

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – North Coast adaptation of  
My Fair Lady**

April 3, 2025

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Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

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## Image of the day

### North Coast adaptation of My Fair Lady

**Due to an unexpected Cockney accent shortage, Portrush Music Society is proud to announce a Northern Irish adaptation of My Fair Lady!**

From “By George, she’s got it!” to “Aye sure, she’s nailed it!” — experience Eliza Doolittle’s transformation like never before. Expect toe-tapping classics like:

- 🎵 “The Rain in Portrush Falls Mainly on the Big Dipper”
- 🎵 “I Could Have Danced All Night (At Kelly’s)”
- 🎵 “Wouldn’t It Be Grand?”

Tickets are flying faster than a seagull with a chip, so grab yours now at -

[www.ticketsource.co.uk/portrush-music-society](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/portrush-music-society)

**Portrush Music Society** - Join us as we bring to life the timeless story of Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower seller, and Professor Henry Higgins, who transforms her into a refined lady of society. Set in Edwardian London, "My Fair Lady" features beloved songs such as "I Could Have Danced All Night," "Wouldn't It Be Lovely," and "On the Street Where You Live." Our talented cast and crew are eager to present this heartwarming tale of transformation, identity, and love. The production will run for **six performances** between the **27th and 31st of May, 2025**. Early booking is recommended to avoid disappointment. Please note that this production contains loud noises, flashing lighting effects, and theatrical smoke effects.

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**For group bookings of ten or more people**, please contact [pmsboxoffice@gmail.com](mailto:pmsboxoffice@gmail.com).

“We look forward to welcoming you to this delightful production and sharing the magic of "My Fair Lady" with audiences of all ages”.

## News

### **Irish Methodist Church first response to Myanmar emergency**

**Through World Development & Relief, The Methodist Church in Ireland is supporting Christian Aid Ireland's humanitarian response to the 7.7 magnitude earthquake that struck Myanmar on Friday 28 March.**

Over 1,700 people have died, with many more injured. Thousands of people have been left without food, water or shelter.

WDR has already sent emergency funds of £5,000/€5,980.

There are a number of ways to donate:

- Online: <https://checkout.justgiving.com/jmbs7h3ecf>
- Donate through your local Methodist church
- Make a bank transfer (Reference: Myanmar)
- Send a cheque to the WDR office (Reference: Myanmar)

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For information on where to send cheques, and bank details please visit our website:

<https://irishmethodist.org/world-development-give>

## Planting Crocuses with Eco Congregation Ireland Small Grant



**Planting Crocuses at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Steelstown, Derry with ECI Small Grant! Patricia McCormack sent us this update:**

Our Steelstown and Culmore Parish Eco Group were very grateful for the grant we received from ECI to promote biodiversity in the grounds of Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Steelstown, Derry. This is how we used it.

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One Sunday during the Season of Creation 2024 we spoke at all Masses about the loss of biodiversity crisis and the small – but important actions we could take. We asked for volunteers to help plant 1,000 crocuses in a grass bed at the entrance to car park and were delighted when 24 turned up. The crocuses have bloomed and were tangible signs of hope, lifting our spirits and, also very importantly, provided an early supply of nectar and pollen for hungry pollinators emerging from hibernation. The crocuses have made an impact, many people have commented on them and there have been new opportunities to talk about Care of Creation. We look forward to them returning each Spring. Well done to all...

## **Ballymore Eustace Parishioners bid to preserve historic church**

**Parishioners of St John the Evangelist Church in Ballymore Eustace have launched a fundraising drive for major restoration work to preserve the historic building for future generations.**

Part of the Blessington Union of Parishes in the Diocese of Glendalough, the church was built in 1820 on an ancient religious site dating back to 1192. The restoration works will be carried out in phases under professional supervision.

Among the works identified under the plans is a new energy-efficient electrical heating system to replace the outdated oil boiler.



Roof refurbishments are imminently critical and works include replacing slates, treating timbers, repairing leadwork and fixing gutters.

External plasterwork will be surveyed and repaired, and once weatherproofing is complete, interior redecoration will follow.

Additionally, plans include repairing stained glass windows when funds allow. Fundraising efforts are ongoing to support the restoration.

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As part of the parish's fundraising efforts they have launched an online donations campaign on idonate. You can donate towards the works at St John's here: <https://www.idonate.ie/cause/StJohnsChurchBallymore>

St John's is home to a number of historically significant features. The church contains a 12th century granite baptismal font and a 16th century stone effigy of a chain mailed knight, Sir Thomas FitzEustace of Castlemartin who died in 1454.

In the grounds of the church are two high crosses.

## **Vatican launches new pastoral guide to strengthen advocacy for human life**

**Amid ongoing global challenges that threaten human dignity, the Vatican has introduced a new pastoral resource titled "Life is Always a Good: Initiating Processes for a Pastoral Care of Human Life".**

The initiative, released to mark the 30th anniversary of "Evangelium Vitae", seeks to inspire a renewed commitment to the defense and promotion of life in all circumstances.

Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life, highlighted the urgency of this initiative, emphasizing that every human life must be valued and protected. In his introduction to the resource, he drew attention to contemporary crises—including war, violence, poverty, and discrimination—that make a pastoral approach to life more necessary than ever. He also referenced the



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Vatican's recent declaration "Dignitas Infinita", which reaffirmed the inalienable dignity of every human being, regardless of their condition or circumstances.

The document is the result of extensive dialogue with bishops from around the world, many of whom expressed their concerns during their "ad limina" visits to Rome.

According to Archbishop Dario Gervasi, the Dicastery's Adjunct Secretary, this collaboration reflects a collective desire to enhance the Church's efforts in defending human life at all stages.

A webinar held in 2024 with representatives from episcopal conferences laid the groundwork for this process, ensuring that the pastoral strategy aligns with the Church's latest teachings.

**A Synodal Approach to Defending Life** The new resource offers a method for applying synodal discernment to life-related issues, helping dioceses develop tailored pastoral programs suited to their specific cultural and geographic contexts. Rather than providing rigid guidelines, it encourages an open and dynamic approach, allowing local churches to adapt their strategies according to their needs.

Bishop Gervasi underscored the importance of collaboration in this endeavor, stating that the goal is to equip dioceses with the tools necessary to train laypeople effectively and engage younger generations in the defense of life.

The hope is that the resource will inspire a broader movement, reaching not only clergy and religious leaders

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but also parents, teachers, and youth. Free Access and Global Distribution To ensure widespread accessibility, the document has been made available for free in Italian, English, and Portuguese on the Dicastery's website ([www.laityfamilylife.va](http://www.laityfamilylife.va)). French and Spanish versions are set to be released soon.

The Vatican urges clergy and laypeople alike to study the resource and take active steps toward integrating its principles into pastoral work

## Education

### New Sunflower Room for Christ the Redeemer Primary School

Christ the Redeemer Primary School in Belfast has officially opened its new Sunflower Room, a specialist early



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## **years and foundation stage provision for pupils with special educational needs.**

The Sunflower Room provides children from surrounding communities with a supportive learning environment to help them feel confident and happy in their educational journey.

The Education Authority facilitated extensive renovations ahead of the September 2025 intake to ensure high-quality accommodation and comprehensive staff training. This will enable the school to provide tailored support to pupils to meet their individual needs.

For more information, including comments from Principal, Neil Watson; NI Commissioner for Children and Young People, Chris Quinn; EA SEND Placements Programme Director, Peter Canavan; and CCMS Chief Executive, Eve Bremner, please visit: <https://ow.ly/ihSs50VrTqF>.

## **Trocaire Ambassadors Creative Fundraising at St Dominic's ✨**

**It's been a busy 2 weeks for our Trocaire Ambassadors & for all our Trocaire fundraisers!**

Our Ambassadors have now completed all their planned Year Group presentations to Years 8 -13.

We have also seen so many absolutely brilliant class fundraising initiatives, some already actioned & some in the pipeline (as seen in the abundance of Trocaire flyers posted on the school corridors!)

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A big thank you for the hard work & generosity of pupils, staff & parents. Your commitment will benefit those living in the poorest regions of our world.

## **Mock and awe as Campbell College pupils take second spot at Royal Courts of Justice**

**Aspiring solicitors and barristers get taste of legal drama in London Contest, Mark Bain reports in the Belfast Telegraph.**

Pupils from a Belfast grammar school have said it was a thrill to visit the Royal Courts of Justice in London where

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they finished as runners-up in a nationwide Bar Mock Trial competition.

The aspiring lawyers from Campbell College were narrowly beaten by The Boswells School, Essex, after seeing off 212 other schools to make the final two of the prestigious nationwide event.



The Campbell College pupils competed against 24 school teams from across the UK in the final stage of the competition.

Also travelling from Northern Ireland to compete in the final were teams from St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon and Banbridge Academy.

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Founded in 1991 by the national education charity Young Citizens, and supported by the Bar of Northern Ireland, the Bar Mock Trial Competition is a legal education programme in which state school pupils compete in mock criminal trials, taking on roles such as barristers, witnesses, defendants and jurors to impress a judging panel of legal experts. Supported by professional judges and barristers, the team from Campbell College first won a virtual competition heat against 11 other schools in January in order to progress to the national final in London.

Some 214 schools and over 3,000 students took part in the competition this year, with thousands more having taken part since it was founded nearly 35 years ago.

Campbell College student Matthew (15) said: “To be in such historical and prestigious surroundings as the Royal Courts of Justice was inspiring and exciting.

“The wigs and gowns made it feel so real and totally made me believe that I could do this for my career one day.”

Noah (14) was playing the role of a witness in the mock trial. “Being a witness was so fun,” he said. “I totally believed in my story and I enjoy drama, so couldn't wait to get into the actual witness box.” Joshua (15) added: “The judges were really helpful. It's hard to believe they are the same judges who hear real barristers in the highest courts in the land every day. It has definitely inspired me to be a judge in the future.”

Oscar (14) said: “I'm so glad to have been part of our school team. It felt good to be part of this.



“I've made a lot of new friends and learnt many new skills, and used my critical thinking.” Prizes in the competition were presented by the Attorney General, Lord Hermer KC, who called on young people to “come and be brilliant lawyers” because “the country needs you”.

“Many of you want to pursue careers in law, and I think that's a wonderful thing to do”, he said.

“I was state educated, and the first person in my family to go to university, and I want you to know that law is a career for you. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. By taking part in this mock trial competition, you have committed to the process of the rule of law, and I would like to thank you for

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that. To see so many engaged young citizens has given me a huge sense of optimism.”

Ashley Hodges, Chief Executive at Young Citizens, the competition organisers said: “To achieve a thriving democracy of active citizens, young people need to know how our legal justice system works and why it matters. “We are proud that every year the Mock Trial Competition gives thousands of students an immersive way to understand their rights and our systems integral to the rule of law. This knowledge is fundamental to a fair society in which all can play their part.”

“Young Citizens will continue to work with the Bar, HM Courts and Tribunal Service and volunteers from the profession to boost legal literacy across the UK.”  
Courtesy Belfast Telegraph 31/03/2025

## Cathedral Calls

### Durham to host Royal Maundy Service

**Durham Cathedral has announced it will be hosting the Royal Maundy Service this year on 17th April. The King and Queen will be attending the Royal Maundy Service.**

Royal Maundy takes place each year on the Thursday before Easter Day and is a special service in which the King expresses his gratitude for those who serve and volunteer in their communities. The service is rooted in the tradition of



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Jesus washing his disciples' feet in the Upper Room the night before his death and goes back to medieval times.

During the service His Majesty will present 152 recipients, 76 men and 76 women (signifying the age of the Monarch), with specially-minted Maundy money to thank them for their outstanding Christian service and for making a difference to the lives of people in their local communities. These recipients have been selected from the Diocese of Durham and other dioceses across the Province of York and from Wales and Scotland.

The Very Revd Dr Philip Plyming, Dean of Durham says, "We are both honoured and delighted that The King and Queen are coming to Durham for this year's Royal Maundy Service. All of us at Durham Cathedral look forward to welcoming them and being part of this special celebration of volunteering in the local community. Maundy Thursday is about remembering the service and sacrifice of Jesus and it will be so special to celebrate in such a memorable way those who live out the example of Jesus today."

The King's first Maundy Service as Monarch took place in 2023 in York Minster, however the tradition of hosting the service outside of London, came from the late Queen Elizabeth II.

Early in her reign, Queen Elizabeth II decided Maundy money should not just be distributed to the people of London, and so she began travelling to various cathedrals or abbeys to give gifts to local people. She visited every cathedral in the country over the course of her reign, a tradition which has been continued in the current King's

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reign. The last Royal Maundy Service to take place at Durham Cathedral was in 1967.

Each recipient of Maundy money is given two small leather purses by The King, one red and one white. The first contains a small amount of ordinary coinage which symbolises the Sovereign's gift for food and clothing. The second purse contains Maundy coins up to the value of the Sovereign's age (which this year is 76p). The coins are legal tender but recipients normally prefer to retain them as a keepsake.

The 152 recipients have recently been notified and plans are already underway to ensure a successful Royal Visit to Durham this April.

## **Canterbury reclaims its medieval legacy as England's premier Pilgrimage Centre**

**Canterbury Cathedral has appointed a Pilgrim Officer to help re-establish itself as England's leading pilgrimage site.**

Once as significant as Rome and Santiago de Compostela, Canterbury attracted many pilgrims in the Middle Ages. Torin Brown, the new Pilgrim Officer, first came to the city through the Camino de Santiago and later studied theology at Christ Church University.

While working part-time as a shepherd at the Cathedral, Brown engaged with modern pilgrims by stamping Pilgrim Passports, offering blessings, and taking photos at the

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Cathedral's Pilgrim Stone. Fascinated by their journeys, he began collecting data, which revealed that spirituality is the primary reason for the growing interest in pilgrimage.

This insight is shaping Canterbury's pilgrim mission, with Brown collaborating with other cathedrals to share pilgrimage data across the UK.

Speaking about his appointment, Brown said: "Pilgrimage as a religious ritual to a sacred space is an ancient practice that appears to be enjoying quite a renaissance in our post-pandemic, climate-sensitive era.

"There seems to be an undeniable spiritual thirst for what religious people experience as transcendent realities – that characteristic of pilgrimage which can bridge the gap between the sacred and the profane in extraordinary places where the veil is believed to be especially thin.

"It can provide a space where the big questions of life, death, and suffering can be offered up for profound contemplation, and cathedrals and shrines can represent an axis mundi for this meaning-seeking".

Projects are already underway, including Canterbury's involvement in the city's pilgrimage-themed Medieval Pageant this summer.

## Clergy and ministry



## Revd Ken McGrath becomes rector of Gilnahirk

**Monday 31 March and a very happy evening in St Dorothea's, Gilnahirk, as the church regained its full parochial status and Revd Ken McGrath was instituted as rector having served almost three years as Bishop's Curate.**

Ken was baptised, raised and confirmed in the parish making this a particularly special occasion.

In his welcome and introduction, Bishop David invited the congregation to celebrate the achievements of the last few years and to look ahead to the future:

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“As we celebrate your full parochial status and institute Ken as rector you know even better than I how much of that has been due to Ken’s leadership and the hard work of you as a congregation. So, this is an evening for thanksgiving, for celebration and an evening to acknowledge that there are different gifts which have been pulled together to bring this church to this point, and to launch you for the next stage of mission and ministry here.



The preacher at the service was Revd Uel Marrs, Global Director of Mission for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and a longtime friend from the McGraths’ time in Kenya.

Speaking from Exodus, Uel drew a parallel between Moses and ourselves. As God responds to Israel’s cry for help, he takes Moses’ very ordinary shepherd’s staff and steps in with his presence, power and provision to make extraordinary things happen.

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He reminded us that as Christians, we have the Son of God in our hearts. He is our light in the days of opportunity and in the days of darkness. His presence goes before us lighting the way ahead.

Uel encouraged us in these days to take hold of the Son of God himself and allow him to take who we are and the gifts we give him in service of the kingdom of God.

Ken said of his appointment:

“It is very special to become rector of the parish where I was baptised and confirmed. However, this evening reflects the hard work and commitment of so many people, especially the Select Vestry. There is still much to do, but with God’s help, I trust that the parish will continue to be renewed and be a blessing to the whole Gilnahirk community.”

## **Dublin and Glendalough’s 2025 Prayer Movement**

**Join Dublin and Glendalough’s 2025 Prayer Movement: 2025 in Dublin and Glendalough has been dedicated as year of prayer as the United Dioceses work to discern God’s will for its future mission.**

The Diocesan Mission Committee is heralding the 2025 Prayer Movement and they invite you to join them in praying intentionally for the future of the dioceses.

They are seeking



# 2025 Prayer Movement

Praying for growth in our Diocese

2,025 people to join together prayer. Their hope is to recruit a prayer community who make a daily commitment to:

- **Pray the Lord's Prayer**
- **Pray the Diocesan Mission Prayer**  
(adult or young person's version)

“We believe that the foundation for everything we do must be in prayer,” explained Mission Committee chairperson, the Revd Rob Clements. “Our vision is to see all parishes in our United Dioceses flourish as communities of faith, confident in sharing the Good News we have been given and serving our society. Our first priority is to develop a real reliance on the Spirit of God in prayer, worship and in the consecration of our lives, as individuals and communities.”

Archbishop Michael Jackson has joined the Mission Committee in urging all people, schools and organisations throughout Dublin and Glendalough to join the 2025 Prayer Movement.

“The census figures released in 2024 were alarming for the Church. On the evidence of people in the pew, there are now in the region of 5,000 of us in church on any given Sunday in Dublin and Glendalough. As church communities

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we can wring our hands in despair or we can choose to take action. I believe this is a time for action and as Christians our actions must be rooted in prayer,” he stated. “I commend the Mission Committee’s 2025 Prayer Movement and urge everyone to join them as together we seek God’s guidance for the future.”

“The 2025 Prayer Movement is a call to prayer and action,” Revd Rob added. “We are inviting people across Dublin and Glendalough to join us. 2,025 might seem like a bold number, but it is time to be bold. Join us in prayer for personal and community growth in our Diocese. Will you join us in our 2025 Prayer Movement as we pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us in our work?”.

## **How can I get involved?**

Sign up on the diocesan website with a commitment to pray. You will find details of how to do so [here](#).

If you are part of a prayer group in your church, or a Bible study, get the group praying. Let us know if your group is joining this movement and we can track your support. You can do so through the website.

Wouldn’t it be amazing if we had every Church of Ireland School committed to pray this as part of their assembly?

There are so many exciting possibilities, as we seek to start a prayer movement together.

## **Archbishop’s Mission Prayer**





Almighty God, we ask your blessing on the people of the Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough as they go about the work of mission in the everyday things of life.

As you sent your Son Jesus Christ to live the life of the world you created and to die for our sins, so give us a mission of worship and service in the same world during our days on earth.

Equip us to embrace our neighbour, to serve our society and to usher in the principles and the practices of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

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This we ask in the name of the Risen Christ and in the strength of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Mission Prayer for Children's Ministry written by Rev Cathy Hallissey

Dear Father, hear us as we pray  
For all your people every day  
that, in these Dioceses we tread –  
the path on which our Saviour led;

As Jesus came to teach us how  
to serve each other here and now;  
Make it our mission in these days

to bring about your Kingdom ways;  
to practise care and unity  
with neighbours and community  
that, through your Spirit, love and worth  
reflect your kingdom on this earth.

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## 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](mailto:houstonmckelvey@mac.com)

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

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