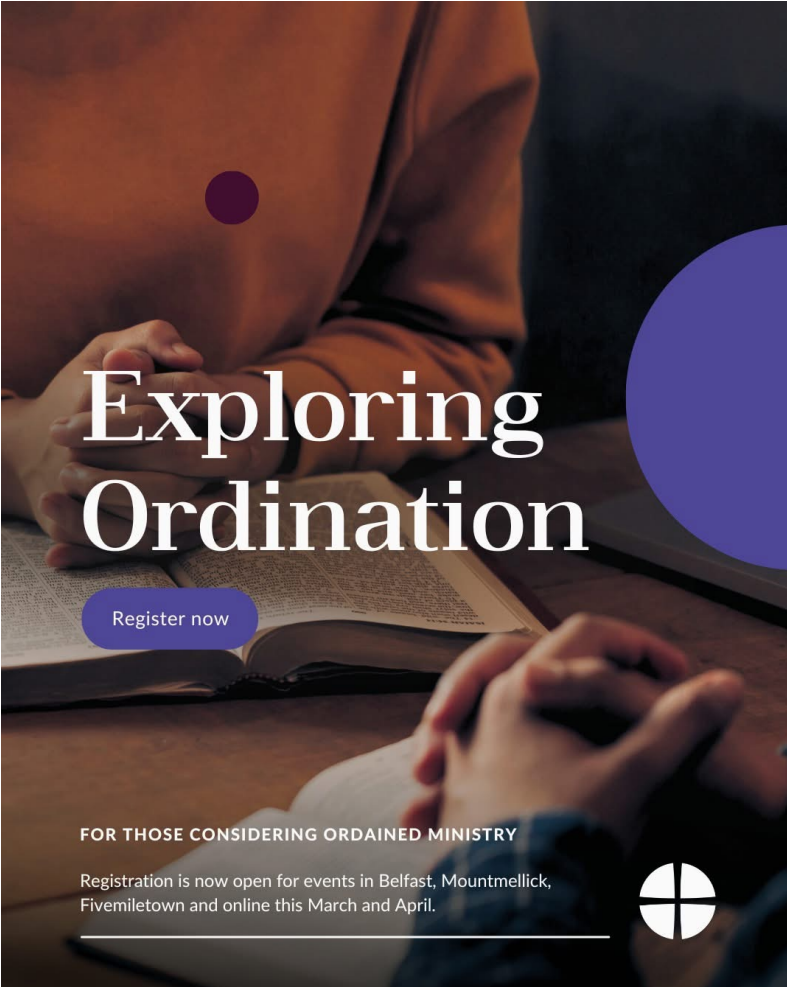
## MCI 'Exploring Ordination' events

**Are you interested in finding out more about the candidating process?**

If so, please register now for one of the 'Exploring Ordination' events

→ <https://forms.office.com/e/NYg5vu3RH5>

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**Exploring Ordination**

Register now

FOR THOSE CONSIDERING ORDAINED MINISTRY

Registration is now open for events in Belfast, Mountmellick, Fivemiletown and online this March and April.



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Saturday 29th March: Edgehill House, Belfast: 10:30am - 12:30pm

Saturday 5th April: Mountmellick Methodist Church: 10:30am - 12:30pm

Thursday 9th April: Online: 7:30pm

Saturday 12th April: Fivemiletown Methodist Church: 10:30am- 12:30pm

## Faith Empowered to train local lay leaders in Evangelism

**Faith Empowered is an exciting new resource from Church Army. It is designed to enable Dioceses to train local lay leaders in Evangelism.**

Through engaging with this material participants develop their knowledge and understanding of evangelism and mission. The aim is that they become leaders in these areas in their church, shaping how the church reaches out to those



Faith Empowered | Faith...

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around it and helping communities to grow and deepen in what they do.

The course consists of 10 sessions, designed to be delivered over a year. During this time the participants will develop their thinking, journey with their cohort and support one another. This is done each session by:

- gathering around food,
- reflecting on Scripture together,
- exploring key themes and thinkers in mission and evangelism
- through prayer for one another.

Faith Empowered is focused on putting learning into practice. This is done by helping participants to implement what they learn in their context, and through sessions



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specifically focused on planning outreach and mission events.

If you are interested in finding out more information, please email Joanne Miller, Diocesan Evangelist and Pioneer Advocate at [bishopsoffice@derryandraphoe.org](mailto:bishopsoffice@derryandraphoe.org)

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

### SEEDS in Derry and Raphoe

SEEDS Children's Ministry and DRY have planned a number of events throughout the year ahead.

“We will be sending out more information closer to each event with the relevant details and consent forms, but we wanted you to be able to make

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**DRY & SEEDS Events 2025**

▲ Secondary school age   ● Families   ◆ Leaders

Date	Event	Location	Target Audience
FEB 15	SENSORY PLAY SESSION 1	The Acorn Centre, St. Peter's	Families
FEB 22	DIOCESAN CONFIRMATION DAY 1	Limavady	Secondary school age
MAR 01	DIOCESAN CONFIRMATION DAY 2	Stranorlar	Secondary school age
MAR 22	SENSORY PLAY SESSION 2	Derg and Killeter	Families
MAR 28-30	DRY WEEKEND	Gartan Outdoor Centre	Secondary school age
APR 05	FAMILY TRAINING	Diocesan Centre	Leaders
APR 12	SENSORY PLAY SESSION 3	Kilmacrenan	Families
MAY 31	FAMILY FUN DAY	Castlerock	Families
JUN 27	SUMMER MADNESS	5 days at Portglenone	Secondary school age
OCT 04	BIG RESTART	Todd's Leap	Secondary school age

**Derry+Raphoe Youth**  
Derry+Raphoe Youth logo

**SEEDS Children's Ministry**  
SEEDS Children's Ministry logo  
PLANTING THE SEEDS OF NURTURING FAITH

[claire@derryandraphoe.org](mailto:claire@derryandraphoe.org) / [kirsty@derryandraphoe.org](mailto:kirsty@derryandraphoe.org)

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note of all the key dates ahead of time.”

The events are marked as either for young people of secondary school age (and their leaders), families or leaders.

Please share these dates with your parishes and those you think would be interested in coming along.

## **Kids' Big Day Out web site snag**

**Unfortunately the PCI website is currently unavailable and so resources and bookings for events are not possible in the normal way.**

If you are wanting to book tickets for Kids' Big Day Out, please use the below link to go straight to the booking page for the event

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/840035648237?aff=oddtcreator>

Its going to be a great afternoon so get your tickets while they are still available!

Saturday 8th March 2025. West Presbyterian Church Bangor. 2-4pm

## **Bookings coming in well for Armagh Youth "Big Overnight"**

**The event is on on 1st and 2nd March 2025.**

*it's time for  
the big overnight!*

**March 1st to 2nd 2025**  
The Cleenish Centre, Fermanagh

*24 hours of fun, faith and friendship for youth groups  
(secondary school age) and leaders  
from across Armagh Diocese.  
Visit to Todd's Leap Activity Centre included!  
Guest speaker Simon Henry (CIYD)*

**Cost  
£65**

For more information and booking forms email [doycarmagh@gmail.com](mailto:doycarmagh@gmail.com)  
or visit [www.armagh.anglican.org](http://www.armagh.anglican.org)

There is space for some more - please get your booking in to David Brown (via email: [doycarmagh@gmail.com](mailto:doycarmagh@gmail.com)) by Wed 29th January.

## Heritage

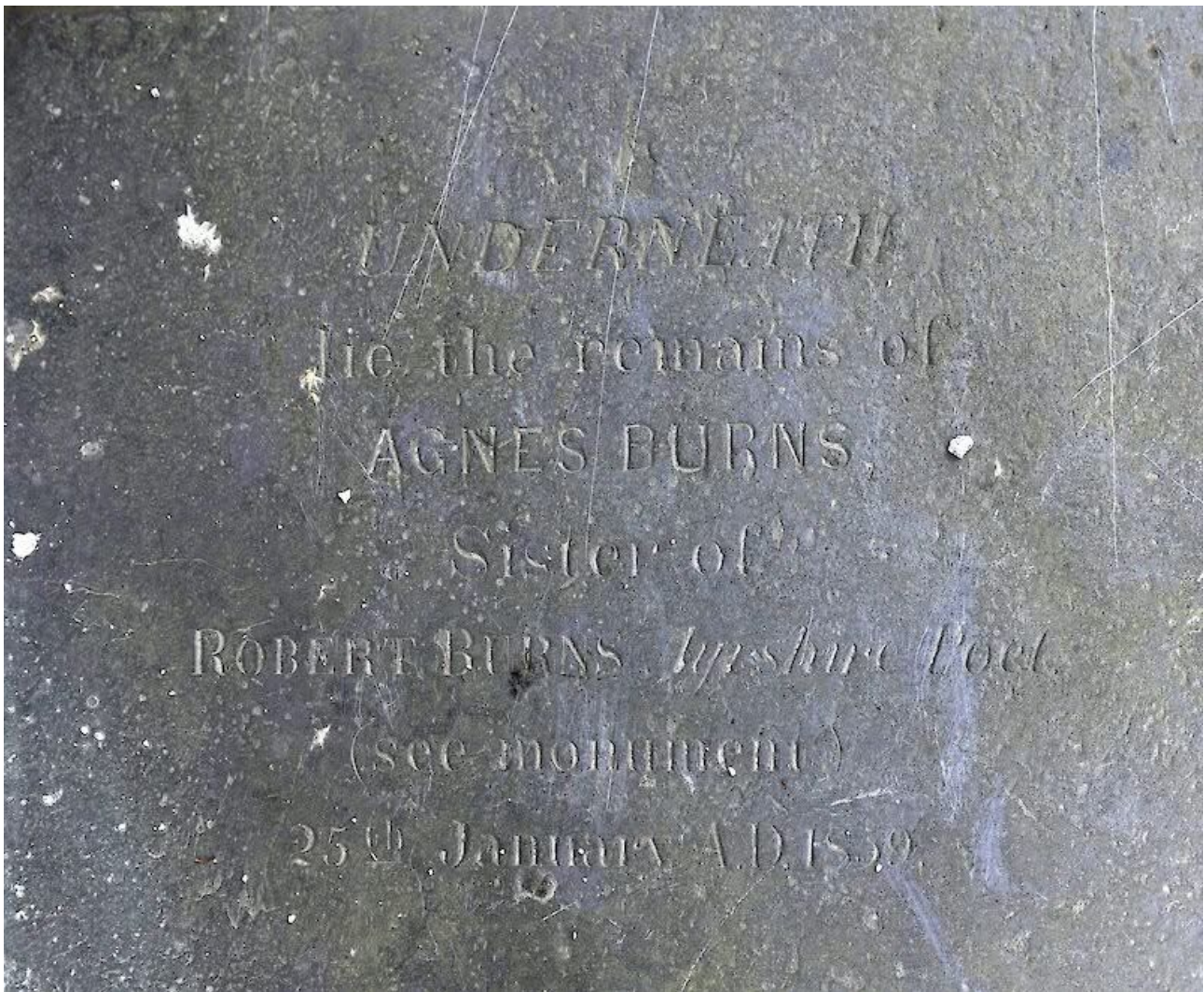
### Agnes Burns: the Sister of Robert Burns and her life in Ireland



**Agnes Burns, the eldest sister of Scottish poet Robert Burns, moved to Ireland after marrying William Galt in 1804.**

The couple settled in Dundalk, County Louth, in 1817, where William worked on the Fortescue Estates, helping to improve the land by building reservoirs and planting thousands of trees. Agnes lived the rest of her life in Ireland, working as a dairymaid on the estate.

One of the most vivid descriptions of Agnes comes from Major McClintock, who noted her strong Ayrshire accent: "She was as unprepossessing a female as one would care to see. But, oh! to hear her read her brother's poems was a caution, with hard rasping delivery, that I question if many out of Ayrshire could make out the meaning of a word she said." Despite her distinctive accent, Agnes shared a deep



connection with her brother Robert, often reading his poems with affection.

Agnes died in 1834 and was buried in the St Nicholas Church cemetery in Dundalk. A memorial to both Agnes and Robert Burns was erected in 1839, with an inscription that reads:

"As a tribute to the genius of Robert Burns, the national bard of Scotland and in respect for the memory of his eldest sister Agnes, whose mortal remains are deposited in this church-yard, erected by the contributions of the poet's numerous admirers in Dundalk and its vicinity, 25th of January 1839."

Today, her former cottage in Dundalk has been transformed into a museum, connecting her life in Ireland to the enduring legacy of her brother, Robert Burns.

## Poem for today

### The Church Bell

By Elinor Wylie

As I was lying in my bed  
I heard the church-bell ring;  
Before one solemn word was said  
A bird began to sing.  
I heard a dog begin to bark  
And a bold crowing cock;  
The bell, between the cold and dark,  
Tolled. It was five o'clock.  
The church-bell tolled, and the bird sang,  
A clear true voice he had;  
The cock crew, and the church-bell rang,  
I knew it had gone mad.  
A hand reached down from the dark skies,  
It took the bell-rope thong,  
The bell cried "Look! Lift up your eyes!"  
The clapper shook to song.  
The iron clapper laughed aloud,  
Like clashing wind and wave;  
The bell cried out "Be strong and proud!"  
Then, with a shout, "Be brave!"  
The rumbling of the market-carts,  
The pounding of men's feet



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Were drowned in song; "Lift up your hearts!"  
The song was loud and sweet.  
Slow and slow the great bell swung,  
It hung in the steeple mute;  
And people tore its living tongue  
Out by the very root.

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## 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](mailto:houstonmckelvey@mac.com)

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[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)

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

**Please recommend to your friends**

