

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Brigade enrolment at St Paul's

November 23, 2023

Image of the day



St Paul's Lisburn Brigade Enrolment Service

Last Sunday
morning The
Church Lads
& Church
Girls Brigade



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at St Paul's held their Enrolment Service. During the service the rector, Rt Rev Darren McCartney was presented with his Chaplain's hoodie.



People and places

90th birthday service helps Christian Aid

Christian Aid want to tell you an ‘Offaly’ sweet story from - can you guess which county?

When Robert Gyles celebrated his 90th birthday recently, a special service was held in St Brigid’s Church of Ireland in Clara to mark the occasion.

With characteristic modesty, Robert didn’t want the service to focus on him so instead the rector, Rev Canon Isaac Delamere spoke about the work of Christian Aid. A collection taken up during the service yielded almost €600 to support Christian Aid’s work.



St Brigid's Church is part of Tullamore Union (Church of Ireland Parishes of Tullamore, Clara, Tyrrellspass & Rahan).

Robert is pictured here with his daughters (l-r), Heather, Rhona, Pamela and Sonia. Doesn't he look very jolly?

Rhona told us: "Church has always played a big part in Dad's life and he was the organist in Clara church for over 60 years, so it was lovely to celebrate with a church service."

Sonia is Rev Canon Sonia Gyles, rector of Sandford and St Philip's Parishes in Dublin.

Following the service, family and friends enjoyed a lovely lunch in a local hotel.

Please join us in thanking this humble hero for his support for our work.

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Congratulations Robert on reaching your tenth decade. Everyone at Christian Aid Ireland sends their very best wishes.



Confirmation at St Patrick's Drumbeg - A really special day for all present. Bishop David McClay led a joy-filled service where he asked "How much more" as he encouraged those present to be filled with the Spirit.

New Christmas Carol to premiere at Dunboyne

A brand new Christmas Carol, entitled 'Sing Ye of Bethlehem' will premiere at two special concerts in St



Peter’s Church, Dunboyne, Co Meath on Thursday 23rd and Saturday 25th November at 7.30pm.

The carol was written by Dunboyne resident, Conor Bowman who works as a barrister by day and an author and songwriter by night.

The carol will be performed by a specially formed Parish Pop-Up Choir made up of parishioners from Dunboyne and Rathmolyon Church of Ireland Parish and members of the St Peter’s National School community.

A special School choir made up of pupils from St Peter’s will also perform, along with the Vocal Vibes Adult and Children’s Choir led by Sarah Bass.

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Commenting on the carol, Conor Bowman said “I wrote the music and words last Christmas Eve, but when a friend decided to arrange it into four part harmony, it really took on a life of its own. It’s great that it can finally be sung publicly and here’s hoping that it captures people’s imaginations further afield this Christmas”.

The concerts will serve as fundraisers for the Parish of Dunboyne and donations will be taken on the door and all are warmly welcome to attend. For further information please see – <https://www.facebook.com/DunboyneandRathmolyonGroup/>

36 men attend priesthood information weekend in the national seminary

36 men from dioceses across Ireland enrolled in this year’s weekend gathering on 18 and 19 November, in the national seminary of Saint Patrick’s College, Maynooth, to help discern if God is calling them to the priesthood.

According to Father Willie Purcell, director of the National Vocations Office of the Irish Bishops’ Conference, “The weekend offers those discerning a vocation to the diocesan priesthood an opportunity – not only to meet with the formation team and college community to experience life in the seminary – but also to meet with likeminded young men who are on the path of discernment to the priesthood. Saint Patrick’s College, Maynooth, provides a safe and conducive environment for participants to ask questions of the

formation team, while also enabling them to reflect on following the example of the life of Jesus. Those attending pray together and join the seminary community in the celebration of Mass, hear accounts of contemporary priestly ministry and meet with students who have begun formation towards priesthood.

“Bishops are currently hosting a Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood. In this regard, any man who is contemplating a vocation to the priesthood and wishes to further explore their calling, should make contact today with the National Vocations Office, on info@vocations.ie, where they can obtain resources and contact details for their local vocations director. Our feedback indicates that seminarians, and newly ordained priests, are grateful for the witness, encouragement and accompaniment of another priest during their own discernment process.”

This is the third year that the national seminary, in collaboration with the Bishops’ Vocations Office, hosted this gathering. Our theme this year, ‘Come and See’, was drawn from the invitation of Jesus in John 1:39 – 41, when disciples ask Jesus where He was staying. and wanted to know Him and hoped for an opportunity to do just that. Rather than being too busy or important for these eager young men, Jesus invited them by saying, ‘Come and you will see.’

Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan is chair of the Bishops’ Council for Vocations and is leading the 2023 – 2024 Year for Vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood, on the theme: ‘Take the Risk for Christ’ (‘You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you’ John 15:16). The Year for Vocation involves

organised prayer and awareness initiatives and will conclude on Good Shepherd Sunday, 21 April 2024. In a particular way during this dedicated year, prayers to encourage vocations to the priesthood are being prayed during daily and weekend Mass in dioceses and parishes across Ireland.

News reports

Unholy row over closure of Scotland's oldest church

The Church of Scotland has been accused of disrespecting country dwellers and “robbing” a rural community of their spiritual home by closing the country’s oldest church.

Birnie Kirk’s near 900-year run as a place of religious worship ended at the weekend after the last Sunday service was held within its ancient walls.

Since being built in 1140, the tiny church in Elgin, Moray, has weathered the elements and conflict but has fallen foul of the Kirk’s bean counters as officials try to balance the books amid falling congregations and rising costs.

The decision has upset elderly parishioners, who will have to worship at Elgin parish church, which for some means a 20-mile round trip.

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Birnie Kirk's usual congregation of about 20 people swelled to more than 100 on Sunday as defiant parishioners flocked to the pews.

Gill Garrow, 68, a Kirk elder, said she was upset by the Church of Scotland's decision, which was notified to the congregation in September. She accused officials at 121 George Street, the Kirk's Edinburgh headquarters, of having "no respect for country folk".

"They are breaking up a community, a family, where people look out for each other. This is our spiritual home," Ms Garrow said. "I know we're not the only ones suffering but there's so much history attached to the church, it's in great



CS Lewis Weekend



Saturday 25th - Sunday 26th November

Celebrating the 125th anniversary of the birth of St Mark's most famous son. All events take place in the church.

Saturday 25th Nov at 11 a.m.

Tour of St Mark's Church highlighting the many connections between Lewis, his family and St Mark's (phone office to register).

Saturday 25th Nov at 7.30 p.m.

The Bookwell brings us author Jem Bloomfield to discuss his book *Paths in the Snow*, drawing the reader deeper into the magic and meaning of Narnia.

Sunday 26th Nov at 10 a.m.

CS Lewis and Narnia with preacher Bishop David McClay.

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condition. Surely to goodness they can keep it open," she added.

Archaeologists have found evidence to suggest Birnie was a centre of Roman power and an important pre-Christian settlement inhabited by the pagan Picts. Two hoards of Roman coins were found nearby and an earlier church dedicated to the Irish missionary St Brendan is thought to have given Birnie its name.

The Church of Scotland said a five-year mission plan had identified that Birnie Kirk should cease to be a place of worship by 2027. A spokesman added that it was hoped that some midweek services could still be held at Birnie from January. "The continued use of Birnie church hall will be reviewed on an annual basis," they said.

Evangelicals launch flying bishops and ring-fenced funding after Synod vote on same-sex blessings

The Church of England's Evangelical Council has launched two new initiatives for orthodox evangelicals, in the wake of the decision to allow trials of special services to bless same-sex unions as part of the Living in Love and Faith process.

In a narrow victory for progressives, the church legislative body has approved a motion for CofE bishops to move towards implementation of 'Prayers of Love and Faith' (PLF). The motion also requested bishops to trial

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standalone services for PLF while they are considered for permanent use.

The outcome has left bishops divided and individuals on both sides of the debate unhappy. Same-sex couples feel their relationships are still being seen as second class, while conservative Christians believe there's no proper theological justification for the change.

In response, the CEEC, established in the 1960's by the late John Stott, former Rector of All Souls Langham Place in

GEORGIAN DAY AT THE CATHEDRAL

SATURDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2023

The Cathedral Church of Saint Patrick
will be open for visitors from
9 of the clock until 5 of the clock.

Choral Evensong
will be sung by the Cathedral Choir
at 5 of the clock.

All welcome.



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London, is offering an alternative system of spiritual oversight, for evangelical clergy who no longer feel aligned with the spiritual leadership of their own bishop.

A group being referred to as 'Honorary Assistant bishops', made up of retired bishops, existing bishops and others described as 'overseers', will offer spiritual support to clergy and congregations who now desire it.

In addition new financial provision known as the "Ephesian Fund" is being set up, which the CEEC describes as a new national stewardship fund.

It's a charitable fund, which the group says it provides a way for congregations who may wish to withhold their giving from the Church of England's central fund in light of the vote, to continue to support orthodox Anglican ministry.

John Dunnett, CEEC's National Director, tells Premier neither idea has come out of the blue: "We've been saying... for the best part of six years now... the changes that the bishops have been pushing through, were always going to be divisive. So this shouldn't be a surprise to any bishop.

"What it suggests is that they've not actually been hearing what people on the ground have been saying."

He insists they're not creating a breakaway group within the denomination:

"This is quite the opposite. This is an attempt to keep clergy and lay people inside the Church of England at a moment when it appears that the bishops are driving a wedge right

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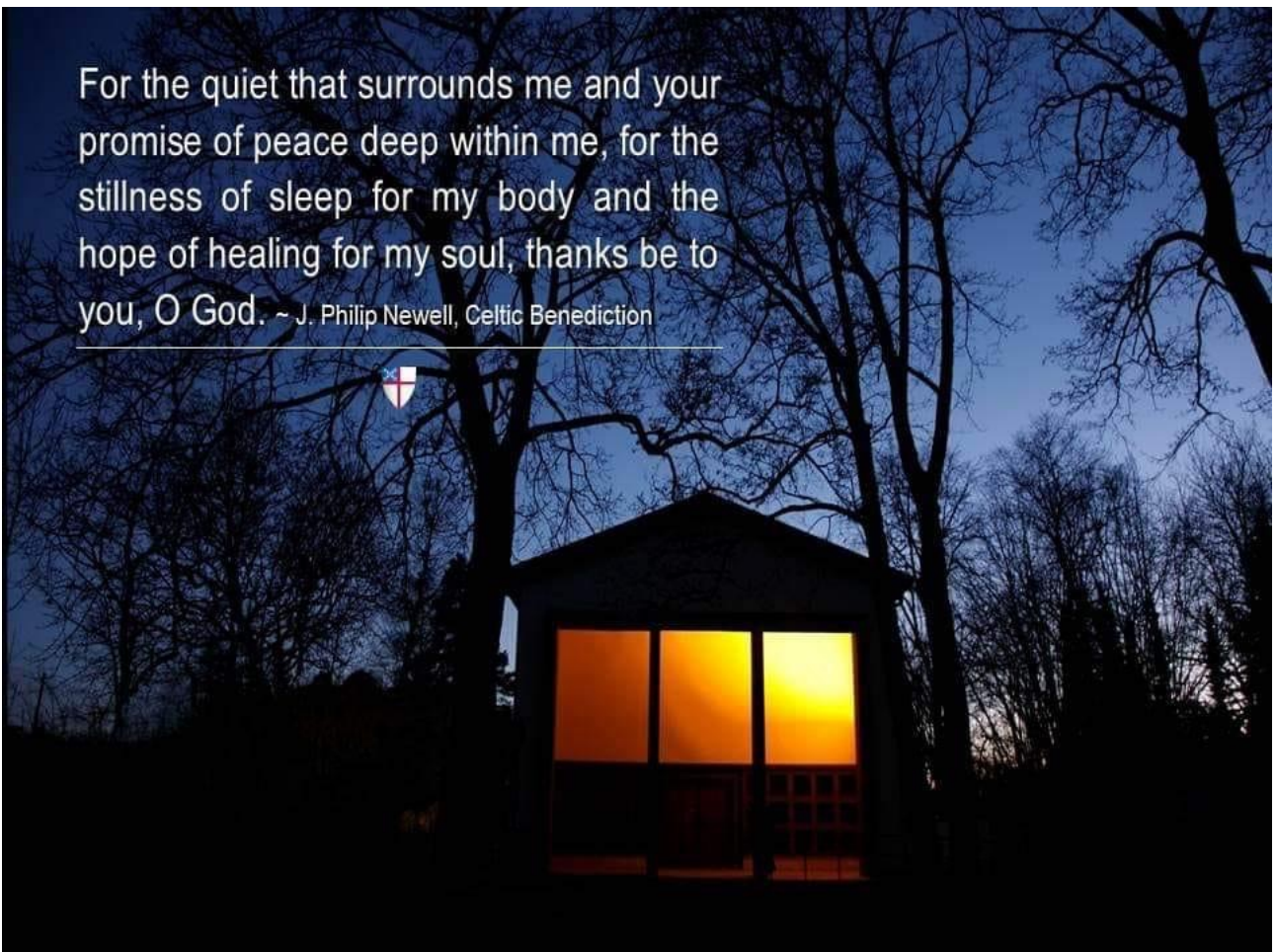
down the middle - the kind of wedge that is causing people to say, 'Should I stay or should I go?' We're hoping people will say stay."

Prayers of blessing for same sex couples are expected to be commended for use by mid-December with provision for dedicated services coming soon after.

The CEEC believes the proposals are being pursued without adequate provision or protection for those holding to the historic and global majority Anglican view on marriage and sex.

The group maintains that these new measures are "informal and temporary", but will allow clergy who now "find their consciences deeply troubled" to remain a part of the Church

For the quiet that surrounds me and your
promise of peace deep within me, for the
stillness of sleep for my body and the
hope of healing for my soul, thanks be to
you, O God. ~ J. Philip Newell, Celtic Benediction



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of England "whilst more formal and official provision is pursued."

Neither side has been willing to leave the denomination over the issue of same-sex blessings, with both conservatives and liberals pressing for a resolution that favoured their interpretation of Scripture. The House of Bishops remains split and deep divisions exist at every level over the correct way forward.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Cappella by Candlelight

Capella Caeciliana are presenting a concert of sacred choral music "Cappella by Candlelight" in St Patrick's Church, Donegall Street, Belfast, this coming Sunday evening (26th) at 7.45pm.

As well as hearing a lot of beautiful music in a reflective atmosphere, attendees will have the opportunity to view the magnificent triptych "Madonna of the Lakes" by Sir John Lavery, which he gifted in 1918 to this church in recognition of his baptism there.

Details of the concert at www.caeciliana.org.

Bells for Bangor Saints Festival

For this year's Columbanus Festival, which runs from Friday to Sunday, the Friends of Columbanus have chosen the theme of 'bells'. The programme includes bell ringing, bell print workshops, a monastic bell lecture and a bell walk.

"Monastic bells played an important role in early medieval times to call the monks to prayer or warn of impending danger," explains Deborah Girvan, chair of the Friends of Columbanus Bangor.

"Inspired by the original Bangor Bell that is displayed in the North Down Museum, we chose the bell theme to build our programme around. We are delighted to welcome renowned expert Cormac Bourke, who will give a lecture entitled, 'Early Monastic Hand Bells Revisited'.

"We have teamed up with Seacourt Print Workshop in Bangor to deliver a series of workshops to learn how to print a unique, limited edition postcard of the Bangor Bell using letterpress".

+The Columbanus Festival runs from Friday November 24 to Sunday November 26. To book an event, go to visitardsandnorthdown.com, drop into either Ards or Bangor Visitor Information Centres or call 028 9127 0069.

+friendsofcolumbanusbangor.co.uk

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+ Brigid Watson, of Sustainable Journeys Ireland, is offering guided tours in Co Down including the Bangor Bell walk and tours of St Patrick's Country.
sustainablejourneysireland.com

Limavady's Walking Ecumenical Carol Service

It is planned to continue this tradition by starting at 7pm at St.Mary's Church on Monday 11th December followed by the Methodist Church and then onto Christ Church before finishing at Drumachose Presbyterian Church where there will be hot drinks and mince pies afterwards.

Please wrap up warm as these churches are all in walking distance and DO come to support each other.

Heritage

Ballywillan Old Church

Ballywillan (Ballywillin) Church is situated one mile from Portrush on the Ballywillan Road. The name "Ballywillin" transcribes to 'Town of the Mill' and was also known as Mylton.

The church ruin you see today dates to the 16th century and replaced or was renovated from an older church built on the site in the 13/14th century. This church, in turn, replaced the older church of Portrush, which existed approximately midway between Ramore Head and Crocknamac Street.



There are no visible remains of this church, known to have existed in the 12-13th century.

The graveyard at Ballywillan is large compared to other churches of a similar period. It has several decorative crosses in different styles, including Celtic. An intriguing grave here is that of Dorothea Ross, reputed to be the illegitimate daughter of James II, conceived when he and his troops were stationed locally during the 1689/90 campaign in Ireland, which ultimately led to his defeat by his son-in-law William III. Incidentally, James II was reputed to have had numerous illegitimate children.

Dorothea married a merchant named John Ross, and the arms on the grave slab, as interpreted by an expert, convey the two arms of the couple's families, with Dorothea's indicating a Stewart/Stuart connection with the fleur-de-lis

above. Some refer to the slab being installed by her half-sister Queen Anne.

There is a flaw here though it does not solve the mystery around the story. The inscription on the slab, when it was more legible as recorded by the Ordnance Survey, is "The remains of Mrs. Dorothea Ross, wife to Mr. John Ross of the town of Coleraine, merchant, who departed her mortal life the 11th day of December, anno domini 1713, in the 42nd year of her age."

If this is accurate, then she would have been born in 1671, a long time before James was in the locality. As erosion has made the slab now illegible, we are left to question the accuracy of the Ordnance Survey or the story itself. Some accounts suggest she died in her early twenties, possibly in childbirth, which could give credence to a misreading of a worn inscription. Was the 42 really 22? The mystery lives on.

Here is one interesting link to the topic by Clare and Paul Ross

<https://niarchive.org/projectitems/1-ballywillan-old-churchyard/>

Poem for today

A November Day by Francis Duggan

The pleasant scent waft in the breeze of the freshly mown hay

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And the blackbird singing sweetly in the warm sun of the day
And the capeweed in their yellow blooms in their billions one can see
In the paddocks and roadside margins by the roadway to the sea
The rumble of the surf waves tells the ocean is quite near
And the familiar flute of the magpie is so pleasant for to hear
The last week of November and Spring is near a close
And a healthy rich red colour on the petals of the rose
A nice and a warm day in very late Spring and from the shrubs and blossom laden trees
The intoxicating scent of Nature's perfume is blown out by the warm and freshening breeze
The coastal countryside bathed in sunshine and white butterflies are dancing in the sky
And the dark winged welcome swallows are chirping as they fly
Above the sunlit coast lands on this beautiful Spring day
And in the warm breeze blowing the scents of bloom and hay.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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