

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – Remembrance**

November 2, 2023

## Image of the day



### Remembrance by George Jones

CNI's sequence on Remembrance continues with a painting by George Jones who is also well known for his music. You can keep in touch with George - artist and musician on Facebook and his web site.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Jones\\_\(radio\\_presenter\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Jones_(radio_presenter))

## People and places



### Light up a Corrymeela star with James Martin

**Oscar winner James Martin shared some of his star dust to invite us all to shine a light for peace this Christmas.**

'I've been coming to Corrymeela for over 20 years to do drama and art classes and I just love all its stands for' says




James. 'I'm so proud to be Corrymeela's 'Shine a Light' Ambassador and invite people to help light up lives this Christmas.'

'With increasing conflict in the wider world, and increased tensions locally, our Shine a Light campaign gives us all an opportunity to bring some hope this Christmas' says Tim Magowan, Corrymeela's Executive Director.

'We were delighted to welcome James and his dad, along with the Lord Mayor of Causeway Coast and Glens Council, and representatives from local businesses, churches, charities and the PSNI, to help us launch our appeal and encourage us all to contribute to a more peaceful world in 2024'.

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You can light up a star to light up a life on our virtual Christmas tree here : <https://www.corrymeela.org/donate/shine-a-light-for-peace>.




BIBLES  
FOR BABIES

Bible Society NI wants to give every baby born in 2023 and living in Northern Ireland a

**FREE TODDLER BIBLE**

And then, a FREE Children's Bible on their 5th birthday!



## 'Bibles for Babies' - NI Bible Society seeks support

“Registration for 'Bibles for Babies' is NOW OPEN! We want to give every baby born in 2023 and currently living in

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Northern Ireland a FREE Toddler Bible on their 1st birthday and a Children's Bible on their 5th birthday.

“Check out our website to find out more and find out how you can register your little one today:”

[www.biblesocietyni.co.uk/resources/bibles-for-babies/](http://www.biblesocietyni.co.uk/resources/bibles-for-babies/)

## Walk in the light in Derry city tomorrow

**Ministers and priests representing the city centre churches will lead a group of walkers and pilgrims from all denominations and faith backgrounds in a celebration of light and peace tomorrow evening of Friday November 3rd, 2023.**

Gathering in a spirit of hope, the walk begins at 7pm at Carlisle Road Methodist Church, proceeding to First Derry Presbyterian, on to St Augustine's - 'the Wee Church on the Walls' - concluding at St Columba's Church Long Tower.

Supported by the four main denominations here, 'Walk in the Light' will include a short, light-themed service in each of the participating churches and will close with supper in Long Tower Primary School, at approximately 8.15 pm.

Although the walk is supported by the city centre churches, participation is by no means confined to those congregations. Members of all churches, and indeed those of other faiths and none, are most welcome to join this expression of hope for peace and light.



The city centre churches are partnering this year with mental health charities and organisations in the city to raise awareness of support services and the readiness of dedicated people with the skills and compassion to listen and offer help anyone in need. Representatives from several of the main charities will join in the walk and will be available to offer advice on how to access their services for anyone seeking help or inquiring on behalf of a loved one.

Walk in the Light is funded by The National Heritage Lottery Fund with money raised by National Lottery players and with additional funding from Derry City and Strabane District Council. The event comes at the end of the week celebrating the Halloween festivities in the city. It also coincides with the onset of shorter, darker days, the feasts of All Saints and All Souls and the annual Remembrance Ceremonies - a time of year loaded with significance for



**Defibrillator dedicated at Kilroot** - Parishioners were delighted to have Bishop George Davison of Connor Diocese with them on Sunday morning, to dedicate a defibrillator, which was installed thanks to a generous donation in memory of Irene McGreal. Here he is pictured with Eden, who was baptised and Olajesus and Eizabeth, who were confirmed by Bishop George, when he last visited the parish on 31st May 2023

people of faith, as well as those who are simply searching, as many are, for meaning and hope.

Rev Peter Morris of Methodist Churches said: “We don’t have to go through life alone: that’s the shared hopeful message that comes from both our united churches and the involvement of local mental health charities.”





**Greetings in Washington - Happy double anniversary to Bishop V. Gene Robinson as he celebrates 50 years as a priest and 20 years as a bishop. Dean Randy Hollerith of Washington National Cathedral presented him with a pinnacle from the WNC central tower!**

First Derry Presbyterian Church added: "At First Derry Presbyterian Church we are delighted to be part of this Light-themed Service in association with the City Centre



## Reverse Advent Calendar - A brilliant simple approach to an essential action from Bangor Food Bank and Community Support

Churches. This gathering gives us light and hope in our dark times in this world.”

Rev Nigel Cairns, Rector of St Augustine’s Church of Ireland, on the Walls said: “The initiative by the four churches offers a fresh dynamic to the close of the City’s famous Hallowe’en Carnival. Few things could be more important than bringing light and hope to broken lives and a broken world.”

Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm. St Columba’s Church Long Tower, concluded: “Our walk in the light is an opportunity to walk in solidarity with the suffering men, women and children whose

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lives have been literally torn apart, particularly in the Holy Land, who are longing for light in the darkness of a devastating war. We will walk in the hope that Isaiah's prophecy of old will come true again: 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.'"



**Derry City during this week's Halloween activities -** Thousands watch the the great fireworks display. Photo courtesy of Chris Gallagher photography

Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Cllr Patricia Logue, said the Walk in the Light event was a very poignant way to end Halloween in the city and district. "The Walk in the Light is a very special way to end the annual Halloween celebrations and to provide an opportunity to

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reflect and share messages of hope. It is important to see all faiths coming together to share the same message of peace and love and to send out a joint message of hope for those who are facing challenges at this time.”

**Event: Walk in the Light.** Date: Friday, November 3rd, 2023. Time: 7.00 pm. Location: the starting point for the walk is Carlisle Road Methodist Church

## In the media

### 'Progress' on review of education, but date not set for final report

**The independent review of education is on course to be completed in “late autumn”, but the Department of Education is still unable to confirm when the final report will be made public, Mark Bain reports in the Belfast Telegraph.**

Work began in October 2021. A panel of five, led by Dr Keir Bloomer, was initially given 18 months to consult with leading bodies and stakeholders on how to reshape the future of the education system in Northern Ireland, though a six-month extension had been built into the time scale for completion.

The Department of Education said: “The independent panel are making good progress towards their aim of completing the report in late autumn, though no specific date is yet available for publication.”

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The review was set up as part of the New Decade, New Approach deal and from the outset promised “not to shirk the big issues”.

It's now over a year since the panel published an interim report on the work carried out.

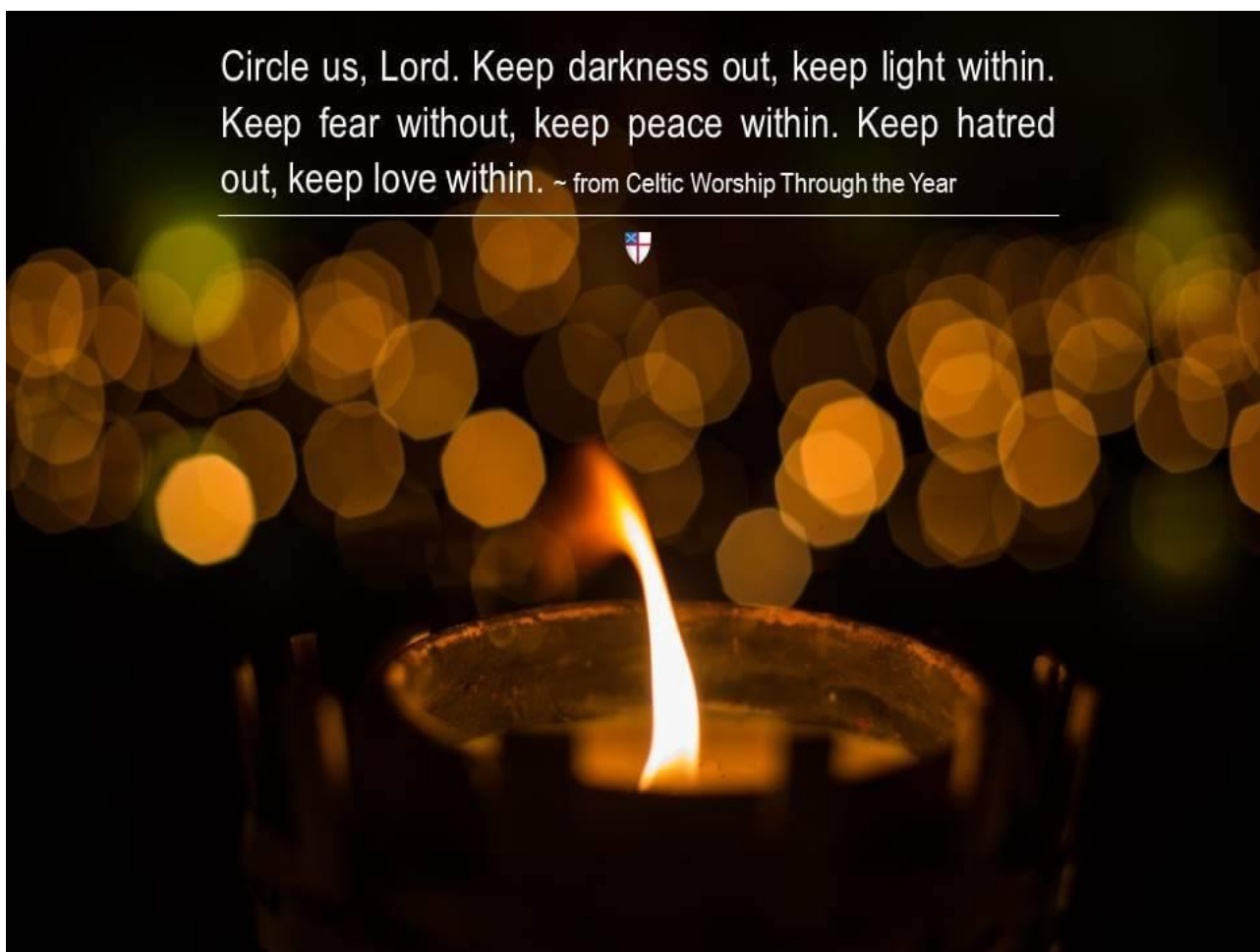
At that time, Dr Bloomer said “doing nothing is not an option” if Northern Ireland was to seriously address the educational needs of children.

But the panel also warned that change cannot happen overnight in a bid to temper expectations and it aims to set a 20-year time-scale for a slow evolution of the system.

“Our review will focus on curriculum and assessment, tackling disadvantage among all age groups, providing improved services for very young children and learners with special educational needs, and making sure that education is properly resourced,” Dr Bloomer added.

“It is clear from our extensive engagement process that many people have strong views on education. The panel has taken evidence from many different stakeholder groups, visited schools and colleges, engaged directly with learners, received written submissions and conducted a very extensive public survey.

“The panel is concerned about services and outcomes for learners with special educational needs (SEN). Assessment and statementing processes are often unduly protracted. There is little evidence that the approaches adopted are as effective as society would wish. At the same time both the



apparent incidence and the costs of SEN are rising exponentially in a manner that cannot be sustained.”

He also said that the education system “has many strengths”, but it is also facing a number of challenges.

“One major challenge is financial. It is clear to the panel that education in Northern Ireland is seriously underfunded. But there are also areas where resources can be used better.”

Dr Bloomer said that services to children in the early years of life would also be a priority.

The report will seek not only to offer recommendations to deal with immediate problems, but also to set a direction of travel for the longer term.

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There were also hints that the panel is struggling to find agreement on some of the major issues and it has remained quiet on academic selection and the transfer test. And midway through the process it was expected final recommendations will include handing more powers to schools in decision making.

## Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

### Learn about the life and times of St. Colmán in Mayo Abbey presentation

**Mayo Parish Heritage Committee are hosting a presentation entitled 'The Life and Times of St. Colmán' by local writer and historian Colmán Ó Raghallaigh in Mayo Abbey Community Centre (F12 X8P5) on Thursday, November 9, commencing at 8 p.m.**

They say “Although we possess a certain amount of historical information about St. Colmán, there is much about his life that remains an enigma.”

Piecing together all of the existing evidence and revisiting previous scholarship, Colmán Ó Raghallaigh re-examines the actions and motives of the man himself and how he dealt with the many challenges and setbacks he faced throughout his life.

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His early life and allegiance to Iona, his central role in the seventh century Synod of Whitby, his return to Inishbofin and subsequent connection to the Abbey of Mayo form the backdrop for a fascinating exploration of the life and times of one of the most important figures in the early Christian church in Ireland.

Fourteen centuries later, it is timely to look again at the influence of this remarkable man.

A former primary school teacher, Colmán Ó Raghallaigh taught for 35 years in his native Mayo. He holds Masters degrees in both Modern Irish and Old Irish, and has a particular interest in Irish history and mythology. He has also lectured in Celtic Studies in the University of Galway.

Colmán is an award-winning author of many books in Irish for children and young people, including a highly successful series of graphic novels. In 1996 he set up Cló Mhaigh Eo to publish high-quality books in Irish and has since published books by more than 20 Irish authors.

Admission to the presentation is free and all are welcome. For further information, contact [heritage@mayoabbey.ie](mailto:heritage@mayoabbey.ie).

Courtesy the Connaught Telegraph

# Church News Ireland



## Perspective

### 'Holding On' to 'Letting Go': The Church of Ireland and its Property - Bishop Adrian Wilkinson

**'God, Kings and Commissioners' was the title given to a one-day conference held recently at the Royal Irish Academy on Dawson Street in Dublin. It was part of the Dublin Festival of History and was sponsored by Dublin City Council.**

The aim of the event was to examine the approaches taken to the research and preservation of landscapes and places of faith across Ireland following the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. The contributors were all academics, archivists and historians but I was privileged to be asked to chair the first part of the conference and contribute some opening remarks on the history of the Church of Ireland through its buildings, records and people, from the perspective of a relatively new bishop.

The session I then chaired included an excellent paper on Church of Ireland records, by examining what has been lost or destroyed over the centuries as well as the nature of the material that has survived.

Another superb paper focused on the Rock of Cashel and its transition from episcopal palace and cathedral to the iconic ruin we all know today.

I found a third paper particularly fascinating, perhaps in part because it was by an historical geographer, and that is a subject I studied and loved when I was at university, but also because I have lived in church owned properties all my life. In this paper the author examined the valuation of the benefices held by the Church of Ireland in 1871 on the eve of disestablishment, before its dismantling and reorganisation under the terms of the Irish Church Act passed two years previously.

At the time the Church of Ireland was one of Ireland's largest institutional landowners. The clergy resident in their individual parishes enjoyed their rectories and the income from the use and letting of the glebe land in their parish. All this was to change. The ownership of most of this land was transferred to former tenants under the agency of the Commissioners of Church Temporalities. However, under favourable terms, the new Representative Church Body was facilitated in acquiring those glebe houses that were in use, as well as much of the land that had been around those houses. As a result, the built heritage and landscape presence of the Church of Ireland remained largely intact after disestablishment, providing a welcome sense of continuity and stability at a local level during this period of upheaval. In other words, while much of the wealth of the Church of Ireland was redistributed to others, the clergy, church buildings, schoolhouses and other property used by the Church of Ireland remained as before.

The legacy of this is still evident across this Diocese. Splendid old rectories can be seen across the countryside, though many now have new owners. Often the current clergy live in smaller more modern homes no doubt much to

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their relief when it comes to paying the heating bills. While some schools have been amalgamated or moved to newer premises and some parish halls have been sold, we still have a huge portfolio of historically significant properties. Indeed, many of the churches active in 1871 remain in use in our parishes today.

Over the past year, before I visit a parish on a Sunday morning, I often put up a picture of the church or cathedral I will visit on social media. I have heard from some people that they enjoy seeing these pictures. On several occasions recently, I have been to parishes to dedicate memorial gifts or rededicate church buildings following refurbishment and restoration work. I salute all that is being done by parishioners and select vestries to keep many of our churches in good condition, though I don't underestimate the time and expense involved by so many volunteers in this work.

At the end of the history conference I attended last month, the final paper was by Professor Alan Ford of the University of Nottingham. Its title was From 'Holding On' to 'Letting Go': The Church of Ireland and its Property.

That of course is the nub of the issue for so many of us at parish, diocesan and central church level. There are no simple answers to this issue, but the responsible stewardship of our heritage requires us to consider this from time to time on a case-by-case basis. Where our church buildings are still the focus of active communities of worshippers, they provide a visible landmark of spirituality and focus for outreach and engagement with the wider community. In such circumstances they should be

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maintained and I'm glad to note that I see much evidence of this in Cashel, Ferns and Ossory. However, when buildings become a burden rather than a blessing, then creative solutions for their continued use need to be examined.

As the hymn writer Brian Wren reminds us in his hymn 'In Christ, our humble head,'

'Our walls of soaring stone,  
and tales of old renown,  
can send us out and spur us on,  
or drag and weigh us down.'

There is much wisdom in knowing the difference.

*The Right Reverend Adrian Wilkinson is bishop of Cashel,  
Ferns and Leighlin*

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## Church News Ireland

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