

Church News Ireland



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Image of the day

The Bann at Coleraine

The Bann flows from Lough Neagh to the north coast and captures the largest drainage area in Northern Ireland. This view from the Killowen bank is upstream from the historic bridge in the town centre which links County Antrim with County Londonderry. Several Olympic medallists have trained on this stretch with the town's rowing club.

News

King throws open Windsor Castle state rooms as Muslims break Ramadan fast

The King has opened state rooms at Windsor Castle to Muslims breaking Ramadan fast for the first time.

More than 360 guests from all backgrounds gathered on Sunday in St George's Hall for the Iftar, the fast-breaking evening meal during the holy month of Ramadan.

It marks the first time in the royal residence's one thousand year history that an open Iftar event was held in the hall famous for hosting special banquets during state visits.

The King, who has promoted and celebrated interfaith dialogue and religious diversity throughout his working life, is understood to have been "kept aware of" and "supportive"

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of the event by the Royal Collection Trust (RCT) and the Ramadan Tent Project (RTP).

The gathering is part of the RCT's aim to make sure access to its palaces is "enjoyed by everyone", said Simon Maples, Windsor Castle's visitor director.

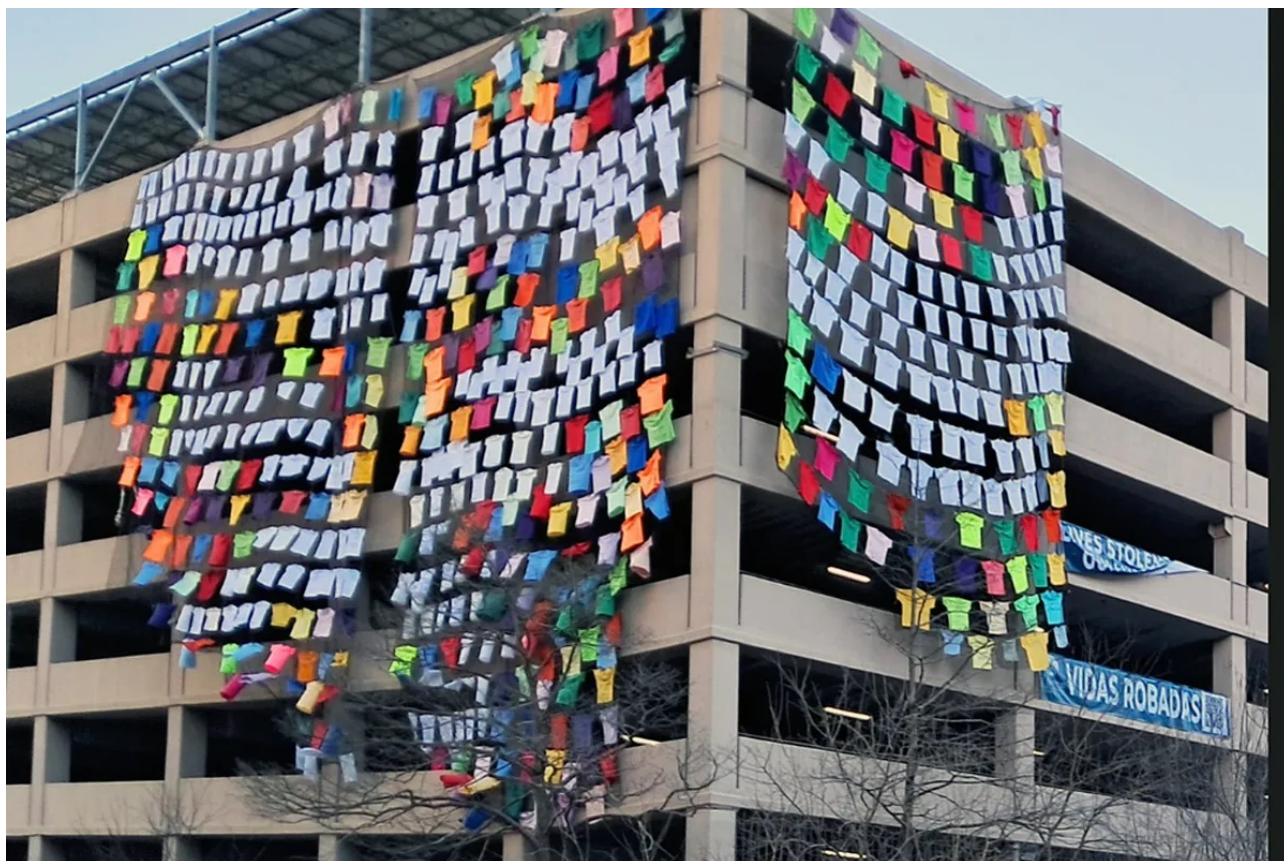
The Berkshire royal residence welcomed Iftar attendees for the first time in history last year, but in the Learning Centre rather than the state apartments.

The holy month of Ramadan, which began last Friday, sees Muslims fast between dawn and sunset for the duration of March.

Mr Maples said the monarch has been "championing religious diversity and encouraging interfaith conversation" for many years. Omar Salha, the founder and chief executive of the RTP, told the BBC: "The King is an excellent ambassador for this cause and is committed to community cohesion. We are incredibly grateful for his support towards the British Muslim community."

Texas church's art installation remembers lives lost to gun violence

People who have died from gun violence were remembered at St. David's Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, through a recently concluded art installation that featured nearly 600 T-shirts, which represents the average number of gun deaths every 50 days in Texas.



An art installation at St. David's, Austin, Texas, features nearly 600 T-shirts to represent the average number of people who die from gun violence in the state every 50 days. Photo: Courtesy of St. David's

The shirts were arranged in rows and then mounted on three large panels made of netting. Those panels were placed on the outside of St. David's parking garage, adjacent to the church, and displayed Feb. 20 to March 2.

The installation, "Vidas Robadas/Stolen Lives," was launched by Texas Impact, an interfaith advocacy network, as a way to make visible the reality of gun violence in communities all across the state.

It was created under the direction of Austin artist Alicia Philley and was timed to coincide with Gun Violence

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Awareness Day at the Texas Capitol, also in Austin, on Feb. 27.

Dianne Hardy-Garcia, the church's director of community engagement and advocacy, told Episcopal News Service that church members made 250 of the shirts, all of them white, to remember people who died by suicide involving a gun. They were told which families wanted the name, age and birth date or death date to appear on the shirt of their loved one, she said. For others, their shirts simply remember "another life lost" or "otra robada vida." All include the phone number for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline – 988.

The colorful shirts were made by other churches and represent victims of gun homicide. Since some of them had been displayed elsewhere, St. David's members made sure to touch up any of the information on them that had faded, Hardy-Garcia said.

The installation was blessed on Feb. 26 by St. David's assistant rector, the Rev. Kristin Braun, with Philley, the artist, and parishioners who had helped create T-shirts attending.

[Bishop Mariann Budde receives mountain of supportive mail after post-inauguration sermon](#)

Washington Bishop Mariann Budde has drawn intense national and international attention in the past month for her Jan. 21 sermon at Washington National Cathedral, in which she spoke directly to President

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Donald Trump in attendance and asked him to “have mercy.”

This week, Budde thanked all the people who have responded favorably to that sermon, in a video message she recorded literally in front of some 20,000 positive responses – a mountain of letters piled high in postal crates on a desk.

“I cannot tell you how much it has meant to me to receive the letters and phone calls and notes and gifts and expressions of gratitude, support and encouragement, and I am persuaded that there is a spirit of love and goodness in this land that flows through all of us,” Budde said.

Budde, in her post-inauguration sermon, had asked Trump to show mercy to “the people in our country who are scared now,” and she specifically held up the fears felt by many LGBTQ+ people and immigrants at the start of Trump’s second term.

Trump later demanded an apology, calling Budde a “Radical Left hard line Trump hater” whose sermon was “ungracious” and “nasty in tone.”

Though many of Trump’s supporters shared the president’s view, Budde also became a kind of folk hero for many Americans who saw her as one of the few public figures calling for compassion and respect for human dignity as the new Trump administration began swiftly upending existing policies and democratic norms.

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Washington Bishop Mariann Budde inspects some of the more than 20,000 pieces of mail she has received since her post-inauguration sermon Jan. 21 at Washington National Cathedral. Photo: Laura Natta, Diocese of Washington

Last week, churchwide leaders thanked Budde personally for her “courageous, Gospel-related words” when she appeared via Zoom in a gathering with members of Executive Council, which was meeting Feb. 17-19 in suburban Baltimore, Maryland.

Executive Council greeted Budde with applause, according to an official summary of the meeting. “Then council members shared stories of the impact of her remarks as well as concerns about her safety,” the summary said. “Budde reassured everyone she was fine. One speaker described Budde’s remarks as a breaking in of the Spirit into the midst of much turmoil.”

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A Diocese of Washington spokesperson said nearly all of the more than 20,000 pieces of physical mail Budde received in the past month were positive. “They are almost all letters of thanks to Bishop Budde for speaking about mercy and kindness and for helping them feel comfort in their fear,” she told Episcopal News Service.

Email communications to Budde and the diocese, on the other hand, have been more divided, some angry at the bishop and others expressing gratitude and support.

Budde offered more words of encouragement in her video statement, posted Feb. 25 as a Facebook reel. The video had logged more than 300,000 views in less than two days.

“Now is a time for us to stand together, to take courage from one another and learn together how we are to be brave now and to hold on to the things that are good about us and about our country,” Budde said.

“Together, God will work through us to bring about the kind of society, the kind of community, that we all deserve and that we want to pass on to those who come after us. So, take good care, have courage and remember that together we can all be brave.”

– David Paulsen is a senior reporter and editor for Episcopal News Service based in Wisconsin. He can be reached at dpaulsen@episcopalchurch.org.

Education



Ballymena Academy Chamber Choir supports NI Children's Hospice

Ballymena Academy Chamber Choir had the pleasure of presenting a cheque for £3235.00, raised through their Carol Services and Christmas Concert, to representatives of the Northern Ireland Children's Hospice.



Busy successful week for St Malachy's College choristers

It was a busy and successful week for St Malachy's College choristers. The week began with the Senior Chamber Choir performing for the Celebration of the Eucharist at St. George's Parish Church, Belfast.

The pupils were then treated to a workshop from the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland for which many auditioned successfully. The week finished with an excellent performance from the pupils at Ballymena Festival. The Senior Chamber Choir were awarded 1st place in the Lyn-Burn Cup.

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The College's Senior Choir achieved 1st place in the Kenneth McKeown cup in what was a very competitive class. The Senior Choir were also awarded the Dinsmore Shield for the best overall choir on the day. A fantastic achievement for the pupils. The College would like to thank Mr. Mark McGrath for all the work that he does with the choirs. See tomorrow for a photo of the full size choir!

Schools encourage staff at Siege Museum in Derry

The staff posted - A big thank you to the three Ballymoney Schools that visited the museum today, Ballymoney High, Dalriada and Our Lady of Lourdes.

Over 60 pupils on a shared education visit to whom we provided a tour of the Siege Museum, Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall, and City Walls.

The pupils were excellent and it was our pleasure to host you all.

We've had over 140 secondary school pupils into the museum this week as part of their Leaving Certificate studies. These are always very engaging visits with students wanting to know so much about our culture and traditions!

Our thanks to Sutton Park, Mohill College, Waterpark College, St Michael's College and Woodbrook College for their visits.

Apprenticeship success for BRA pupils



Staff were delighted to learn that two M6 pupils, Aoife McIvor and Faith Hillis, have secured apprenticeships. Aoife will be joining Quarter Chartered Accountants, and Faith will be working with Deloitte.

“These are wonderful placements for Aoife and Faith, and we are very proud of the hard work they have both put in to secure them”.

Cathedral Calls

Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan welcomed to Christ Church Cathedral

Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, welcomed members of the Dublin Romanian Orthodox community to Choral Evensong on Sunday March 2.

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The preacher was Metropolitan Josef, Metropolitan of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of Southern and Western Europe. Metropolitan Josef is also an Ecumenical Canon of the cathedral, having been appointed by Archbishop Michael Jackson and installed in February 2024



Metropolitan Josef (centre) with Dean Dermot Dunne, priests from the Dublin Romanian Orthodox community, some members of the Chapter of Christ Church Cathedral and the Cathedral Choir.

A large number of Romanian Orthodox Priests and parishioners joined the service and the choir of the Dublin Romanian Church sang the Motet, 'The Doors of Remembrance'.

In his sermon, Metropolitan Josef explored the theme of forgiveness. He said that forgiveness must be sought with sincerity and not lightly. He suggested that when seeking

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forgiveness there was a battle between pride and humility. A proud person, who thinks the world revolves around them, considers any remark as an affront while a humble person t



Metropolitan Josef preaching

seeks forgiveness taking on their shoulders the sins of others, he said.

“This is the daily struggle for every Christian – to strive not to assume that they are at the centre of the world and the world revolves around them. The Christian focus is on forgiveness and humility,” he stated.

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Metropolitan Josef said God wanted our hearts to be compassionate and that a sign of compassion was forgiveness. “Until we have forgiven everyone, we will not be able to taste freedom. It is all dust if we have not sacrificed our hearts for forgiveness,” he added.



The Choir of the Dublin Romanian Church.

Before the service concluded with a blessing by the Metropolitan, Dean Dermot Dune thanked him for his wisdom in preaching and thanked the members of the Romanian Orthodox community for coming to the service.

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He hoped that the link between the two churches would continue to grow.

Clergy and ministry

A Time of Inspiration, Connection, and Renewal

Down & Connor - Recently the Down 3 family of parishes gathered for a deeply enriching Parish Pastoral Council Formation Day.

Aishling from the Pathways team opened up with words of welcome and **Jim Deeds** facilitated the day.

As we listened, shared, and discerned together, several key themes emerged—inspiration, motivation, support, connection, hope, and dynamism—guiding us towards a renewed understanding of our mission.

One of the most powerful moments of the day came as we reflected on the need for stronger connections across our Families of Parishes. The Spirit is calling us not just to serve within our own parish communities but to foster deeper relationships between clergy and laity, between neighboring parishes, and within the wider Church. We are not alone in this journey—we are called to walk together, supporting and inspiring one another.

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As we prayed and shared our hopes and concerns, we recognized the importance of leaving space for the Holy Spirit to move among us. Change can bring uncertainty, but it also opens doors for renewal. The Spirit invites us to embrace our shared responsibility—clergy and laity together—as we seek new ways to serve, lead, and build vibrant, faith-filled communities as Christian leaders.

There was a great sense by the end of the session that the Church is alive and moving, and we are being called to step forward with faith, courage, and an openness to new possibilities. Together, we will continue to listen, learn, and grow as we embrace this sacred responsibility.

We would like to thank **Canon John Murray** for hosting the event and for everyone who gave up their Saturday to commit to the formation day. We hope you were enriched by the day and look forward to seeing you again for the formation evenings.

Events

Church's Ministry of Healing in-person Lenten course Dublin

“We still have some space available on our in-person Lenten course, in Egan House in the grounds of St Michan's Church, Dublin 7.

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“However, we are keeping this as a small, gentle, series, so if you have been thinking of booking, don't delay! . Sessions are from 1-2pm on Tuesdays, 11th March-1st April. Lydia and Susan will be facilitating the sessions - Susan is a member of CMHI and a reflective practice supervisor and lecturer for Dublin City University on its Masters in Chaplaincy course”.

Email lydia@ministryofhealing.ie to reserve one of the final remaining places

Meals and Miles on Wheels!

Cycle the 100 miles travelled by Meals on Wheels to raise funds for this vital service of the East Belfast Mission.

EBM - We deliver hot nutritious meals five days per week to over 250 elderly and sick clients in the local East Belfast area who would otherwise be without a substantial daily meal.

Choose between 30 minute or 1 hour slots and help us reach 100 miles on Thursday 13th of March! Sign up today!

<https://ebm.enthuse.com/cf/east-belfast-mission-spinathon-fundraiser-2025>

Organ recital All Saints' Clooney

Join All Saints' Clooney, Londonderry, Director of Music, Stewart Smith, for an organ recital on Friday 28th March at 7.30pm.

ORGAN RECITAL



**All Saints' Clooney,
Londonderry**

Friday 28th March
7.30pm

Stewart Smith

In Aid of Scripture Union



Enjoy an inspiring selection of music and a time of reflection in the beautiful surroundings of All Saints' Church. Friday 28th March, 7.30pm. Collection in aid of Scripture Union

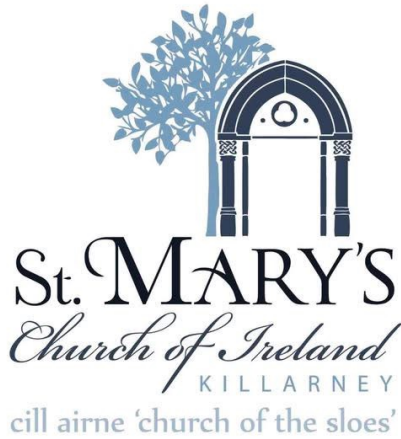
Cancer Focus dip at moonlit Portrush East Strand

Join us under the stars and immerse yourself in the refreshing moonlit water of Portrush East Strand on Friday 25 April

All monies raised will allow us to continue to support local people impacted by a cancer diagnosis.

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Sign up today: <https://cancerfocusni.org/event/northcoastdip/>



CONCERTS PROGRAMME

Mar 08: Taft Jazz Orchestra
Mar 27: Killarney School of Music
Apr 4-6: Wander Wild Festival
Apr 14: Palmyra-Macedon Choir
Apr 23: Millenium HS Wind Ensemble
Apr 26: Hardkoo Men's Choir
May 20: University A Cappella Choir
Jun 14: Fresno Choir San Joaquin
Jun 25: HS Choir (tbc)
Jun 26: Olympia Youth Choir
Jun 27: (tbc)
Jun 28: John's Creek Chorale

Jul 03: SS Patrick & Alphonsus Choir
Jul 04: Friendship Festival
Jul 05: Spraoi Chairraí
Jul 07: Tim O'Shea & Friends
Jul 27: American Church Choir (tbc)
Jul 26: Spraoi Chairraí
Aug 02: Spraoi Chairraí
Aug 16: Tim O'Shea & Friends
Aug 23: Spraoi Chairraí
Oct 11: Niall Leogue

The dates/choirs may change.
All concerts start at 8pm.

St. Mary's Church of Ireland
Kenmare Place : Killarney : Ireland

www.churchofthesloes.ie

Free Admission

Retiring Collection in aid of church repair fund

cill airne 'church of the sloes'

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Resources

Brighter Communities programme

The Brighter Communities programme energises innovative and emerging community groups, teams and projects with £1000 of funding awarded each month.

Since 2018 it has contributed over £85,000 to our communities and its still going!

Brighter Communities is Power NI's community fund donating groups across Northern Ireland with £1,000 of funding. Applications for the month are now open.

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**

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