

Church News Ireland



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Image of the day

St David's Cathedral

The finest seat in the UK facing St David's Cathedral, St David's Day, Pembrokeshire 2025.

News



New Patron of Mothers' Union visits one of their projects

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As the newly announced Patron of Mothers' Union, The Duchess of Edinburgh has visited one of the charity's projects, English for Women, in Chelmsford.



The project aims to reduce isolation of those in local



communities who experience language barriers in their everyday lives, many of whom are fleeing challenging situations. It provides a space where learners can build support networks and learn everyday English to increase their sense of belonging.

Mothers' Union has a long history of royal patrons, The Duchess is following in the footsteps of the late Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen Mother and Queen Victoria.

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Read more: <https://www.royal.uk/news-and-activity/2025-02-27/the-duchess-of-edinburgh-becomes-patron-of-mothers-union>



New school chapel organ Kings Hospital

The Kings Hospital school, Dublin unveiled their new school chapel organ last week.

A wonderful new instrument and inaugurated by Simon Harden and David Leigh of St Patrick's cathedral Dublin.

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Hollywood's Elgar Organ final stages of rebuilding

A celebration and 'launch' concert was scheduled for Saturday 2nd March and invitations there were to the Parish church of St Philip and St James.

The concert featured acclaimed international organist, Jonathan Scott.

Jonathan is Associate Artist of The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, where his lunchtime organ recitals attract huge audiences. You can see examples of his performances on the Scott Brothers YouTube Channel here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhJWvK35K6Q>

Pastoral pints and prayers reach out at the pub

It's not like your average service or prayer meeting - this iconic Cork church is inviting parishioners to explore their faith over pints in a city pub.

Hosted by the team at Shandon's historic St. Anne's church, these meetups give locals a chance to learn about Christianity in a relaxed, informal setting. The 'Pastoral Pints' gatherings take place on the fourth Monday of every month, organised by parish priest Reverend Meghan Farr.

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She held her first event on Leaside a little over a year ago. It was inspired by the culture of 'Pub Theology' in the US, which is where communities gather to discuss philosophy and religion in bars.



'If you don't want to talk about Jesus at church, then we'll do it in the pub!'

Rev. Farr was born in Florida and studied for the priesthood abroad before moving to Ireland almost two years ago. She attends every meeting with her husband and is inviting everyone - no matter their background - to come along for a chat.

The Pastoral Pints events are very relaxed. There's no strict agenda or mandatory bible readings - people can ask anything faith-related, especially things they might be too afraid to say in church.

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Rev. Farr said: "It has a lot of different names in the US, but pub theology is very popular in churches across the country over there. I decided for the beginning to keep it very relaxed and informal. If someone's unsure about their own faith or burned out from going to church, this can be a nice option. If you don't want to talk about Jesus at church, then we'll do it in the pub!

Church in Wales told of priest's abuse 17 years before reporting to police

The former Bishop of Swansea and Brecon has admitted to five counts of indecent assault on a boy under 16, decades after the abuse took place.

However, it has emerged that senior figures in the Church in Wales were aware of allegations against him as early as 1993, 17 years before they were reported to the police.

By the time South Wales Police were informed in 2010, the victim had already passed away, preventing further investigation.

Anthony Pierce, now 84, served as Bishop from 1999 to 2008 and previously worked as a parish priest in the West Cross area, where the offences occurred in the 1980s.

He pleaded guilty at Swansea Crown Court and is set to be sentenced on 7th March, according to Wales Online. He has been released on bail in the meantime.

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The Church in Wales has admitted that an internal review uncovered evidence that a small number of its members knew about a separate allegation against Pierce in 1993, but failed to pass it on to the police until nearly two decades later.

An independent inquiry has since been launched to examine how allegations were handled and whether procedural changes are needed.

Despite the allegations, Pierce was appointed Bishop in 1999 and served for nine years.

In 2002, he was made a Commander of the Order of St John for his charity work.

In 2011, Swansea University awarded him an honorary fellowship, which is now under review in light of his conviction.

South Wales Police confirmed that, due to the victim's death in 2010, they were unable to pursue the case when allegations were finally reported.

The Church's independent review will assess past safeguarding failures and review decisions regarding Pierce's permission to officiate between 2011 and 2016.

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Education

Shared Education Programme in Ballymoney

As part of their Shared Education Programme, Dalriada school pupils joined pupils from Ballymoney High and Our Lady of Lourdes to question local councillors from most of the Parties at UUC - University of Ulster, Coleraine.

The day was named Pupil Voice and the event was chaired by Mark Caruthers. Topics of discussion included the Irish sea border, Covid 19 vaccine injuries, the safety of women, the hospital waiting times and why they, as the next generation, should stay in NI when the pay is far better in the South or elsewhere in the UK. "This was a fantastic opportunity for all!"

North Belfast Future Voices Poetry Anthology

Congratulations to Dylan Sloane (9J), Joseph Robinson (9L) and Marcus Duncan (8K) whose poems were selected for inclusion in the North Belfast Area Learning Community's Future Voices Poetry Anthology, part of the Look North Festival.

Along with pupils from a range of North Belfast schools, the boys read out their poems during the anthology's launch at St Malachy's College on Friday. We are extremely proud of



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all three boys who used the medium of poetry to eloquently express their ideas among their peers and admirably represented RBAI as a school which values literature and the arts. Well done boys.



BRA student's volunteer role recognised

BRA was absolutely delighted to learn that Shay Brogan (Form 4) recently accepted The King's Award for Voluntary Service, presented by Lord Lieutenant of County Antrim, Mr David McCorkell KStJ, on behalf of

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Monkstown Village Initiatives at an awards reception at Mossley Mill.

Shay volunteers during his spare time at the wonderful Monkstown Village Community Garden.

Equivalent to an MBE, The King's Award for Voluntary Service is the highest Award given to local voluntary groups in the UK, and they are awarded for life.

Very well done to Shay and everyone at Monkstown Village Initiatives!

Calling all London based RBAI alumni

RBAI are competing in the Bath Cup at the London Aquatics Centre next Friday, 7th March.



Heats commence at 11:30 am and the boys would value your support.

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Belfast High School Abaana Uganda Project Fundraising

Thank you to everyone who has supported our Abaana team in their fundraising activities this year. We have reached our £5,000 target!

The draw for our final fundraiser took place. Thank you to everyone to donated a prize or purchased a ticket and congratulations to all our winners:

Keith Drury Painting - Mrs A Lowry
Culloden Voucher - Maria Sgibneva
Microblading Voucher - Georgia Gowdy
£100 voucher for BarSouth - Beth Martin
2 Belfast Giants Match Tickets - Tom Jackson
Bleubird Fleece - Grace Higginson
£50 Amazon Voucher - Ciara Robinson
£40 Flowers by Reids Voucher - James Lau
£30 Castello Voucher - Dr M Wood
£25 Whitehead Golf Club Voucher - Grace Murphy
Afternoon Tea for 2 at Etc, Carrick - Emma Surplus
Family of 4 Activity Pass to Ice Bowl - Matthew Horan
Berry Box Voucher - Scott Gruthrie
Joules Bundle - Daniel Ringland
Pamper Hamper - Aoife O'Hare
Neal's Yard Gift Set - Miss A McCalmont
Artisan Condiments - Mrs K Millar

Cathedral Calls

Bath Abbey Girls Choir member to record The Magic Flute opera by Mozart

We are delighted to share with you news of Ruth, one of our most talented singers in the Girls Choir has been part of an exciting project to record The Magic Flute opera by Mozart.

We are so proud of her achievement not only on this wonderful project but in everything she has offered with amazing commitment and enthusiasm these past 7 years in the Abbey Girls Choir (and prior to this as a Melody Maker!)

So far only the overture and Ruth's main solo aria has been released with the rest coming out on 21 February.

Ruth said she is 'So excited to finally be able to hear this and share it with you, and I hope you enjoy it'.

She added 'I am so grateful for the Abbey's support through this back in 2023, and all the opportunities I have had here, and with my singing teacher Alicia, over the years that have grown my singing and confidence so that I was able to be part of this.'

Ach Ich Fühl's: https://youtu.be/LeeAnEXFmOY?list=OLAK5uy_lbP8x1ZBu_ZwZkuWEhi9dNe2bfb9QYz5c

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Overture: https://youtu.be/itewWgPEKHc?list=OLAK5uy_lbP8x1ZBu_ZwZkuWEhi9dNe2bfb9QYz5c

Well done Ruth!



Quinquagesima Sunday - St Peter's, Belfast - You Tube

Sunday 2nd March 2025 + 10:30am Holy Communion
Join St Peter's on the last Sunday before Lent on their Youtube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/@stpeterbelfast>

Ash Wednesday, St Columb's, Derry

To mark the beginning of Lent, join our Ash Wednesday service on Wednesday 5th March at 7.30 pm for a service of Choral Eucharist. Sung by the Cathedral Choirs of Boy

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Choristers and Lay Clerks, music includes Herbert Sumsion's Communion Setting in F. All are welcome.



World Day of Prayer, St Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Armagh,

To mark World Day of Prayer, St Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Armagh, will be holding a service on

Friday 7th March at 8pm. Everyone welcome. Every year, this special service unites people across the globe in a spirit of worship, solidarity, and shared faith. In 2025 the focus is on the Cook Islands and the theme, "I Made You Wonderful" from Psalm 139:14, serves as a beautiful reminder of God's creative work in each of us and his love of diversity.

Clergy and ministry

Salvation Army's Talking Tables

The Salvation Army has launched a scheme to tackle loneliness.

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A 'Talking Table' has been positioned at the Imagine More café in the grounds of Strawberry Field, Liverpool, serving as a place where the community can come together.



Salvation Army officer, Major Kathleen Versfeld, Mission Director at Strawberry Field, said: "In Liverpool we love to talk, and often do to complete strangers in the lift, on the bus, or at the shops. For some, sadly, this may be the only opportunity in the day to socialise with others. The 'talking table' is a gentle way of encouraging strangers to become friends, and above all to help others fight the daily battle against loneliness".

The 'Talking Table' is in operation seven days a week, 10–4pm. Everybody is welcome

Joe Johnston, Comber parish

Today I went to a Memorial Service in St Mary's Comber for Joe Johnston, a very loyal parishioner of mine in

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Comber for 32 years from January 1986. He was a very kind and good friend, Canon Johnathan Barry writes.

I am retired now just over 6 years, so that means I have known him for almost 40 years. My father first met him walking on Rosapenna beach in Co Donegal in the late 1970s, early 80s.

They had much of importance in common, a love of the Church, enquiring minds, an ability to discern matters of truth, and to express their views with conviction and clarity.

Joe Johnston was an exceptional man, faithful and true. He and my father had many conversations.

On Sunday morning last I was in Carrigart Church, where Joe was well known to the congregation, where he often worshipped on holiday. I told them of Joe's death, and started to remind them he had inspired them to restore the old clock in the church tower and the striking mechanism many years ago. As I spoke the clock began to strike the hour. A significant coincidence?

When Joe was on holiday in the Rosapenna Hotel, he and my father would meet each morning on the beach and go for a lengthy walk together. Joe had his stick, and my father had his dog.

As they met they always greeted each other in the same way.

“Ah, the man with the stick!”

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“And the man with the dog!”

Some years later the dog died. My father wrote about it, reminding his readers of the intensely bright light you can get in that place on a summer’s morning, when the sunlight is so strong it dazzles. Strand and sea merge as one, and you cannot see through it.

Sometimes the dog would run until he was out of sight. Joe and my father would then have to wait until the dog returned to them from the light.

When writing about it after the dog had died, my father said his beloved dog had now gone into the light, but this time was not coming back. So he would just have to wait for my father to catch up with him.

My father died many years ago. He went from my sight. And now Joe has gone too.

But I can “see” them still.

The man with the stick has set off down the strand. At the edge of the light, far in front of him, a figure has appeared. Beside him is a dog. They wait.

May Joe rest in Peace and rise in Glory.

Events

Methodist Safe Places

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Conference 2024 directed that all churches should register to become a Safe Place.

To do this, we recommend that a minimum of three people from each church attend the 90-minute session, which is open to anyone interested in learning more about domestic abuse and how being a Safe Place can raise awareness and benefit victims.



The dates for upcoming sessions this March are as follows for ROI and NI together:

Tuesday 4th March 2025, 7:30pm

Thursday 6th March 2025, 10:30am

Tuesday 11th March 2025, 7:30pm

Thursday 13th March 2025, 10:30am

→ To register and find out more, visit:

irishmethodist.org/ministries-learning-development

Armagh - The Home of Saint Patrick Festival 2025

The Armagh Festival takes place from 9th – 17th March 2025, celebrating rich heritage and vibrant culture with an exciting lineup of events!

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Armagh St. Patrick Festival promises an unforgettable celebration, from heart-pounding live music in cozy bars and restaurants to reflective and spiritual moments that stir the soul – there's something for everyone. And of course, plenty of good craic to go around!

The Home of St. Patrick, where history and culture come alive to create an extraordinary festival experience. One of the highlights is the Vigil Walk which takes place between the two St Patrick's Cathedrals, the only city in the world to have the honour of having two Cathedrals that share the same name.

The two Cathedrals dominate the skyline and their visual impact will be remembered by anyone who visits Ireland's Ecclesiastical Capital. Click to explore the Ecclesiastical Trail Buildings, Gargoyles and Angels or Saint Patrick's Way: The Pilgrim walk.

Plan your trip -
visitarmagh.com/stpatrick

Hands-on Digital Animation workshop

Animate your imagination!

Resources

[2025 Lenten Meditations from the Episcopal Church](#)

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This Lent, “let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Join writer Jerusalem Jackson Greer this Lent as she encourages us to partake in “A Commonplace Lent.”

(https://www.episcopalrelief.org/church-in-action/lent/?utm_source=ENS+EBlast&utm_medium=email+ENS&utm_campaign=ERD+LENT+2025+EBlast&utm_id=ERD+Lent+2025&utm_content=ERD+LENT+2025+EBlast)

Climate Stewards Carbon Fast

Looking for some Lent 2025 materials to help you care for creation?

Join with Climate Stewards Carbon Fast, starting Wed March 5th. Receive weekly emails with suggested actions to lower your carbon footprint and stories from their partners in the global south. Sign up on the website:

<https://www.climatestewards.org/carbon-fast>

Church Support Webinars

An ongoing series of free webinars from the Church of England to offer practical ideas and support for local leaders.

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We hope these sessions will provide access to individuals, information and resources that will help to make a real difference in your church and community.

Webinars will take place on Zoom, lasting an hour (unless otherwise stated). They will focus on a specific theme relating to our national vision and strategy for the 2020s as well as support in the areas of evangelism, discipleship, mission and more.

Spaces are limited and registration is required in advance. Full details, including sign-up links, are included below. New webinars are added regularly.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/church-support-webinars>)

'Where your treasure is' - new course for Lent 2025

A new five-week course from Operation Noah exploring how we can use our money to tackle the climate crisis. Out now and ready for download!

Each week includes a short reflection and discussion questions, a prayer and actions that you can take. The course is ideal as a Lent course or it can be used at other times of the year such as during the Season of Creation or Advent. All information -

<https://www.operationnoah.org/where-your-treasure-is>

In the media

Four Archbishops called to Vatican : More Irish dioceses set to amalgamate - Irish Catholic

More Irish dioceses set to amalgamate writes Garry O'Sullivan February 27, 2025

Ireland's four archbishops are scheduled to fly to Rome this week for meetings with the Dicastery for Bishops to discuss Vatican plans to amalgamate more Irish dioceses.

Bishops have come under increased pressure from the papal nuncio Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor to move faster on diocesan mergers. Last year the Bishop of Elphin was appointed Apostolic Administrator of Achonry with a view to an eventual merging of both dioceses and this month was appointed Bishop of Achonry as well as continuing as Bishop of Elphin.

However plans by the Nuncio to amalgamate the dioceses of Raphoe and Derry came unstuck recently when the bishop of Derry Donal McKeown flew to Rome to tell the Dicastery for Bishops that the time wasn't right for such a merger.

This reflects an unease among some of the Irish bishops at the pace of change being sought by the Vatican, with some complaining that more consultation is needed.

The dioceses likely to be discussed in Rome for possible amalgamation are Kilmore (Bishop Martin Hayes was appointed in June 2020) and Clogher (Bishop Larry Duffy was appointed in December 2018).

Other diocesan mergers on the table appear to be that of Ferns with Ossory. Ossory could also amalgamate with the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly which would raise the question of provincial boundaries being discussed but this scenario is less likely as the nuncio is believed to want to keep the provincial boundaries.

Another likely amalgamation is the formal amalgamation of Armagh and Dromore -the Archbishop of Armagh is already the Apostolic Administrator for Dromore.

Earlier this month the Irish bishops discussed changes to diocesan boundaries when they were in Knock. Archbishop Emeritus Terrence Prendergast of Ottawa addressed the Bishops Conference with a talk on 'Biblical Perspectives on change'. While these changes aren't of biblical proportions, they are part of a restructuring that marks one of the most significant changes in Irish Church governance in over nine centuries, leading to a more consolidated leadership.

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

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www.churchnewsireland.org

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

Please recommend to your friends
