

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – New Colour for RBL Ireland**

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## Image of the day

### New Colour for RBL Ireland

At the weekend a new colour was dedicated for the Royal British Legion Ireland. An apt reminder of the forthcoming D Day anniversary remembrance events.

## News briefs

### Church and state in Scotland

The **Duke of Edinburgh** attended the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh on Saturday . During a speech, he said the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, so soon after Prince Philip died made it “far more emotional” for the family, adding that public support had been - “overwhelming”.

### Moderator installed

**Rt Rev Dr Shaw Paterson** was officially installed as the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 2024-25. He will chair the annual gathering in Edinburgh then serve as the Kirk's ambassador at home and abroad for the next 12 months.

### Scrap two child limit on benefit payments - Archbishop of Canterbury

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The **Archbishop of Canterbury** has told the Observer the two child limit on benefit payments to families should be scrapped, external, the paper says. Most Rev Justin Welby describes it as a cruel and immoral policy that plunges hundreds of thousands of children into poverty, with those from ethnic minorities and homes where someone has a disability most affected.

## **Bishop enjoys school visit**

The Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, **Dr Paul Colton** said recently - I truly enjoyed my visit to St John the Baptist National School, Midleton in Cloyne Union. It's one of the biggest schools in the Church of Ireland in Cork, Cloyne and Ross - it was inspiring and heart-warming to meet the pupils and excellent staff led by Principal, Elma Huggard. Thank you for your warm welcome, lovely assembly, beautiful gifts and great hospitality.

## **North West Methodist Mission partners in Global Ministries**

“It was a huge pleasure to welcome Ullas Tankler the area liaison officer from our partners Global Mission Fellows - Global Ministries of UMC . Our Organisation has benefited from this partnership through the works of the Global Mission Fellows Tino and Camille. We are grateful for this partnership as we continue to work towards making a positive difference in people's lives”..

# News

## Shankill Parish team face 4 Peaks Challenge

### Shankill Parish team prepare for 4 Peaks Challenge to help restore historic Lurgan Church of Ireland

Four members of the Shankill Parish in Lurgan are rising to the challenge of tackling the four highest peaks of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in just one weekend. Andy Williamson, Christine Connolly, Wendy Gardiner and Iain (Dino) Uprichard are signed up and ready to undertake The 4 Peaks Challenge from June 20-23.

They will start off with Ben Nevis on Friday, then Scafell Pike and Snowdon on Saturday before travelling back to Newcastle to climb Slieve Donard on Sunday afternoon.

The mammoth effort means that in just three days they will have climbed a total of 4,258m or almost half the height of Everest.

The intrepid team will have to endure more than 24 hours of climbing, 46 km of walking, 18 hours travelling in a minibus, only 15 hours sleep over three nights and on average complete 90,000 steps each.

Their effort to reach new heights is being done in order to raise vital funds for the Re-Imagining Shankill Project which plans to restore and reorder the church with the approach of

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the 300th anniversary of the original building in the centre of Lurgan.

Iain Uprichard said he signed up for The 4 Peaks Challenge as he “is approaching the age of my front door and my life insurance policy expires next year, never mind loving the mountains which are great for body, mind and soul.

Diocesan lay reader Christine Connolly is taking part to add another achievement to her various road running competitions.

Andy Williamson, community evangelist for the parish, said he hopes to prove to himself that he can achieve this mammoth task.

Meanwhile, Wendy Gardiner, the outgoing church warden, said she was drawn to the 4Peaks because she “likes a wee challenge and also being outdoors”.

Local people are being encouraged to pick up their own 4 Peaks Challenge in support of Andy, Wendy, Iain and Christine by walking 90,000 closer to home.

By doing one lap of Lurgan Park (4,000 steps) once a day, in just three weeks participants could have completed the 90,000 step challenge.

Courtesy Valerie Martin, Northern Ireland World

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## **Invitation from friends at Ireland Israel Alliance**

**A solidarity march for Israel will be held in Dublin city centre, on Sunday 26 May 2024 3pm a joint initiative of a number of organisations in the Republic of Ireland.**

The Meeting Point is St Stephen's Green Dublin, Harcourt St end

The March will end outside Dail Eireann, where there will be speeches and prayers for Israel, for the hostages and for the Peace of Jerusalem.

The organisers request that participants only carry flags of Israel or the Republic of Ireland. Participants are encouraged to bring blue and white balloons for releasing during the event.

To confirm details and for more information please contact the organisers of the event, Ireland Israel Alliance at [contact@irelandisrael.ie](mailto:contact@irelandisrael.ie)

## **Pandemic cost Church of England thousands of worshippers**

**COVID-19 has cost the Church of England nearly 170,000 worshippers, the latest weekly attendance figures show, despite a recent rebound.**

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Average weekly attendance at services rose by almost 5 per cent in 2023 to 685,000, up from 654,000 in 2022.

Children's attendance last year was up by almost 6 per cent, from 87,000 in 2022 to 92,000 in 2023.

However, the numbers are still below pre-pandemic levels, with 854,000 having attended each week in 2019.

The Church, which has released the figures ahead of its autumn Statistics for Mission report, said the analysis suggests in-person attendance is drawing closer to the pre-pandemic trend.

Archbishops praised the "noticeable growth" in congregations.

**In February, The Daily Telegraph reported that Sunday church attendance was only 80 per cent of what it was in 2019.**

Some 133,200 regular parishioners had not returned when Covid restrictions ended, despite the Church claiming it had "bounced back".

The latest analysis shows attendance has more than halved since 1987, prompting clergy to warn it was in "a doom spiral".

Officials said that in 2021 all-age Sunday attendance was 22.3 per cent below the projected pre-pandemic trend, but the latest figures reveal the gap narrowed to just 6.7 per cent last year.

The Most Rev Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, said: “This is very welcome news and I hope it encourages churches across the country ... I’m especially heartened to hear that more children are coming along.”

The Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York, said: “This is very good news. For the first time in a long time we have seen noticeable growth.

“Of course we don’t yet know whether this growth is a trend but I take it as a great encouragement.”

The Rev Marcus Walker, the rector of Great St Bartholomew’s in London and the chairman of the Save the Parish campaign group for front-line funding, said: “Thank goodness churches across the country are recovering from the disaster of Covid and the mismanagement of the Church’s response at a national level.”

## **Outpouring of support after mother’s death was overwhelming - Duke of Edinburgh to General Assembly Scotland**

**The Duke of Edinburgh deputised for the King last week as he attended the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.**

The Duke of Edinburgh has said the outpouring of support following the death of his mother, the late Queen Elizabeth II, was “overwhelming”.



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Edward deputised for the King as Lord High Commissioner at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on Saturday, where he welcomed the newly elected Moderator, Rev Dr Shaw James Paterson.

As he addressed the Edinburgh assembly, the duke spoke of the support he received following the death of his mother from royal chaplains.

The late monarch passed away in September 2022 at Balmoral in Aberdeenshire, bringing an end to a 70-year reign and sparking tributes and memorials across the country, including in Scotland's capital.

“For my own part, I just want to pay personal tribute to the chaplains of the Chapels Royal and especially those here in Scotland,” he said.

“There have been moments recently where I have been lucky to have sensed God's care and love.

“And who could forget the scenes that followed the passing of my mother?

“The outpouring of emotions, the demonstration of respect, love and grief was overwhelming and a privilege to experience and behold.

“I think I can speak for my whole family when I say we will remain forever grateful for that support.”

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The death of his father, Philip, his predecessor as duke, just the previous year, Edward said, made his mother's passing "far more emotional".

The Duke of Edinburgh, flanked by First Minister John Swinney and Edinburgh Lord Provost Robert Aldridge, said he was "really touched and comforted" by how chaplains helped the royal family "behind closed doors and away from the public gaze and the scrutiny".

"I know it's part of the job description, so perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised, yet it not's necessarily what they did, it's how they did it," he said.

"Here were centuries of tradition, of rituals long practised, of prayer, of care and of comfort."

Edward also congratulated Dr Paterson on his appointment as Moderator for the next 12 months – replacing the Rt Rev Sally Foster-Fulton – joking of the similarities between the life of a child of a minister, with that of a child of the royal family.

"Growing up in the family of a minister is never easy; having to come to terms with sharing one or both of your parents with the wider parish family," he said.

"And believe me, I can empathise."

Responding to the Duke of Edinburgh's address, Dr Paterson asked him to urge the King, who has been diagnosed with cancer, to "take the time he needs before he gets up to full speed".

“His health is important, and we will be praying for him and all who have got health concerns,” the Moderator added.



## Cathedral Calls

### Prince William to be usher at Duke of Westminster's wedding in Chester Cathedral

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## **The Prince of Wales will be an usher at the wedding of his close friend Hugh Grosvenor, the Duke of Westminster, next month.**

He will be part of the groom's party when the Duke, 33, one of Britain's richest men and a godfather to Prince George, marries Olivia Henson, 31, at Chester Cathedral on June 7.

The Princess of Wales is not expected to attend the society wedding of the year, as she continues her cancer treatment, according to The Sunday Times.

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex will also not be among the 400 guests, even though the Duke of Westminster is the godfather of their five-year-old son Prince Archie.

'The couple, who met in 2021, have opted for a "strictly no-gifts policy" for their wedding guests'

The couple, who met in 2021, have opted for a "strictly no-gifts policy" for their wedding guests because the Duke has a fortune of more than £10 billion.

His property portfolio, which he inherited on the death of his father, who died of a heart attack in 2016 aged 64, includes 140,000 acres of land in Oxfordshire, Cheshire, Lancashire and Scotland, along with 300 acres in Mayfair and Belgravia.

The service at Chester Cathedral will be followed by a reception at the nearby Eaton Hall, the Grosvenors' 11,000-acre family estate, where the couple will live.

## Dean of St Patrick's pays tribute to Bryan Dobson

**In a heartfelt reflection, Dean William Morton expresses gratitude to Bryan Dobson for his 40-year career in public broadcasting and his contributions to Saint Patrick's Cathedral.**

Acknowledging Dobson's dedicated board membership and regular worship attendance, Dean Morton highlights Dobson's support and kindness. Emphasising Dobson's role in promoting Cathedral initiatives, Dean Morton extends warm regards for a fulfilling retirement, underscoring Dobson's legacy of generosity within the Cathedral community

## In the media

### Cork Bishop recognised for leadership and community work at civic reception

**The Bishop was honoured on his silver jubilee year as a Church of Ireland leader.**

**Irish Independent-** A civic reception has been held for the longest serving Church of Ireland Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross in 400 years in Cork city, **James Joy** writes.

The reception was held by Lord Mayor of Cork, councillor Kieran McCarthy, to honour Bishop Paul Colton, who has spent 25 years in his role.



Born in Derry (while his family were living in Buncrana, Co. Donegal), Bishop Colton moved to Cork when he was just two years old and was elected Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross by an Electoral College on January 29, 1999.

Bishop Colton is now the second-longest serving person ever in his role.

Speaking at the reception, Lord Mayor McCarthy said that the Bishop has made a “significant contribution to civic, community and charity life over the last 25 years”.

“This work has been crucial to building and strengthening communities in our city. Even against a backdrop of challenges in recent years, he has remained steadfast in his

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leadership and wise council. I am delighted to be hosting this reception tonight and to be able to acknowledge the dedication and contribution of Bishop Colton to this city," the Mayor said.

Joining the Lord Mayor in paying tribute to Bishop Colton, chief executive of Cork City Council, Ann Doherty, said that the leadership the Bishop showed during the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukrainian crisis "stands out".

*"Good Morning, Lord!*

Today's a new day, a chance for a new start. Yesterday is gone, and with it any regrets, mistakes, or failures I may have experienced. It's a good day to be glad & give thanks, and I do, Lord. Thank you for today, a new opportunity to love, give, & be all that you want me to be. Amen.,"



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“Bishop Colton was a key leader in our community response forum and actively contributed to supporting out most vulnerable communities at times of significant need. On this special occasion I extend warm wishes and congratulations to Bishop Colton and his family,” Mrs Doherty said.

The Lord Mayor of Cork, councillor Kieran McCarthy, and Bishop Colton previously planted an oak tree in the Bishop’s Palace grounds as part of the annual Civic Service and Festival Eucharist at St Fin Barre’s Cathedral on St Patrick’s Day in honour of his silver jubilee.

## Perspective

### A post-Synod Pentecost sermon

**Today is Pentecost Sunday – fifty days after Easter and there’s no better time to celebrate the diversity of the Kingdom of God than on the day of Pentecost.**

**Separately, our differences are too diverse to list, but put together, our individual uniqueness creates a beautiful kaleidoscope we call the Body of Christ.**

**Sermon given on Sunday by the Reverend Jason Kernahan, Rector of Eglantine, in Connor Diocese**

Today’s Epistle reading emphasises the diversity of the people of God.

Sadly, today we see people and nations torn apart by racism, religious chauvinism, man-made borders, and cultural bigotry. We witness all kinds of discrimination. We



have become a culture of us-versus-them, where the ‘other’ is to be feared and never trusted. This is not a new occurrence, but we would have hoped that humanity would have learned from its past mistakes over the ages; however, here we are in the 21st century, repeating history again and messing up in the way we have continued to do throughout the generations.

Pentecost is a reminder that God’s Holy Spirit is given freely to all people with no regard for race, culture, socioeconomic standing, gender, or any other distinguishing mark used by people to differentiate one person from another. In God we are one.

On the Day of Pentecost, reported in the Book of Acts, people gathered in Jerusalem from all corners of the Roman Empire. They represented competing economic interests, diverse cultures, a myriad of languages and different religious traditions. Nevertheless, God’s grace was given freely to all who heard the message preached by St. Peter.

God’s Holy Spirit is freely given to all people. I want you to keep that in mind as I talk about something this morning that has disturbed, concerned, and angered me greatly this week. And I am not alone in this. Many of my clergy colleagues and members of the laity are feeling the same way.

Last weekend the General Synod of the Church of Ireland met in Armagh. The General Synod is a meeting of representatives of all dioceses in the Church of Ireland. The primary purpose of the Synod is to enact legislation for the whole Church of Ireland. A motion was put to synod by a

lady from Dublin who wanted the synod members to reaffirm the tradition teaching, which I might also add is part of Canon Law, that no child should be denied baptism regardless of the marital status of the parents. The reason that this motion was put forward to synod was because an increasing number of the clergy are refusing to baptise children whose parents are not married, or they are refusing to baptise the child of a single mother.

This motion wasn't going to change anything in Canon law, but it was brought forward to ensure that what the church teaches was reaffirmed. In other words that no child should be refused baptism. And guess what? – the motion wasn't passed. The laity – that is people like you in the pews supported the motion, but the clergy didn't. Now the motion fell by just a tiny number of votes on the clergy side, but this never should have happened.

I find myself having to ask the question – on what planet do some of these clergy live on? Do they have any experience of the real world, and do they know their parishioners? These 'Puritans' as I call them put children into two different categories – there are those who are worthy to be baptised and those who are unworthy. And yet how can a child be held responsible for the marital status of its parents?

We need to truly understand the importance of baptism. It's one of the gospel sacraments of our church. Baptism is a gift freely given by God. It should never be withheld from anyone, and especially not from an innocent child. Baptism is, in the Church, accepted as the initiation into the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. It is the actual means God uses to bring people into the Body of Christ.

Jesus says that we enter the Kingdom of Heaven “through water and the spirit.” Because of this, our liturgy of baptism mentions regeneration, adoption as children of God, new birth, and the sign and seal of the Holy Spirit.

The Church was given baptism as the way in which Christ commanded us to bring in new Christians. Therefore, Anglicans accept a baptized person as a Christian and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ. In baptism, faith is not created, it is confirmed. In baptism, grace is not created, but increased by prayer.

Jesus so often used children when talking about the kingdom of God. In Mark’s Gospel he says, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them. Again in Matthew’s gospel when the disciples asked Jesus who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, he called a child, whom he placed among them and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. And yet here we are in 2024 and some clergy – those who are responsible I might add for building up God’s kingdom, are doing the very opposite by refusing to welcome the most innocent and vulnerable in our society.

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When a deacon in the Church of Ireland is being ordained to the priesthood, the declarations, or duties of a priest are read out. And one of the duties of a priest is to baptize and catechize. Therefore God's judgement on me and on all other clergy is surely greater because we are the ones who have been entrusted with the responsibility of building up God's kingdom on earth. How will these clergy who refuse baptism to some infants answer when one day God asks them "why did you hinder the little children from coming to me?"

The Church of Ireland that I grew up in used to be a welcoming, tolerant, and accepting denomination. Now we are being infiltrated by modern day Pharisees. I don't represent the Diocese of Connor on General Synod and there's a very good reason for that. It's because I'm not popular amongst the clergy in this Diocese. I'm seen as unsafe, too liberal, too traditional, and of course I'm a fierce opponent of conservative evangelical attitudes.

There is also an ever-widening gap between the Church of Ireland in the Republic and the Church of Ireland in the north. The majority of clergy and laity in the south think we are absolutely mad up here. And maybe, just maybe they're right. Our parishes in the north are being taken over by clergy who seems to have no respect for Church of Ireland identity, ethos, or tradition.

Bishop Michael Burrows, who is the Bishop of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe, said this in his Sunday sermon last week in St Mary's Cathedral Limerick, "The older I get, and every year when I return from the General Synod, I

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sometimes wonder to myself more and more what planet I'm on.

And whether the Church of Ireland is still the place I thought I knew and loved. Sometimes I genuinely wonder that. And then I come back to this place. And rapidly, and thankfully, I realized that when I did, I still found myself in a place of sanity.”

I understand how Bishop Michael feels, and like him I thank God that this place, this parish, is a place of sanity.

At the beginning of the sermon I asked you to remember something – that at Pentecost, which we celebrate today, God’s Holy Spirit is freely given to all people. And that includes children.

I apologise if this sermon has turned into a rant BUT I want to make it very clear where I stand on this issue. As your Rector, as your priest, as your pastor, I will never refuse baptism to any child who is brought to this parish church.

I end by saying this -the clergy who feel they need to be judge and jury when it comes to baptism ought to read Matthew 18 verse 6, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks.”

Amen.

Note - This sermon was first published in the parish’s web site. The Rector commented, “This morning I was asked by a number of parishioners to publish the sermon that I

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preached today on the feast of Pentecost. I don't normally do this, but after receiving such supportive feedback on this important subject matter I have decided to do so.”

## Speaking to the soul

### Go

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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