

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – St Brigid of Kildare

Image for today - St Brigid of Kildare

St Brigid's Cathedral Kildare celebrates the Spirit of Brigid
St. Brigid's Day celebrations in Clara
Annual St Brigid's Day Lecture in Belfast
St Brigid Stateside - From Rushes to Ritua

News -

Bear Grylls, Guvna B, Lily Jo, headline at Flame 2025
USA: Helping refugees 'is not rocket science. Its Christianity'

Cathedral Calls -

Belfast Cathedral Black Santa Sit-out raises £200,000
Video interview with creator of The Longest Yarn exhibition
in St. Macartin's, Enniskillen

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books -

Books for Lent and Easter 1

Speaking to the soul -

Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

Image of the day – St Brigid of Kildare

Brigid was a contemporary of St Patrick and founded a religious community at Kildare.

More than that, it is almost impossible to say with any sure historical basis.

Her spirituality had an enormous impact on the church in Ireland in the period of growth and transition immediately following the time of St Patrick. At that time the church in Ireland developed through spiritual communities of monks and nuns. Her pre-eminence in this led to her being regarded as a second patron saint. Her reputation for holiness spread rapidly to Scotland and Northumbria in the sixth century.

The lack of any writings by Brigid or any contemporary means that much that is written about her includes pagan elements, for there was a pre-Christian Celtic pagan mother-goddess who had a similar name. Later Christian hagiography found it difficult to disentangle truth from legend. What we can be sure of is that Brigid was a remarkable person and, through the grace of God, gave unique leadership in her own troubled times.

The roll-call of the saints of the Celtic church in Ireland is so male-dominated that the honoured place given to Brigid of Kildare is itself a testimony

Collect for St Brigid's Day (1st February)

Father,
by the leadership of your blessed servant Brigid
you strengthened the Church in this land:
As we give you thanks for her life of devoted service,
inspire us with new life and light,
and give us perseverance to serve you all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

St Brigid's Cathedral Kildare celebrates the Spirit of Brigid

St Brigid's Cathedral, Kildare will host a number of events to mark St Brigid's Day (1st Feb) and the wider Brigid, Spirit of Kildare Festival, which is centred around Ireland's newest Bank Holiday and follows on from the success of the Brigid 1500 programme in 2024.

On Sunday 2nd February, 3.00pm, the annual Patronal Festival will take place in the cathedral. This year's preacher is the former Dean of Kildare, Rev Robert Townley.

The service will also feature new music from 'The Birr Mass', which was written by organist and composer Peter Whyte to mark the 50th anniversary of the Birr Choral Society. One of Peter's compositions, 'Brigid, the Exalted One', will also be sung in the service, having premiered at the Cathedral's 800th anniversary celebrations in 2023. The Kildare Cathedral Choir will lead the singing.



Later on Sunday 2nd at 8.00pm, there will be a concert entitled, 'Written In The Soul: An Evening of Song', in the cathedral organised by Hot Press Magazine. It will feature a range of celebrated Irish female musicians, including Cathy Jordan, Róisín O, Loah, Eimear Quinn and Muireann Bradley.

The cathedral will be open to visitors from Wednesday 29th January to Wednesday 5th February (except Sunday 2nd February), from 10.30am to 5.00pm.

Commenting on the festivities, the Dean of Kildare, Very Rev Isobel Jackson said, "We are delighted to warmly welcome visitors to St Brigid's Cathedral from all over the world and around the country this Brigid's Tide, to share with them its beauty and its history. Our prayer is that those who

January 30, 2025

hear the story of St Brigid who pointed the way to Christ, will leave spiritually refreshed”.

On Saturday 1st February, Lá Fhéile Bríde, at 9.45am, a new mural entitled, 'Saint Brigid's flame', will be launched by Dean Isobel Jackson and Fr Adrian Carbery from St Brigid's Parish Church in Kildare town. The mural was painted at the entrance to the cathedral on the gable wall of Firecastle café, by the renowned street artist, Mister Copy, with calligraphy from local artist, Josephine Hardiman.

Following the mural launch, at 10.00am, Newbridge Gospel Choir will launch their new single, 'Song for Brigid (Cloak of Green)' by Laura Hill in the cathedral.

At midday, Peace Ambassadors from local schools will lead a Pause for Peace in the cathedral, which will be live-streamed around the world.

On Friday 31st January, at 11.00am, there will also be a special local schools concert in the cathedral.

The theme of this year's Brigid, Spirit of Kildare festival, is "Her Spirit, Our Story". With a diverse line-up of events, from festivals and concerts to art commissions, workshops, and thought-provoking talks, Spirit of Kildare aims to keep St. Brigid's story alive in a meaningful and rich way.

For further information please see www.stbrigidscathedral.com.

January 30, 2025

St. Brigid's Day celebrations in Clara

Celebrate St. Brigid, Ireland's beloved patron saint, with a special ecumenical celebration in Clara. – Sunday February 2nd at 12:15 pm.



Start: The celebration begins at St. Brigid's Roman Catholic Church, where Fr. Joe Deegan will lead the gathering in prayer, accompanied by readings from community members.

Procession: A procession will cross the Fair Green to the Church of Ireland St. Brigid's Church. Those named Brigid are invited to lead the procession, and those attending the celebration are encouraged to bring St. Brigid's crosses as a sign of devotion.

Blessing and Stories: At St. Brigid's Church, Rev. Isaac Delamere will lead with additional prayers and a retelling of St. Brigid's story shared by the community.

St Brigid's Day celebration



*St. Brigid
Patron Saint of
Clara Parish.*

To mark St. Brigid's Day, a short prayer service will be held on Sunday 2nd of February, led by Fr. Joe Deegan in St Brigid's RC Church at 12:15pm with procession to St. Brigid's Church of Ireland for a retelling of the story of St. Brigid, led by Rev. Isaac Delamere, and further prayers.

The procession will then make their way to the ancient Abbey in Kilbride conclude with Ecumenical prayers in Kilbride Abbey.

All those named Brigid or one of her many derivatives; Breda, Bríd etc are especially welcome to attend

Refreshments will be served by Clara Heritage Society.

All are welcome to attend.

Journey to St. Brigid's Kilbride Abbey: The gathering will proceed to the ancient Kilbride Abbey, where attendees will be led in prayer and song. The abbey will be prepared for moments of silent reflection and candle lighting for private intentions

Light refreshments will be served, and all are warmly welcome, especially those named Brigid.

This celebration is hosted by the Clara Heritage Society in partnership with the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland congregations. All are welcome.

Annual St Brigid's Day Lecture in Belfast

**An invitation to all to the annual St Brigid's Day Lecture.
Date: Sunday 2nd February 2025**

Venue: St Bride's Parish Centre, 38 Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast. Time: 4.00pm.

Theme: Synodality for Mission

Guest Speaker: Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ

St Brigid Stateside - From Rushes to Ritual

**Diocese of Brooklyn celebrating the Spirit of Ireland,
Honouring St. Brigid's Legacy**

January 30, 2025

Ireland is rich in symbolism, with various icons representing its vibrant culture and traditions, each carrying deep meanings and connections to the nation's heritage, Bill Miller writes in *The Tablet*.

The shamrock and Celtic harp represent St. Patrick's Day and Irish culture. Another recognized symbol, St. Brigid's Cross — a crucifix woven from rushes or straw — represents peace, God's protection over the home, and the start of spring on the Emerald Isle and is displayed over the doorways of Irish homes.

This image of St. Brigid was painted in 1930 by the Irish artist, Patrick Joseph Tuohy. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

Meanwhile, devotion to St. Brigid herself is growing there.

The Diocese of Brooklyn is joining that movement with the first diocese-wide celebration of St. Brigid's feast day on Feb. 1 at the Cathedral Basilica of St. James in Downtown Brooklyn.

Bagpipers will lead a procession into the cathedral, where Bishop Robert Brennan will celebrate Mass and deliver the homily, followed by an Irish dance program. In addition, James O'Dea, a parishioner of Holy Name Parish in Windsor Terrace, will perform his new song, "St. Brigid of Ireland."

Some parishes will provide buses to bring people to the celebration, including St. Sebastian in Woodside, Our Lady of Angels in Bay Ridge, and St. Francis de Sales in Belle Harbor.

Father Christopher Heanue, director of the diocese's Irish Apostolate, said the public is invited to attend the celebration alongside members of local Irish parade committees, Hibernians, and Emerald Societies.

“This historic event will welcome our Irish-American bishop, Robert Brennan, to lead us in prayer and celebrate this patroness of Ireland,” Father Heanue said.

Father Heanue, the son of Irish immigrants, is the rector at the Co-Cathedral of St. Joseph in Prospect Heights. However, he noted the cathedral in Downtown Brooklyn is the most appropriate venue for the celebration.

He explained how, in the 1820s, Irish immigrants successfully petitioned for the first Roman Catholic church to be built on Long Island. The result was the Cathedral Basilica of St. James, which became the home cathedral of the Diocese of Brooklyn upon its establishment in 1853.

St. Brigid (451-525) was a consecrated religious sister who evangelized throughout Ireland and founded a famous monastery at Kildare. She reportedly was a friend of St. Patrick — a patron saint of Ireland with St. Columba — and worked with him on several spiritual projects.

News

Bear Grylls, Guvna B, Lily Jo, headline at Flame 2025

January 30, 2025

Thousands of young Catholics, aged 14-21, from around the UK will be gathering at the OVO Arena, Wembley on Saturday, 15 March 2025 for Flame 2025.

There will be live music with major artists, talks, adoration and worship at this huge gathering. Among the headline guests will be explorer Bear Grylls, Brian Enriquez, founder of Hallow, Ashley and Brian from CAFOD, World Youth Dance Crew, Rapper Guvna B, Lily Jo, singer songwriter, singer Adenine Adewale, Isaac Harvey disability advocate, One Hope Project and De La Salle Brother Chris Patino from San Francisco.

For more information and booking see:

<https://cymfed.org.uk/flame/>

USA: Helping refugees 'is not rocket science. Its Christianity'

In his first interview since becoming US Vice President, JD Vance yesterday expressed his support for President Trump's draconian orders to deport millions of unregistered migrant workers, and authorise raids on schools and churches sheltering them.

He voiced his disappointment at the US Bishops who have issued several statements condemning the plans. Vance suggested churches have just been helping refugees in order to profit from government grants.

Vance told CBS: ".. as a practicing Catholic, I was actually heartbroken by that statement. And I think that the US

January 30, 2025

Conference of Catholic Bishops needs to actually look in the mirror a little bit and recognize that when they receive over \$100 million to help resettle illegal immigrants, are they worried about humanitarian concerns? Or are they actually worried about their bottom line? We're going to enforce immigration law. We're going to protect the American people."

"I think the US Conference of Catholic Bishops has, frankly, not been a good partner in commonsense immigration enforcement that the American people voted for, and I hope, again, as a devout Catholic, that they'll do better," Vance said.

The USCCB is one of ten national resettlement agencies that receive federal funding and partner with local organizations to assist refugee populations that qualify for federal assistance. Those populations include people resettled via the US refugee admissions program, certain groups of vulnerable noncitizen children, and certain other groups such as victims of human trafficking and torture.

In a statement regarding their work with refugees the USCCB said: 'Faithful to the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church has a long history of serving refugees.'

'In 1980, the bishops of the United States began partnering with the federal government to carry out this service when Congress created the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). Every person resettled through USRAP is vetted and approved for the program by the federal government while outside of the United States. In our agreements with the government, the USCCB receives funds to do this work;

January 30, 2025

however, these funds are not sufficient to cover the entire cost of these programs. Nonetheless, this remains a work of mercy and ministry of the Church.'

Fr James Martin SJ wrote on his Facebook page:

'The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic bishops, priests and deacons, sisters and brothers, and lay men and women from around the world (including myself, for two years in East Africa), help migrants and refugees not because the migrants and refugees are Catholics, though many of them are, especially along the US/Mexico border. And, pace, Vice President JD Vance, it's not for financial gain either, which is at best a laughable suggestion, at worst a lie (which is a sin, btw). The church cares for migrants and refugees because this is what Jesus asks us to do, when he says that to welcome the "stranger" is to welcome him (Mt 25).

'And, more pointedly, that to *not* welcome the stranger is to not welcome Jesus himself. That command may be personally challenging, difficult to carry out (as it almost always is, for individuals, communities and nations), or even threatening to your worldview, but let's be clear: you don't need a PhD in New Testament studies to understand what Jesus is saying here. It's not rocket science. It's Christianity.'

Courtesy of ICR. By Jo Siedlecka. Jan 27th, 2025

Cathedral Calls

Belfast Cathedral Black Santa Sit–out raises £200,000

The 2024 Christmas Black Santa Sit–out at Belfast Cathedral raised a total of £200,000 and this will be distributed to 104 charities at the annual Good Samaritans Service on Sunday February 2nd.

Dean Stephen Forde said he was ‘delighted’ that the appeal had exceeded all his expectations by raising this outstanding sum. He made special reference to ‘an immensely generous donation’ of £73,600 received from the Belfast Charitable Society who marked the 250th anniversary of their home, Clifton House, on Christmas Eve 2024.

Continuing a tradition established by Dean Sammy Crooks in 1976, the 2024 Black Santa Sit–out began on the steps of St Anne’s Cathedral on Monday December 16.

From then until darkness fell on Christmas Eve, Dean Forde and his helpers – the canons and clergy of the Cathedral – stood on the steps each day come rain or shine, collecting money in Black Santa’s famous wooden barrel as well as taking contactless payments – the hand–held ‘tap’ machine an innovation for 2024.

As well as passers–by, many people made a special trip to Donegall Street to support the appeal, and generous donations were received from businesses and individuals.

Dean Forde said: “Even in difficult financial times, I am amazed at the generosity of so many people. This allowed us to exceed our target for the year and, along with the significant donation from the Belfast Charitable Society, to raise the magnificent total of £200,000.

“The Belfast Black Santa Appeal is a tradition which companies, organisations, churches and individuals take to their heart at Christmas time. Out of this generosity, thousands of people across Belfast and across the province will benefit through the work of those 104 local charities who have been awarded a grant from this year’s appeal.”

Belfast Charitable Society made the decision to support Black Santa for the first time as part of its 250th anniversary celebrations for its home, the former Poor House of Belfast, Clifton House – its donation of £73,600 adding a further 50 per cent onto the fundraising total received from members of the public.

Professor Alastair Adair, Chair of Belfast Charitable Society explained: “The familiar sight of Black Santa on the steps of St Anne’s Cathedral has become synonymous with the giving spirit and generosity of the people of Belfast. An ideal also close to the hearts of past and present members of Belfast Charitable Society. The decision to support Black Santa’s remarkable fundraising initiative was made as part of our 250th Anniversary celebrations of Clifton House.

“We are delighted to be able to make this significant donation of £73,600, bringing the total Black Santa fundraising total up to £200,000. As Ireland’s oldest extant charity, Belfast Charitable Society has been addressing

January 30, 2025

disadvantage for over 270 years and sadly knows too well the need that still exists due to poverty today.

“The impact this fundraising will have on those reliant on the charitable organisations receiving this funding will be significant, and in some cases life changing.”

Dean Forde has paid tribute to all those working behind the scenes to keep the annual appeal running smoothly, including the army of volunteers from Belfast Cathedral and from Black Santa’s partner organisation, PwC Financial Services, whose ‘immense hard work and generosity of time’ he said, ensured the success of this year’s appeal.

The Dean added: “The success of this year’s sit–out is a mark of the generosity of so many people to the needs of those they do not know, with a care which readily reaches out to those in greatest need in our communities.”

Special guest at the Good Samaritans Service, which gets underway at 3.30pm, will be former Olympic athlete Lady Mary Peters, and there will be music from singer Peter Corry.

Video interview with creator of The Longest Yarn exhibition in St. Macartin’s, Enniskillen

The Longest Yarn exhibition which continues in St. Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen until the morning of 8 February, is told in this new video interview with Tansy

January 30, 2025

Forster, its creator who is originally from Northern Ireland.

Also featured in the video is Dean Kenneth Hall, who serves as Rector of St Macartin's and Dean of Clogher. The Longest Yarn draws its name from the 1962 film The Longest Day.

Enniskillen is famous for being the only town in the British Isles after which two regiments are named; the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and the Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards.

The video can be viewed here;

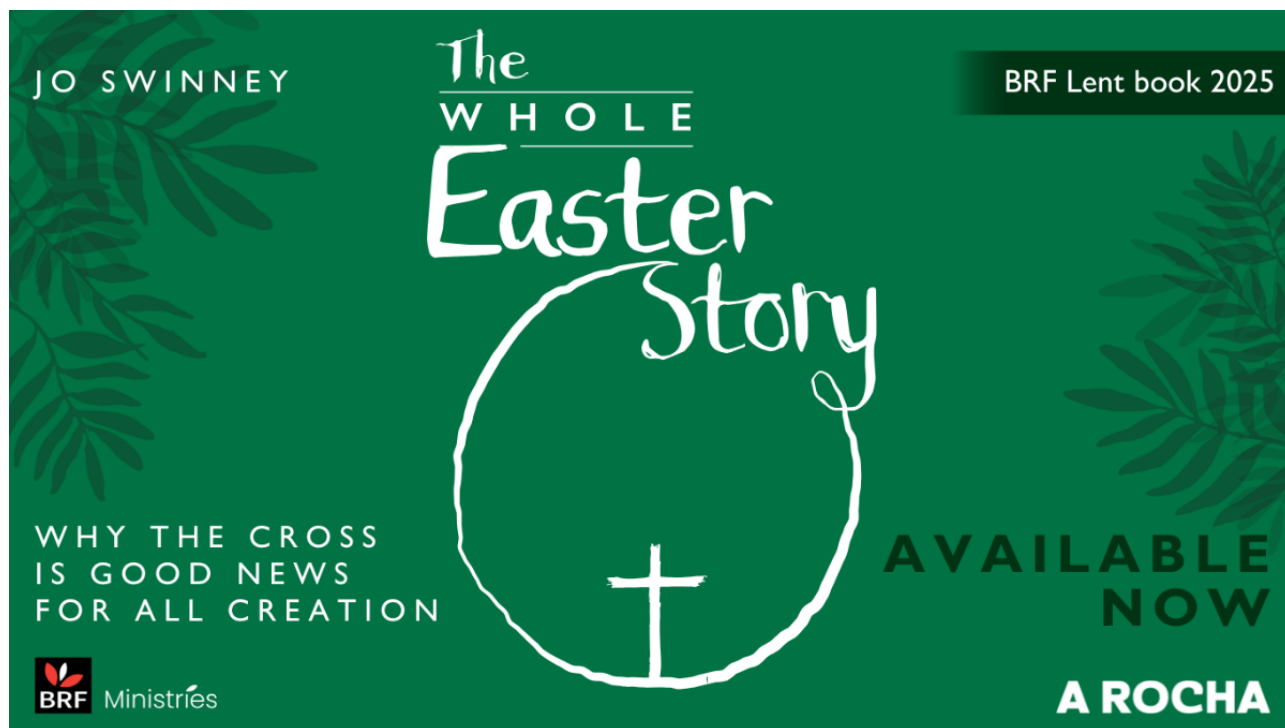
<https://www.churchofireland.org/news/12690/the-longest-yarn-exhibition-crafts>

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Books for Lent and Easter

The Whole Easter Story BRF Lent book 2025

Explore the profound meaning of Easter. There is no doubt that each of us has a place in the Easter story, but what happened on the cross is not just a story of me and Jesus. It is far deeper and wider than that. In this Lenten journey, Jo Swinney explores the broader impact of the Easter story on God's relationship with creation. Through Bible readings,



reflections and stories from A Rocha's global conservation efforts, discover how the cross transforms not just our own individual connection with Jesus, but also our relationships with each other and our world.

£9.99 | Paperback and eBook | Jo Swinney



Easter Inside Out

Step into the Easter story as storyteller David Kitchen reimagines the Easter narrative through a varied cast of characters, from Mary Magdalene to Caiaphas. If you want to understand who might have been where and doing what

January 30, 2025

as the Easter story unfolds, this book gives you answers. It also lets you sense what it could have been like to be one of those involved in the twists and turns of one of the most extraordinary stories in the whole of history.

Great for teens and adults of all ages

£12.99 | Paperback and eBook | David Kitchen

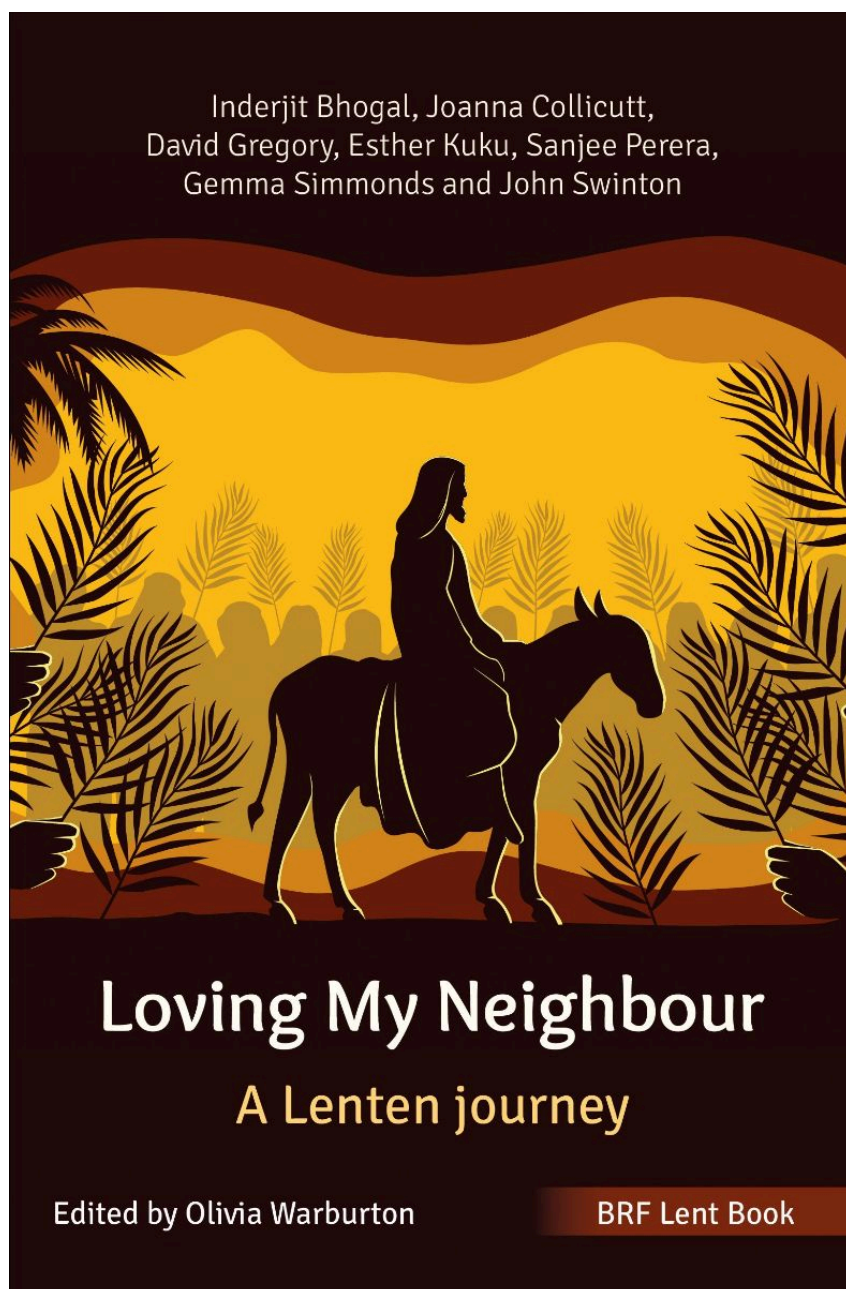
Loving My Neighbour

‘A profoundly intelligent, challenging and ultimately hopeful book that roots the complexity of love in raw reality... [demonstrating] how God’s love shines through and permeates our vulnerability as well as our capacity to forgive and to embrace the “other”. This is a deeply moving read that takes us through the wilderness to the cross and beyond and at times left me breathless with wonder.’

Kate Nicholas

£12.99 |

Paperback |



January 30, 2025

Authors: Inderjit Bhogal, Joanna Collicutt, David Gregory, Esther Kuku, Sanjee Perera, Gemma Simmonds, John Swinton

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

Link in Monday through Saturday from early morning

Please recommend to your friends

