

Church News Ireland



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Image of the day

Portbraddan

Portbraddan, 'The port of the salmon', by Whitepark Bay, on Antrim's north coast. By Neill Farren.

News



Castlerock commissioning for Rwanda mission trip



On Sunday two representatives from CMS Ireland came to Castlerock Parish church for the commissioning of Rev Chris and Sara for their upcoming mission trip to Shyogwe diocese in Rwanda. Please pray for Rev Chris and Sara as they make their final preparations.

Lunchtime concert for Westport church damaged in storm

A lunchtime recital will be hosted by St Mary's Church in Westport on Sunday next, March 2nd, on behalf of Holy Trinity C of I church in the town, which is currently closed due to damage sustained in Storm Éowyn on January 24th.



Holy Trinity Church is one of Westport's most historic buildings.

The recital, commencing at 1.30pm, will be given by the Dublin City Choral Union and there is no admission charge. A retiring collection, however, will be taken towards Holy Trinity Parish funds.

The Dublin City Choral Union is a mixed-voice choir founded in 2018. Its wide-ranging repertoire ranges from sacred motets to gospel and beyond. The artistic director is Duncan Brickenden who trained at the Conservatory of Music, (TUD), the Royal Academy of Music, London and Central St Martin's, also in London.

The choir will be accompanied on the day by the highly accomplished organist John Dexter who now resides in Mayo.

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Rev. Cousins, rector of Holy Trinity Church, again thanked Fr John Kenny and all at St Mary's Church for their gesture in coming to the rescue of the Protestant community in Westport after the devastating storm and their expression of ecumenical friendship at this time. Courtesy Western People

Invite to 'decisive' local Spring Gatherings to engage further with Irish Synod

According to the General Secretary for the Synodal Pathway of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Ms Julieann Moran (pictured next page), "The Synod on Synodality represents a historic and Spirit-led moment for the Church – one that calls each of us to deeper communion, participation, and mission.

"With the publication of the Final Document in October 2024, Pope Francis has offered not just reflections but a roadmap for renewal that will shape the life of the Church for years to come. This is not a theoretical exercise – it is an active and ongoing process that will bring real changes to how the Church listens, discerns, and walks together."

Ms Moran continued, "In Ireland, we are not only witnesses to this transformation. We are called to be active participants in it. The urgency of this moment cannot be overstated. The synodal way is now an essential part of how the Church listens, discerns, and moves forward with the collective wisdom of all the baptised together – clergy, laity, and religious. Implementing the insights and



Ms Julieann Moran

recommendations of the Final Document is not an optional exercise but a vital responsibility for us all.

“ I encourage everyone to engage with the Final Document, to integrate its principles into our ministries and work, and to foster a culture where synodality is lived out daily. We need to take seriously this invitation of the Holy Spirit and contribute to a Church that is more inclusive, responsive, and mission-focused.

“As the Synodal Pathway of the Catholic Church in Ireland continues, we are now at a crucial stage of this journey. In recent weeks, the National Synodal Team met with members of Diocesan Synodal Teams and members of movements, associations and other ecclesial groups, in order to provide resources for proposed Spring Gatherings at local level.



The Synodal Pathway of the Catholic Church in Ireland

“These Spring Gatherings will provide an opportunity for deep discernment, using the Conversation in the Spirit methodology, as we revisit the themes that emerged from the earlier stages of the Universal Synod in Ireland and discern priorities for mission, for action. These gatherings are not just another meeting or consultation asking for opinions or repeating the same question(s), rather these will mark a decisive moment in shaping how the Church in Ireland responds to the call of the Holy Spirit.

“The outcomes of these gatherings will directly influence a planned national gathering (called a pre-synodal assembly) to take place in October, where key priorities will be

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presented and will guide future decisions. The Holy Spirit is calling us to walk together in new ways, and now is the time to respond with faith and courage, trusting that through our shared discernment, the Church in Ireland will be renewed for the generations to come.”

Ms Moran concluded, “I encourage parishes, groups, and individuals to engage wholeheartedly in this process by getting in touch with their diocesan office to find out where a gathering is being held in their local area.”

For more information on the work of the Irish Synodal Pathway, to view all available resources and details of the Spring meeting, visit synod.ie.

'Symbol of the antichrist': Trump slammed for bizarre AI Gaza video

A video posted by President Donald Trump to his Truth Social platform shows him shirtless and sipping drinks with Israeli president Benjamin Netanyahu, in a reimagined Gaza.

Its soundtrack sings: “Donald's coming to set you free, bringing the light for all to see, no more tunnels, no more fear: Trump Gaza's finally here.

"Trump Gaza's shining bright, golden future, a brand new life.

"Feast and dance the deal is done, Trump Gaza number one."



The video features bearded belly dancers partying on a beach, and an image of Trump hugging a scantily clad belly dancer in a night club.

Elon Musk – who has been tasked with cutting government spending – features several times, throwing dollar bills in the air and eating hummus on the beach.

Golden effigies of Trump feature repeatedly; a large Trump statue looms over a hotel strip, whilst miniature ‘Trump Gaza’ golden souvenirs line the AI-generated gift shop shelves.

It is unclear whether the video was made by a White House team member - but it has been pinned to the top of the president's account as a 'Pinned Truth'.

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Trump supporters on Truth Social have responded with bemusement and concern.

"I don't think that's funny or cool. Sorry. Am I missing something??? I hope it's a joke a bad joke.." wrote one user.

Another said: "I hate this. I love our president, but this is horrible," said another.

Some picked up on the symbols in the video as references to Biblical imagery, with one user saying: "Mr President while I appreciate what you do, is not about you. To God be the glory and the honor, for without Him, you couldn't have accomplished anything. The statue is a symbol of the antichrist, please humble yourself to God. Jesus is king and only Him."

"You're doing great Mr President. But don't let it get to your head. God put you in that position for His Glory, not yours," said another.

Education

Classroom RevivR equips schoolchildren with life-saving skills.

A new interactive online learning tool has been launched by British Heart Foundation Northern Ireland (BHF NI) to equip thousands of schoolchildren with essential life-saving skills.

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Earlier this #HeartMonth, British Heart Foundation launched its free interactive online learning tool, Classroom RevivR, in Northern Ireland to equip thousands of schoolchildren with essential life-saving skills.

At Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock, Head of PE/ Sport, Catherine McGourty, took a class of year 8's through a session, to encourage them to be prepared in the event of an emergency.

If you work in a school or are a member of the school community, encourage them to sign up for free by searching Classroom RevivR.

Classroom RevivR has been supported thanks to fundraising by our charity partner Royal Mail.

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/what-we-do/news-from-the-bhf/news-archive/2025/february/classroom-revivr-launch-ni>

Mum of drugs victim hopes play will 'make NI pupils think'

The mother of a County Armagh teenager, who died after taking drugs given to her on her first night at university, is hoping a play touring schools will make other young people think about what they would do in a similar situation, BBC News reports.



Sandra Larmour's 18-year-old daughter Jeni (above) died after taking Ketamine hours after arriving at Newcastle University in October 2020.

The play - I Love You Mum - I Promise I Won't Die - is based on the true story of 16-year-old London boy Daniel Spargo-Mabbs who died after taking ecstasy on a night out 11 years ago.

Sandra, who has been campaigning for more drugs education in schools, worked hard to bring the production to Northern Ireland.

Young people at Jeni's old school - The Royal School Armagh - saw it on Tuesday.

Martina McAfee, one of the actors in the production, says the fact that it is a "verbatim play" meant it was "not an easy performance to do".



A verbatim play is based on the actual words of real people.

Martina believes that because the script is based on "true words" from 16-year-old Daniel Spargo-Mabbs' family and friends means it "sticks in the students' heads" after they leave the school.

The title of the play are the final words he spoke to his mum on the night he died.

(<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgm1yrm83mjo>)

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Cathedral Calls

Ash Wednesday and Lent with Westminster Abbey

Westminster Abbey invite you to join them for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter at the Abbey. Explore upcoming services, online resources, and more.

“A schedule of major services, as well as online reflections, will be published shortly. In the meantime, sign up to our email newsletter to receive weekly faith resources in your inbox”

Ash Wednesday is explained in 90 seconds.

On Ash Wednesday you can tune in online through their livestream for the 5:00pm GMT Sung Eucharist.

(<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/worship-music/services-times/holy-week-and-easter/>)

Events

Information Evening on The Bereavement Journey - Diocese of Armagh

This is an event to find out more about the Bereavement Journey everyone is welcome.

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Questions about how to run a course, what support is available, and have your questions answered.

Where: Royal Hotel Cookstown

Date Tuesday 18th March 2025

Time 7.30 pm

Ards Choral
Society

In Paradisum

Musical Director: Ian Bell
Accompanist: Joanne Cruise
Narrator: Walker Ewart
Guests: Brian McClean
& Cabhan Keag

St Mark's Church Newtownards
Thursday 6 March 2025



CHURCH OF IRELAND DIOCESES OF DOWN & DROMORE AND CONNOR

ORGAN SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME 2025

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Applications are invited from candidates of all ages who are Grade 4 & above.

BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME

Free fortnightly lessons for the three year duration of the scheme.

Development of practical skills including hymn playing, choral training & performance of organ repertoire.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications may be requested from the Honorary Secretary
downdromoreconnororganinfo@gmail.com

or downloaded from

www.downanddromore.org

www.conor.anglican.org

Deadline for applications: **23rd April 2025**

Audition dates: **17th and 19th May 2025 - St John's Malone**



Outline of course

The Bereavement Journey is a special opportunity for learning about the process of grief, and through this working together over seven weeks to develop ways of coping as well as collective support.

The programme is for everyone who has been bereaved in any way and at any time. Featuring weekly meetings, each lasting two hours, the delivery of the programme involves several facilitators (depending on the number of participants) providing a series of videos on a range of topics - attachment, separation and loss; the pain and responses of grief; anger and guilt; coping with others reactions; delayed and suppressed grief; adjusting to change; moving forward healthily.

Each week there are two videos, followed by group discussion, during which participants are invited to contribute, however nobody should feel pressured into speaking at any time. To encourage participation from people who have experienced differing forms of loss, as well as people from throughout the community, the faith element of the programme is retained until the final week, during which participation is optional. Experience has however informed us that the majority of participants undertake all seven weeks.

The programme has run for three consecutive years in St Mark's Armagh, each very positively evaluated, and we would value the opportunity to support a spread in the delivery of this programme throughout the diocese. An opportunity to meet with other parishes, to summarise the

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Bereavement Journey programme and then discuss how we might support local delivery in other churches, is something we would welcome.

If you are planning to attend please inform Valerie Thom:
phone number 07736644051
or email: valeriethom2@btinternet.com
Thank you

Resources

Pancakes and Prayer for Lent

C of I Children and Family news -Take a look at the fantastic Pancakes and Prayer campaign that CIYD and Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal have put together this year then think about the ways you, your church, your school or your Toddler group might get involved.

Pancakes and Prayer for Lent!

Young people encouraged to raise money for South Sudan schools

Pancakes and Prayer for Lent!

Bishops' Appeal and the Church of Ireland Youth Department (CIYD) have teamed up to encourage all Church of Ireland youth groups / youth clubs / schools to take part in Pancakes and Prayer, a special initiative for Lent 2025, focussing on several schools in South Sudan within the Dioceses of Ibbá and Maridí. The schools are all part of the Fields of Life Thrive Programme which helps

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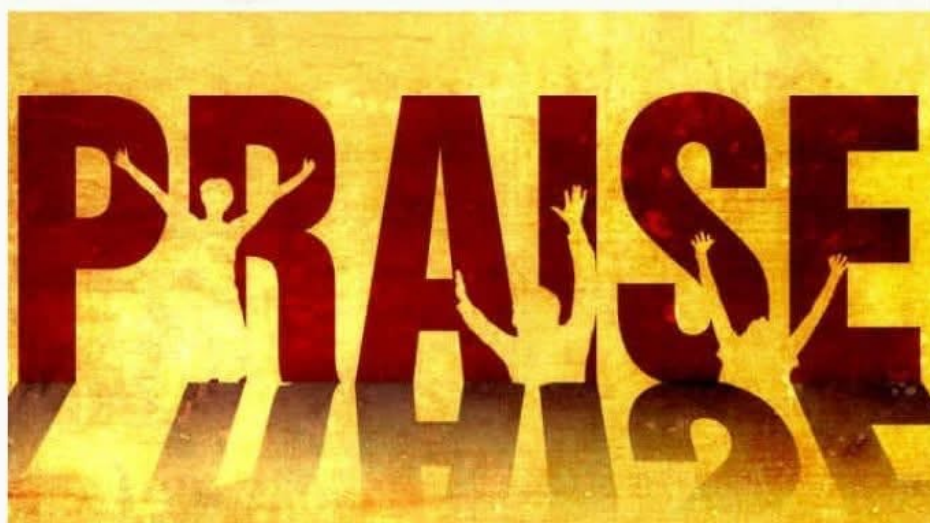
every child to say: "I am educated, I am fed, I am safe and I am loved."

We are asking young people and leaders throughout the Church of Ireland to pray throughout Lent for the students, teachers, and the wider communities of schools in South Sudan who are part of the Fields of Life Thrive programme. But also encouraging each group to run a special fundraising initiative at some point during this period – it could be a pancake party on or around Shrove Tuesday (4th March), or treats after church on Mothering Sunday (30th March), or simply to provide an opportunity for the young people to make a donation each time the group meets, in lieu of money they would normally spend on drinks or

ALL SAINTS' CLOONEY CHURCH OF IRELAND

Praise & Worship

Sunday 2nd March - 7pm



"Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs"

Psalm 100:2

THE ULSTER CONSORT

ON WINGS OF SONG

ROMANTIC MUSIC BY SCHUBERT, BRAHMS, AND MENDELSSOHN

A beautiful, varied concert showcasing the radiant female voices of the Ulster Consort. Solos, duets, 2-part, 3-part, and 4-part choruses combine with piano duet *March militaire in D* (performed by Tristan Russcher and Matthew Owens) to ensure a delightful early evening concert of 19th century Romantic music to celebrate the coming of spring.

Highlights include the ever-beautiful *Ave Maria* and *An die Musik* by Schubert, Mendelssohn's glorious *Lift this Eyes* and the rarely-performed *12 Lieder und Romanzen* by Brahms.

THE ULSTER CONSORT

TRISTAN RUSSCHER piano

MATTHEW OWENS piano and conductor

Saturday 22 March, 6pm–7pm

Hollywood Parish Church, Hollywood, BT18 9BX

Tickets: **£15**, available in advance via [eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk),
and on the evening at the door



creative
hollywood
festival



snacks.

Funds raised during Lent will go towards running school gardens, growing food to feed children during the school day. Training in growing and protecting crops, equipment and seedlings are all part of what will be provided through the generosity of young people within the Church of Ireland.

Many of us choose to give up something for Lent – be it sweets, fizzy drinks or crisps and snacks. The money we save, donated through Bishops' Appeal to the schools in South Sudan, will enable children in South Sudan to be fed day after day, week after week and month after month. Long after Lent ends the legacy will live on through the impact of our prayers and through our giving.

It costs a little over £8,000 per year (€10,000) to set up and maintain a school garden in a group of schools, feeding up to 3,500 children for a year at a cost of less than €3 per child or £2.50. That's not per child per day, but per year! This is a project where a small amount of money can make a big difference – and where our prayers for safety, welfare and the protection and presence of our loving God can and will transform lives.

The Download pack will be available at www.ciyd.org and a link to donate – <https://store.ireland.anglican.org/donations/donate?appeal>

Then, each week, there will be new video clips on social media to encourage prayer, and further information about the project, running for the six weeks of Lent. Whenever the group meets, midweek or on Sundays, we encourage you to

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take a few minutes to watch the latest video clip and to pray for the children and young people of South Sudan.

<https://ciyd.org/2025/02/17/pancakes-and-prayer-for-lent/>

<https://www.facebook.com/239169528439033/posts/671008048588510>

Heritage

John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck, the renowned writer with Ulster-Scots heritage who won the Nobel Prize for Literature, was born in California on this day in 1902.

Steinbeck's maternal grandfather, Samuel Hamilton, was from the Ballykelly area of Londonderry. At age seventeen he travelled to the United States, where a year later he married Elizabeth Fagen, born in the US but whose family also hailed from Ulster.

John Steinbeck was a prolific writer, authoring 33 books during his lifetime, including 16 novels. Many of these novels have become classics of English and American literature, such as *Of Mice and Men*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *East of Eden*.

Though Steinbeck was only two when his grandfather died, he had a life-long fascination with the man and his Ulster roots. In August 1952, Steinbeck visited Scotland and

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Northern Ireland with his wife Elaine, stopping off at what he regarded as his ancestral homeland.

Steinbeck recalled driving through Ballykelly "without knowing it was there", but at Limavady the locals turned him back. He recalled: "I guess I had thought of Ballykelly as a town; it isn't - it's what they call in Texas 'a wide place in the road.'" However he described Ballykelly as "the seat of my culture and the origin of my being and the soil of my background".

His popular novel *Of Mice and Men* takes its name from Robert Burns' famous poem *To A Mouse*, from the line that states "The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men Gang aft agley".

Speaking to the soul

Go

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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www.churchnewsireland.org

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

Please recommend to your friends
