

Church News Ireland



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January 29, 2025

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Image of the day



Bishop Burrows of C of I visits Pope Francis for farewell of Personal Representative of Abp Canterbury to the Holy See

After five years of service in Rome, the Personal Representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Holy See, and Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome Archbishop Ian Ernest, returned to his homeland, Mauritius, last weekend.

On the final day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025, Archbishop Ernest and his wife Kamla paid a farewell private visit to Pope Francis. The Prefect of the Dicastery,

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Cardinal Kurt Koch, and the Chairman of the Governors of the Anglican Centre, Bishop Michael Burrows of the Dioceses of Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe, also participated. It was a warm and friendly meeting. At the end, Madame Kamla, a graphic designer, presented the Pope with an artwork that she had created.

News

C of I Primate and representatives at NI Holocaust Memorial Day and visit to Belfast Islamic Centre

Church of Ireland representatives, including the Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop John McDowell, attended the Holocaust Memorial Day Northern Ireland event this year on Thursday, 23rd January, in Belfast City Hall.

Time was devoted at this event to hearing the stories of the Mothers of Srebrenica group. Archbishop McDowell visited Belfast Islamic Centre earlier on the same day, along with the Revd Lynne Gibson and the Revd Suzanne Cousins.

“Most striking was their determination to teach the next generation to choose love over bitterness,” Mrs Cousins, the Primate’s Inter-Faith Advisor, reflected on the commemoration. “Most important for us to understand is that genocide doesn't just happen. It starts with divisive language and people being targeted on account of their identity – a reality we touched upon in our church services and sermons this past weekend when reflecting upon the



gospel of the day, Luke 4:14- 30, on the rejection of Jesus in Nazareth.”

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust encouraged people to light a candle on Monday evening (27th January) at 8pm, and to place it safely in their window to remember those who were murdered for

who they were and stand against prejudice and hatred today.

A Moderator returns to Ballymena

The Right Reverend Dr Richard Murray has begun a special tour of one on PCI's 19 regional presbyteries – the Presbytery of Ballymena.

This includes preaching engagements in local congregations and opportunities to see their special initiatives in the community, visits to schools, the Police Service, Ambulance Service, local businesses and a Farmers Mart, are all on the agenda for the Moderator.

His tour of the Ballymena Presbytery will involve upwards of 20 separate church and civic engagements.

The five-day tour starts with a visit to Connor Presbyterian Church. It will be a very familiar setting for Dr Murray, who was minister there for 11 years from 2005. Essentially a pastoral visit, presbytery tours are designed to encourage the local church, enabling the Moderator to see first-hand the work that congregations and ordinary Presbyterians are doing in the community.

It will be Dr Murray's third of the four presbytery tours that Moderators undertake during their year in office. Looking forward to it, he said, "It will be very different from the last tour of the presbytery by my one of my predecessors, Dr David Bruce. Back in March 2021 it was undertaken 'virtually', with a number of online meetings due to the Covid restrictions at the time. Thankfully I will be out and about seeing first-hand what the church is doing on the ground.

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“Each tour has been different, but one thing has been a constant presence as I go around the denomination, and that has been our Church’s desire to be an active blessing in the local community in a way that brings honour and glory to God. I know that will be no different across the Presbytery of Ballymena,” he said.

“My wife Lynn, our son Andrew, and I spent 11 very happy years in Connor and I am looking forward to going back to see an initiative called ‘A warm place’, that has been going



COFFEE CONCERT

8th February at 11am

»»————««

featuring

**Dorothee Mühleisen
(baroque violin) and
Michael Shields
(harpsichord).**

»»————««

Come enjoy a beautiful concert inside
St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church-
Galway's Medieval Church

€10 at the door- includes tea &
coffee, baked goodies, and concert;
in aid of St. Nicholas'
Schola Cantorum

 SAINT NICHOLAS' Collegiate Church


since the fuel crisis a few years ago. I am told that it has developed into something more than a space to keep warm.

“The Presbytery will be holding a Gospel Rally there on Wednesday evening, where I am to preach. I will be focussing on my theme for the year, which is ‘Mighty to Save’, and all are very welcome to join us. I am also looking forward to joining ministers from across the presbytery for a special dinner, which is taking place in Broughshane on the Friday evening.”

During the course of the tour, Dr Murray will also take part in a number of civic engagements, which include paying a courtesy call on the Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, meetings to listen to and encourage the PSNI locally and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service at its Divisional Headquarters in Ballymena. The Moderator will also visit some local businesses, and Ballymena Livestock Market, where he will meet farmers and members of the Farmers’ Mission.

“Education always features prominently on any presbytery tour, and this week I’ll be visiting three local schools, Moorfields Primary School, Ballymena Academy, and Castle Tower special school. We will also be holding a special event for teachers, classroom assistants, and governors from our local congregations, which I am looking forward to.”

Congregations in the Presbytery range in size from 50 to 670 families, with over 16,400 people having a connection to its 31 congregations. Each presbytery has its own moderator, and this year it has been the recently retired minister of Townhill Presbyterian in Portglenone, Rev Philip

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McCullough. “As a former minister of our Presbytery, Dr Murray’s visit is being eagerly anticipated and will be an opportunity for him to meet and thank those who contribute to the church and community life,” Mr McCullough said.

“The Moderator will get a glimpse of some of this activity, which ranges from a local food bank to a parents and children’s club, and he’ll meet many people who play a vital part in our children’s education. Dr Murray will also see the progress that is being made on the construction of a new Meeting House at Buckna.”

Mr McCullough concluded by saying, “I would ask all our people to pray much for this tour, that Dr Murray’s visit will be an encouragement to the members of our congregations and a practical expression of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland’s prayerful interest in, and support, of the wider civic and business community in our area.”

Dr Murray will close the tour on Sunday, 2 February, when he will preach at Churchtown Presbyterian’s morning service and at First Ahoghill Presbyterian in the evening.

US bishops criticise executive orders signed by Trump

The president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has criticised various executive orders signed by President Trump, the Catholic Herald reports.

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Speaking for the USCCB as a whole, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio stated: “It is our hope that the leadership of our country will reconsider those actions which disregard not only the human dignity of a few, but of us all.”

On his first day back in office, President Trump signed 26 executive orders, which included rescinding 78 orders from the previous administration.

The far-reaching scope of the orders covered issues such as renaming the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America; changing the name of Denali back to Mount McKinley; giving a lifeline to TikTok in the US; and withdrawing from the World Health Organisation (WHO), of which the US is the largest funder.

However, it was provisions relating to the treatment of immigrants and refugees, foreign aid, expansion of the death penalty, and environmental regulations, that Archbishop Broglio described as “deeply troubling” and likely to have “negative consequences, many of which will harm the most vulnerable among us”.

Whilst the Archbishop did not reference specific executive orders, it can be inferred which actions he was addressing and the associated Catholic opposition.

President Trump has signed an executive order lifting the Biden Administration’s moratorium on the death penalty and expanding its application. Whilst historically the Church has made public statements supporting the death penalty—Pope Pius XII notably endorsed the state’s right to administer it—recent pontiffs have stood against it. In 2018,



the Catechism of the Catholic Church was updated to state: “The death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.”

The executive orders also mark a significant change in direction regarding the environment. Plans to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, remove regulations promoting the extraction of oil, natural gas, and coal, and declare a national energy emergency, stand in contrast to the increasing emphasis the USCCB has placed on protecting the environment.

Perhaps the area where the bishops stand most opposed is the approach taken towards immigrants. With Latino

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immigrants making up the vast majority of undocumented individuals in the country, and 52 per cent identifying as Catholic, it is likely the USCCB feels a duty to protect parts of its congregations.

The reduction of the annual cap on refugees allowed into the U.S., the end of birthright citizenship for certain children born in the country to undocumented immigrants, and the revocation of the ‘Sensitive Locations’ policy—previously allowing undocumented migrants to seek refuge in churches—directly challenge the USCCB.

The bishops have previously emphasised the “moral obligation to treat the stranger as we would treat Christ himself” and have called on Catholics across the nation to strive for “communion and solidarity with diverse newcomers”.

However, Archbishop Broglio acknowledged that some aspects of the executive orders could be viewed positively

Official prayer from Pope Francis for the Jubilee year 2025

Father in heaven,
may the faith you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of charity enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed hope
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within both
humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.
May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.
To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.
Amen.

CAFOD
Catholic Agency for
Overseas Development



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and commended President Trump for “recognising the truth about each human person as male or female”.

The Archbishop also clarified that the USCCB remains politically neutral. He emphasised: “The Catholic Church is not aligned with any political party, and neither is the bishops’ conference” and that regardless of who holds political power, “the Church’s teachings remain unchanged.”

Education



Ulster Rugby stars visit New Bridge Integrated College

New Bridge writes - We were honoured and delighted to be the first school visited by Ulster Rugby stars - Stuart McCloskey, Rob Baloucone and Ben Moxham.



They profiled their careers, met our school rugby players and were questioned by our Sixth Form during an interactive Q&A session. The Ulster Rugby players shared some of



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their own experiences, both on and off the pitch, with our Sixth Form. They focused on the importance of mindset, resilience and motivation.

A very special and memorable session for our New-Bridge students. A huge thank you to Bank of Ireland for their organisation today and of course Ulster Rugby.

Methodist College Chair comments on media reports

Following recent media reports, the Chair of the Board, Rev'd Niall Johnston, said:

“Immediately following the occurrence of the unacceptable behaviour, the Principal was in contact with Mr McConkey and his parents and offered an apology on behalf of the school, an apology that I wish to reiterate. This was before any legal proceedings were intimated. A review of the school’s procedures commenced immediately. When the legal proceedings were initiated, the matter was placed in the hands of the school’s insurers who then dealt with the claim on the school’s behalf.

“The school admitted publicly the allegation that was made against the school, which was one of negligent supervision. It would have been inappropriate for the school to comment on this matter during legal proceedings. The school continues to extend its regret over these incidents to Mr McConkey and his family and again offers its sincere apologies in respect of the incidents that occurred on the trip”.



Cathedral Calls

Raphoe Cathedral hosts special Service of Thanksgiving for ministry of Diocesan and Parish Readers

Bishop Andrew Forster expressed profuse appreciation, on Sunday evening, for the ministry of Diocesan and Parish Readers in the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe. He was speaking at a special Service of Thanksgiving in Raphoe which celebrated their contribution to worship in our churches.

The service, in St Eunan's Cathedral, was led by the Dean, Very Rev Liz Fitzgerald, assisted by Bishop Andrew and by the Archdeacon of Derry, Venerable Robert Miller.

Met Eireann's yellow wind warning for Donegal elapsed at 6pm and readers and clergy from a number of parishes in



the diocese took advantage of the lull to travel to the service.

In his sermon, Bishop Andrew thanked the congregation for attending on a weekend when weather conditions had been so challenging. His gratitude to the readers present could not have been made any clearer. "Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you," he said (repeating the phrase 10 times).

"Tonight," the Bishop said, "I want all of us to go home from this beautiful Cathedral feeling encouraged, feeling blessed, knowing not only that I thank you but that the spirit of God blesses you for your ministry as Parish Reader, for your ministry as Lay Reader, for whatever ministry God has called you to. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

Bishop Andrew said there was perhaps no higher calling than to lead the people of God in the worship of God. "We

are made to worship. It's part of what it actually means to be made in the image of God that we are worshippers – it marks us out from the rest of creation, doesn't it, that we worship? What we find in the world that we live in is that if we don't worship the one who made us, we end up worshipping all sorts of stuff: we end up worshipping money, possessions, or celebrities; we might even end up worshipping ourselves. But God has called us to greater things, to more wonderful things, to be worshippers of the one who made us all, to be worshippers of the one who created us and made us in his likeness.

"Think about this for a moment. Think about it whenever you leave your home on a Sunday morning to come to church. Sometimes it feels routine. Sometimes it feels normal. But what you are about to do is lead the people of God in one of their highest callings - to be worshippers of the King of Kings. Thank you for doing that. Thank you for the blessing that you are."

Music for Sunday evening's service was provided by organist Renee Goudie, while the Old Testament and Epistle Readings were delivered respectively by Richard Cotter and Nuala Dudley.

Clergy and ministry

New C of I Pioneer Minister for Carrigrohane Union of Parishes

The Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, the Right Rev. Dr Paul Colton on Sunday, 26th January 2025, licensed



Sarah Louise Hockey to be Pioneer Minister in Carrigrohane Union of Parishes.

The National Director of Pioneer Ministry, the Rev. Rob Jones,

presented Sarah Louise to the Bishop and Matt Gould, Lead Evangelist in Carrigrohane Union of Parishes, interviewed her after the licensing. The sermon was a conversation

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between the Rev. Rob Jones and the Rev. Robert Ferris, Rector of Carrigrohane Union.

Sarah Louise commented: “It was such a joy to be commissioned as Pioneer Minister in the Church of Ireland on Sunday. The service was such a celebration of all that God is doing in and through His Church in this season. I’m excited and honoured to be a part of this work as we continue to reach out, in particular to young people, who have little or no connection to church, seeking to introduce them to the person of Jesus and invite them to a life transformed by knowing and loving Him”.

Galway Samaritans search

Galway Samaritans are recruiting new volunteers.

If you are interested and want to know more please come along to their next Open Meeting 📌



The poster features a photograph of four people (three men and one woman) wearing green Samaritans vests. The vests have the Samaritans logo and the text 'We're here to listen' and '116 123'. Above the photo is a green banner with 'Samaritans Galway'. Below the photo is a dark green section with white text: 'Join our team', 'Copy', and 'Go to message'. Below that is a dark blue section with white text: 'Open meeting Tuesday February 4th at 7:30pm 14 Nun's Island, Galway, H91 YR27'. At the bottom is a light green section with dark green text: 'If you wish to be a volunteer but can't make this meeting please sign up online or email us: samaritans.ie/volunteer recruitment@galwaysamaritans.ie'. The footer of the poster says 'Samaritans - Galway is a registered charity.'

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At - 14 Nun's Island, Galway, H91 YR27 on Tuesday
February 4 at 7.30pm

If you can't make the meeting and are interested please
email recruitment@galwaysamaritans.ie

Down & Dromore Clergy and Leaders' Conference



**Down & Dromore
biannual Clergy
and Leaders'
Conference took
place in Sligo.**
Participants were
joined by Revd Dr
Ian Paul who gave



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the Bible readings in Revelation plus speakers Pastor Paul and Priscilla Reid and Jonathan Conrathe. Canon Roly and Susan Heaney were chaplains to the conference.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

POWER NI Brighter Communities winners

These recent £1,000 Brighter Communities winners rounded off 2024.

October's winner was Clabby Community Group - CCG. Clabby Community Group, based in Clabby Village, Fermanagh, used the funding to organise a Christmas party for elderly residents from the village and surrounding areas.

November's winner was Share Discovery Village. The funding will support their Unity in Motion project which focuses on bringing local groups together for dance and drama workshops, to help people be creative, make friends, and build confidence.

December's winner was The Link Family and Community Centre. The funding will support their Drop In, a safe and welcoming space for people facing substance dependency. It offers meals, support services, and engaging quizzes to help build connections and expand knowledge.

Power NI's Brighter Communities programme energises innovative and emerging community groups, teams and

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projects with £1000 of funding awarded each month. Since 2018 they have contributed over £85,000 to local communities.

Apply now for January's fund at <https://ow.ly/eT6u50UImcv>

From Moscow to Millvale - Soviet spy Anthony Blunt's closest friends were from Northern Ireland

The February meeting of the Ballyclare & District Historical Society will be held on Tuesday 11 February in The Old Presbyterian Church, Ballyclare at 7.30pm.

This month, the meeting will include a presentation on the life of Anthony Blunt, once the Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures who was exposed as a Soviet spy in 1979. 3 of Blunt's 4 closest friends were from Northern Ireland, including a man from Millvale with whom he spent the final 30 years of his life. 'Moscow to Millvale' is the story of their lives. Blunt visited Moscow in 1935 and started spying for the Soviets from January 1937. In 1953 he started a relationship with a man from Millvale and went on to spend the rest of his life with him.

The story takes in history at all levels:

World History: Spying and World War II

National History: The British Establishment and the Royal Family

Local History: How did this man's family come to be in Ballyclare and what part did they play in the history of our town?

From Moscow to Millvale



A presentation on the Life of Anthony Blunt

THE OLD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
MAIN STREET, BALLYCLARE

Tuesday 11 February
7.30pm



EVERYONE WELCOME



It's a fascinating story, so please join us on Tuesday 11 February for what promises to be another very interesting evening. Refreshments will be served. £2 for non-members of the Society.

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

Please recommend to your friends