

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Ballyclare goes coastal

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Image of the day



Ballyclare goes coastal

Over the past week, Year 9 pupils have had an amazing time in Portrush completing their Coastal Study fieldwork

Under blue skies, they

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explored coastal features along our beautiful north coast—
perfect weather for learning outside the classroom!

News



Canterbury front-runner rules himself out of race to be next Archbishop

The Bishop of Norwich will now form part of the Crown Nominations Commission, which chooses the next Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Bishop of Norwich has ruled himself out of being considered as the next Archbishop of Canterbury.

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Rt Rev Graham Usher had been seen as one of the favourites to succeed Justin Welby who resigned from the role in November following criticism over his handling of abuse disclosures.

But Bishop Graham told The Times this week that despite speculation in recent months, he “felt no sense of inner calling to be Archbishop of Canterbury”.

He put himself forward to be a member of the Crown Nominations Commission (CNC), the 17-member body tasked with finding the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury. He will now join Most Rev Stephen Cottrell the Archbishop of York, becoming the panel's second Church of England episcopal member.

Church protocol means that as a member of the CNC, he can't now be considered for the Canterbury role himself.

Bishop Graham said that it was a “weighty privilege” to be elected to the CNC and that “whoever becomes the next Archbishop of Canterbury will need to know, more than anything, that she or he can only undertake this role with the grace and comfort of Almighty God”.

The 54-year-old, who is also lead bishop for the environment, said he “remained constant” to “God’s continued faithful call to serve the people and parishes of the wonderful diocese of Norwich, as well as the national and international environmental roles I have, all of which bring me much joy”.

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The rest of the CNC membership will be revealed in early April. It's expected to hold its first meeting in May, with at least two more meetings scheduled for July and September.

The next Archbishop of Canterbury is expected to be announced in the Autumn.

Concern raised over religious group in Derry Diocese

Safeguarding: Bishop of Derry highlights concerns about practices and policies of religious group SSPX Resistance Ireland

In a letter printed in every parish bulletin in the diocese at the weekend, Bishop McKeown addressed the fact SSPX Resistance Ireland was holding Masses in the diocese.

The Derry News understands SSPX Resistance Ireland Masses have taken place in the Galliagh area of the city, but not in Church properties, over the past two years.

Bishop McKeown said, given the group's presence in the Diocese of Derry, he found it necessary to stress the Catholic Church had "no supervision whatsoever of the priests or ministers of SSPX Resistance Ireland".

"[They] have no connection with the Diocese of Derry in terms of Safeguarding practices and policies and are not overseen by the Bishop of Derry," wrote Bishop McKeown.



The Bishop of Derry, Most Rev Dr Dónal McKeown, has expressed his concern about the safeguarding practices and policies of SSPX Resistance Ireland, a new religious group operating in the Derry Diocese.

“The priests associated with SSPX Resistance Ireland are not in full communion with the Catholic Church and they do not accept the full teaching authority of the Church,” his letter continued.

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“The priests of SSPX Resistance Ireland administer sacraments, but do so illicitly - that is, without the necessary facilities and approval of the Church.

“The Catholic Church has no supervision whatsoever of priests or ministers of SSPX Resistance Ireland, who have no connection with the Diocese of Derry in terms of Safeguarding practices and policies and are not overseen by the Bishop of Derry.”

“Considering this information, I urge all the faithful to remain steadfast in communion with the Church, united with the Holy Father and the bishops who share in full communion with him.

“Let us continue to pray for the unity of the Church and for those who have distanced themselves from full communion, that they may one day be reconciled.”

SSPX Resistance is a splinter group of the Society of St Pius X (SSPX) - the canonically irregular organisation founded in 1970 by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre.

Ordained in 1929, Archbishop Lefebvre was a Holy Ghost Father. As Superior General of the order, he participated in the drafting and preparation of documents for the Second Vatican Council (1962 to 1965). He was a major leader of the conservative bloc during its proceedings and refused to implement its subsequent reforms.

In 1968, he resigned his leadership position in the Holy Ghost Fathers and founded SSPX as a small community of seminarians in the village of Écône, Switzerland, in 1970.

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SSPX favours the retention of the Tridentine Mass - the Traditional Latin Mass - and pre-Vatican II liturgical books in Latin for other sacraments.

As well as the Diocese of Derry, SSPX Resistance Ireland has a presence in County Cork - in the rural community of Reenascreena near the town of Rosscarbery.

In a December 8, 2024 podcast “The SSPX Resistance in West Cork: Pious priests or a danger on our doorstep?” produced by The Southern Star newspaper in West Cork, Fr Tom Hayes, Parish Priest of the local Clonakilty and Darrara Parish, outlined the provenance of SSPX Resistance Ireland.

“In the 1980s, a significant new step was taken by Archbishop Lefebvre, when he went ahead, without the authority of the Pope, and consecrated a number of people as bishops,” said Fr Hayes.

He added: “That led to all the people involved being automatically excommunicated - or put outside communion with the Church - so they were barred from participating in any sacraments or from participating in Church life in any fashion.

“One of the bishops he ordained, allegedly as bishop, went on later again to ordain other people and one of those has recently formed the movement that is called the SSPX Resistance.

“They have fallen out with the original group who broke away from the Church, largely because they don’t believe

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that the Society of St Pius X was radical enough for them or is in enough opposition to the authority of the Holy Father in Rome or the Catholic Church.

“The group of people who have set up camp, as it were, in Reenascreena belong to that second group [SSPX Resistance Ireland].” Courtesy DerryNow

Two significant objects of local Methodism go on display in Carlow County Museum

Two objects of enormous historical significance to both Carlow and Carlow’s Methodist community were unveiled recently at Carlow County Museum.

Cllr Fergal Browne, cathaoirleach of Carlow County Council, and Rev John Alderdice, president of the Methodist Church in Ireland, unveiled a display of two objects at the museum.

The two items are a limestone plaque from 1789 commemorating the last visit to the town by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, and the second item is a beautiful 1899 tablecloth containing the hand-stitched signatures of 183 people.

The conservation and relocation of the 1798 plaque was funded by a Heritage Council’s Heritage Stewardship Fund grant while the conservation of the tablecloth received funding from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts,



At the unveiling the Methodist Church 1789 plaque and the 1899 tablecloth in Carlow County Museum were Rev. Katherine Kehoe, Rev. John Alderdice, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Avril Hogan, Carlow Methodist Church, Richard Codd, President of the Carlow Historical and Archaeological Society, cllr Fergal Browne, cathaoirleach of Carlow County Council, Dermot Mulligan, Museum Curator, cllr Fintan Phelan, Mayor of the Municipal District of Carlow and Minister Jennifer Murnane O'Connor

Gaeltacht, Sports and Media, through its Regional Museum Exhibitions Scheme.

“Carlow County Museum, operated by Carlow County Council, co-ordinated the conservation and display of both objects,” said Cllr Browne.

“The report on the limestone plaque stated that the plaque was in an advanced state of decay and extremely fragile to touch. Without specialised intervention the plaque would



have continued to deteriorate. Following the conservation works, I'm pleased to state, the plaque is now stable. Meanwhile, the tablecloth, for the majority of its 125 years, remained in storage. This wonderful piece of Carlow social and religious history has been conserved, mounted and framed and on display in our wonderful museum that is free to visit," he added.

The tablecloth contains the hand-stitched signatures of 183 people who attended a Methodist church building fund raising 'Bazaar and Sale of Work' in the town hall on Saturday 13 May 1899.

Many of those whose stitched signatories are contained in the cloth were important families in the area, involved in



business, social and cultural life of the town and surrounding areas.

The memorial plaque is believed to have come from the former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Charlotte Street in the town. Until recently the plaque was stored in the basement of the present Methodist Church.

The oval shaped blue limestone plaque has the finely carved inscription ‘Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Erected AD 1789’.

Rev Alderdice was on a four-day visit to the county and engaged in a number of activities with the Carlow Methodist community. He described it as “a genuine honour to take part in the unveiling of the two historical items presented by the Methodist Church to Carlow County Museum”.

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“Being able to preserve these important items offers us a window to our past that helps us understand our social and religious history and enables us to consider our place in the community in the present.”

The conservation works to the tablecloth were undertaken by Rachel Phelan Textile Conservation in her studio in Dublin. Gebel and Helling Conservation Ltd of Cork and Tipperary conserved and relocated the plaque to the museum.

A delighted Rev Katherine Kehoe said: “It is a privilege to attend this wonderful event and to see the names of past Carlow Methodist Church members saved for posterity. I am conscious of the great debt of gratitude the present church family owes each one. Many thanks to all at Carlow County Museum for making this piece of Methodist Carlow history available to the community.”

These items, along with hundreds of objects of Carlow’s history, can be viewed in Carlow County Museum, which is located on College Street in Carlow town and admission is free of charge. Courtesy the Carlow Nationalist and Photos by michaelourkephotography.ie

Nenagh churches pray for unity

A large congregation, drawn from many different Christian traditions in Nenagh and environs, came together in St Mary’s Church of Ireland at 7pm on Friday, February 28, to pray for Christian unity.



The service had first been planned for January 24, but had to be rescheduled because of Storm Éowyn. The liturgy had been prepared by the Community of Bose, an ecumenical monastery of brothers and sisters in northern Italy, on the theme ‘Do you believe this?’

Joc Sanders (Church of Ireland) welcomed the clergy and congregation to the church on behalf of the Rector, Rev Keith Barry, who was indisposed. The service was ably led by Deborah O'Driscoll, pastoral assistant in the Odhrán Pastoral Area (Catholic). Music was provided by the Odhrán Pastoral Choir.

Lynn Kelly (Church of Ireland), Donal Mackey (Catholic) and Clifford Guest (Methodist) read from John 11:17-27 (Jesus consoles Martha at Lazarus’s tomb). Fr Pat Gilbert, PP (Catholic) read from John 20:24-29 (St Thomas meets



Jesus in the upper room). Joc Sanders (Church of Ireland) gave a brief reflection, and led the congregation in saying the Beatitudes.

The light of Christ was taken from the Easter Candle to light candles held by the people, as all said the ecumenical Nicene Creed, in this 1,700th anniversary year of the Council of Nicaea. The people then brought the candles up to the chancel and placed them around a large cross, as they joined in the Taizé chant ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom’.

Rose Langley (Church of Ireland) and Siobhán Darby (Catholic) read prayers from ancient authors. Fr Vitalii Svyryd (Ukrainian Orthodox) read from 1 Peter 1:3–9 (New birth into a living hope). Finally, to send the people out into the world, the clergy joined together in pronouncing the Aaronic blessing.

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After the service, light refreshments were served. Amid a merry buzz of conversation, it was generally agreed that it had been a lovely, moving service, well worth repeating. Many present said that they looked forward to more opportunities to join together in this way, rotating the venue between different churches. Courtesy The Nenagh Guardian

Course for priests from abroad helps integration into pastoral roles here

During March, eighteen priests from diverse regions around the globe came together for this year's Orientation Course, an initiative jointly organised by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and Spiritans Mission Ireland.

The participants hailed from Nigeria, India, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Indonesia, and Angola. The programme is designed to equip priests with the pastoral and cultural understanding needed to serve effectively in ministry in Ireland.

The intensive two-week course offered valuable insights into Irish society, Church life, and the unique pastoral challenges faced by clergy in the country. It included sessions on topics such as intercultural ministry, pastoral care, safeguarding policies, and the role of the Church in modern Irish society. Through dynamic discussions and the sharing of experiences, the priests were able to deepen their understanding of their mission within a new cultural and ecclesiastical context.



Commenting on the initiative, Father Willie Purcell (pictured with participants), National Diocesan Vocations Coordinator of the Bishops' Conference, and who serves as one of the course tutors, said, "This course is a vital step in helping priests integrate into their new pastoral roles in Ireland. It provides both practical pastoral training and spiritual guidance, ensuring they are well-prepared to engage with parish communities across the country."

"This programme reflects the universal nature of the Church and underscores the importance of collaboration across cultures. We are deeply grateful for the dedication of these priests and their commitment to serving in Ireland."

A standout feature of the course was the sense of fraternity and mutual support it fostered among the priests, who will now take on pastoral assignments in dioceses and religious congregations throughout Ireland.

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The Orientation Course, held biannually, demonstrates the Church's ongoing commitment to welcoming and supporting international clergy as they embark on their mission in Ireland. Courtesy of Catholic News

For more information about this programme, visit www.spiritan.ie.

Education



Belfast Philharmonic at the Boys' Model

We are looking forward to performing Carmina Burana in a new venue on April 12th, The Belfast Boys' Model School!



The North Belfast Youth Choir meet there to rehearse in their impressive performing arts theatre and the school received a prestigious award for excellence in a new build.

Visit our website for more details about the concert
#belfastphil150

Triumphant choir success for St. Matthew's PS Drumsurn

St. Matthew's Primary School Drumsurn have achieved huge success at the recent Coleraine Music Festival. This is such a huge accomplishment for a County Derry rural primary school.

St. Matthew's entered both their junior and senior choirs into five competitions and achieved a triumphant four first awards and one second award.



Richard Yarr was the adjudicator at the event. Mr Yarr is a highly respected music professional and is known for his outstanding roles as a producer and adjudicator and is enthusiastic about nurturing young talent and promoting classical music.

Principal of St Matthew's, Mrs Kealey shared her pride saying: "Mr Yarr's comments about the school choir were amazing. He said our school choirs were 'bright and enthusiastic, beautiful dynamic variation and all-round excellent choirs'. Here at St. Matthew's Primary School, we are just so passionate about music and choral singing. From the very young in Primary 1 to our older pupils in Primary 7, every child gets the opportunity to be part of the school choir. St. Matthew's school choir reflect the hard work, dedication, and talent of all the choir members and their directors."

The choirs are led and directed by both Miss Kealey and Mrs Kealey and both teachers are true believers that

participating in a school choir can be such a rewarding experience that contributes to a child's holistic development.

“There is a huge range of physical, mental, and emotional benefits that children can gain from joining their school choir. Participating in a school choir can truly enrich a child's life in many ways, such as improved academic performance, development of social skills, emotional well-being, discipline, responsibility, and physical development too,” Ms Kealey said.

“Our school has always had a strong reputation for having developed and instilled the love of music in our pupils and encouraged them to be part of the school choir. We also had success in the past when we got through to the final heats of ‘School Choir of the Year’ on a few occasions. We take great pride in our music here at St. Matthew's which permeates throughout the curriculum and our entire school community is just so proud too.”

Miss Kealey, who is a trained soprano and graduated from Queen's University Belfast with a BA in Music, added: “I am absolutely over the moon and so incredibly happy for the boys and girls in both the junior and senior choirs. They worked so hard and have made me, the staff, and the wider school community so proud.”

All at St. Matthew's are thrilled about the Choir's recent success.

Mrs Kealey concluded: “It is just wonderful to see the positive impact that music has on all our students. We now

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look forward to some celebrations in the very near future and the opportunity to showcase our fabulous choirs again.”

For more information on the school and to see the children singing you can visit stmatthewsprimaryschool.com



Wallace High School Night at the Musicals

On Friday 28th March at 7pm pupils from Years 9-14 will be singing an array of songs from well-known musicals such as Matilda, Wicked and The Greatest Showman!

Tickets available at <https://zurl.co/HwRk3>

£6 adults. £5 children/concession

Pupils take part in New York St Patrick's Day Parade

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Over 40 pupils from St Paul's High School in Bessbrook marched in the famous parade. They also met up with Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin during their trip.

A teacher at a Co Armagh high school has said he was both "emotional and proud" after more than 40 pupils flew to New York to take part.

Clergy and ministry

Is God calling you to Reader Ministry in Armagh diocese?

God has given a variety of gifts to his people, for works of service and ministry.

He may have given you the gifts for ministry as a Parish Reader or Diocesan Reader. Perhaps you've felt God prompting you towards a new scope of service in his Church. Could it be that God is calling you to Reader Ministry?

Parish Readers serve by leading God's people in worship: by leading the service, or reading the Bible readings, leading the prayers, or assisting at Holy Communion - in their own parish. Diocesan Readers lead God's people in worship in the same way as Parish Readers, and are also authorised to preach - across the diocese by invitation.

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Applications are currently open for our next training courses for both Parish Readers and Diocesan Readers: Parish Reader applications will close on Friday 30th May for selection interviews in June with the course beginning in September. Diocesan Reader applications will close on Friday 29th August for selection interviews in September, with the course starting in January 2026 in the Church of Ireland Theological Institute.

If you would like to explore the possibility of ministry as a Parish Reader or Diocesan Reader, or for more information, please speak to your Rector, who will refer you to the Warden of Readers, the Rev'd Canon Gary McMurray (028 3887 0798 or garymcmurray@gmail.com).

Youth Pastor to serve in Dundrum Methodist Church, Dublin

We are seeking to appoint a Youth Pastor to serve in Dundrum Methodist Church, Dublin

– a vibrant, multicultural and diverse church community that seeks to serve Christ in the community.

→ For full job description and to apply now, visit: bit.ly/3RcWCAA

Events

Expert parent webinars

Is Your Child Struggling to Fit In?

- Shy or anxious in social situations?
- Difficulty reading social cues?

Join our webinar and learn practical strategies to help your child communicate confidently with peers and adults. Get conversation tips, tools for success, and feel more confident supporting their growth.

Book now: <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/your-pta-expert/parent-webinars#heading465737>

Have you signed up for Walk for Autism yet?

Registrations close on Tuesday 25th March, so hurry!

Together, we can make a real difference and help to raise autism acceptance and understanding in Northern Ireland.

Every step you take helps to support autism projects and the people who use our services. Sign up here today
<https://shorturl.at/otESc>

Find Your Dream Job in the Charity Sector

Looking for a rewarding career where you can make a real difference?

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Join us at the 2025 Northern Ireland Charity Careers & Volunteer Job Fair and connect with 20+ top charities hiring for paid roles right now!



Date: 27th March 2025



Time: 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM



Venue: Assembly Buildings Conference Centre, 2-10 Fisherwick Place, Belfast, BT1 6DW, United Kingdom



Why Attend?



Discover new job opportunities in the charity sector



Meet hiring managers from charities like NSPCC, Praxis Care & Extern



Get career advice & network with sector professionals



FREE entry – but tickets are limited!



Secure your FREE ticket today!  [https://](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2025-northern-ireland-charity-careers-volunteer-job-fair-tickets-1111470892359)

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Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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

Please recommend to your friends
