

# Church News Ireland

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Short reading and a prayer daily on this site



## Image of the day



## Girls Friendly Society Service of Commissioning St Brigid's Cathedral, Kildare

**On Sunday morning a special Service of Commissioning was held for officers, in a diocesan role, for the Girls Friendly Society. (GFS). The service was held in St Brigid's Cathedral, Kildare.**

The Service was led by Dean Isobel Jackson and Rev Philip McKinley. The talk was given by Bishop Pat Storey, who also conducted the Commissioning, as well as making the presentations.

After the service there was an opportunity to meet informally over coffee.

Those commissioned included: Diocesan President: Ms Jane Campbell;  
Diocesan Secretary: Ms Hazel Whitley; Diocesan Treasurer: Ms Violet Beattie;.  
Diocesan Chaplain: Very Rev Isobel Jackson.

There was also a Presentation of All-Ireland Bible Study awards and Handcraft prizes.

## News

### **Housing crisis is driving youth leaving care to drugs and prison**

**Children leaving State care face spiralling into crime and addiction due to an inability to find housing, with the situation getting “definitely worse” according to campaigners.**

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The **Peter McVerry Trust** is supporting dozens of young adults who turn 18 and leave State care in dedicated housing, but this accommodation is already “stretched”. Speaking to The Irish Catholic, founder of the charity Fr Peter McVerry said State care is hugely expensive and that keeping children out of homeless services is “critical” to saving lives.

More at - [<https://www.irishcatholic.com/suffer-little-children/>]



**Christ Church Londonderry says Thank you for the music**





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**A brilliant evening in Christ Church, Londonderry celebrated the life and musical contribution to the city of Ken Goodman BEM.**

The Church building was full of music and people to say a heartfelt, “Thank you for the music!” and to dedicate a memorial tablet placed in the Church by the members of the Britannia Band.

## **125th anniversary year at St Peter’s, Belfast**

**On Sunday morning St Peter’s, Belfast, welcomed former rector, the Venerable Dr Stephen McBride, to**



**preach as part of a series of 125th anniversary year celebrations.**

Stephen shared some of his own memories of his time in St Peter's, and gave thanks for its continued witness in such a beautiful place of worship.

In turn, he was presented with a donation from St Peter's towards the restoration fund of All Saints Parish Church, Antrim, following the fire in that church late last year.

## **Bishop Ian Ellis shares a sermon of hope at Novena in Enniskillen**

**The Church of Ireland Bishop of Clogher spoke about love, learning and prayer during the Novena of Hope mass at the Graan on Friday, March 28, Jasmin Walls reports in The Impartial Reporter.**

The Novena is a nine-day event of prayer and reflection, which anyone is welcome to attend regardless of religion.

Addressing the congregation, Rt. Rev. Ian Ellis spoke about how people can be united in harmony, through faith in Christ.

Quoting from the Gospel of St. John, Chapter 17, verses 20-26, he said: “Hope is trusting that in Christ ‘We may become one’.”

His address studied the explorative theme of hope, using St. John’s Gospel and prayer as guidance.

“It is a prayer which embodies the love and oneness between the Father and the Son and also illustrates and points to the love and oneness disciples are to have with him and one another.

“St John’s Gospel provides us with an amazing world view – it is an inspiration for hope centred on God and God’s love.



“Sometimes we need to step back a little and consider the big picture of the Bible - it’s the story of salvation – the story of God’s love reaching out to his world.

“The Spirit of God speaks to us as a living word that intersects with the story of our lives.

“We are all dealing with life and everything that comes to us as we seek to find our way forward.”

Bishop Ellis described Jesus’s three basic teachings that shape Christian lives.

“There is loving. This is summed up in the new commandment: to love as Jesus has loved.

“The more we learn to love God, the more we will discover how to love and be in union with others.”

He described the second teaching as learning, continuing: “‘Disciple’ simply means ‘learner’ ‘mathetes’ – mathematics.

“Shaping our life on the word is something we are called to do – individually and together.”

During Bishop Ellis' section on learning, he highlighted how the dedication of the inter-church clergy to the Novena of Hope is an example of hope and togetherness in Christ.

He said: “We owe a debt of gratitude to pioneering work of inter-church work by Archdeacon [Cecil](#) Pringle and Fr. Brian [D'Arcy](#), faithfully developed by Fr. [Charles](#) Cross and successive rectors of Rossorry parish.

“Taking part in services such as this and undertaking work for God together, we learn and experience this wonderful love,” he added.

Describing the final teaching, Bishop Ellis said: “There is praying. One of the examples Jesus gave us is in the Lord’s prayer and encapsulated in his final prayer.

“Such prayer is not easy at times and is a lifetime’s work. And this brings us back to our Novena – nine days of the practice of prayer.

"Praying together can have marvellous effects even where two or three are gathered in His name."

The Novena of Hope began on Saturday, March 22 and finished on Monday, March 31. Report courtesy The Impartial Reporter 04/04/2025

## Education

### Secularisation of schools could put parental choice at risk, Senator Mullen

**In a recent debate on Newstalk, Senator Rónán Mullen expressed his opposition to the secularisation of Irish schools.**

He said, “If you only want children taught to read, write and to be good tools for the economy, then you might as well let

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AI do the job. But everybody who is sensible about what education...

## **Police Autism Support Group launch two wellbeing spaces**

**To mark World Autism Awareness Day our Police Autism Support Group have launched two wellbeing spaces located in Newtownards and Lisburn Road Station for police officers and staff.**

They have purchased and begun distributing sensory kits across the organisation for use by colleagues to offer support to members of the public who may benefit from them.

Pictured are volunteer James Poole, Detective Sergeant Hollie McCartan, Chair of the Police Autism Support Group Superintendent Finola Dornan, volunteer Naomi Maxwell and NPT Inspector John Hanna.

You can read more on their website by clicking here:

<https://orlo.uk/5axex>

## **Dalriada School award for best Post-Primary school choir at Dublin Feis Ceoil**

**On Monday of last week the Chamber Choir set off to the RDS in Dublin to take part in the prestigious Feis Ceoil competition.**



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They were entered in the Alice Yoakley Quirk Cup for mixed choirs and won their class against stiff competition from seven similar choirs from all over Ireland - both North and South. This allowed them to proceed to the final where they competed against three other first prize winners.

Again, they emerged victorious and won the IMRO Ireland award for best Post-Primary school choir. This was a generous bursary which will help cover the costs of the day! We are immensely proud of these pupils and Mrs Montgomery records it as one of the highlights of her teaching career. A great day out!

Film clip by Feis Ceoil and wonderful music at -  
<https://www.facebook.com/DalriadaSchool/videos/652851421007788>

## Cathedral Calls

### Installation at St. Canice's Cathedral

**The Rev'd Canon Helen Oxley was installed as Prebendary of Blackrath at Choral Evensong on Sunday.**

The Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory welcomed the congregation to the service and offered his congratulations to Canon Oxley on her appointment. He referred to the fact that Canon Oxley combines her role as a principal in a primary school alongside that of a priest serving in the non

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stipendiary ministry. He also noted the presence of some Diocesan Readers at the service and thanked Helen for all she does to encourage this ministry as Warden of Readers.



Following the Bishop's words the Assistant Registrar, Sean Rafter BL, read the Bishop's Licence. Canon Oxley subscribed to the Declarations and signed both the Diocesan Roll and the Chapter Book, affirming her commitment as a member of the Chapter of St Canice's Cathedral. The Canon Precentor, the Very Rev'd Dr. Paul Mooney, then led Canon Oxley to her stall.

The service of Choral Evensong that followed was led by St Canice's Cathedral Choir, under the direction of Dr. Harry Meehan FRCO. The service included music by Philip Radcliffe and Orlando Gibbons and the anthem was a setting of Lord Tennyson's poem 'Crossing the Bar' by George Hewson.

The Rev'd Nancy Gillespie and Canon Oxley's son, Jonathan read the lessons and Canon Oxley offered a thoughtful reflection on the appointed readings in her sermon. After the service the congregation gathered outside the west end of the cathedral for photographs in the glorious sunshine. This joyful service marked not only a milestone in Canon Oxley's ministry but also now provides her with an opportunity to bring her commitment to education into the life of the cathedral.



A Civic Service marking the 80th Anniversary  
of Victory in Europe Day (VE80)

will take place in

**Saint Columb's Cathedral**

**Wednesday 7th May 2025**

**at 7.30 p.m.**

All are very welcome to attend.

A retiring offering will be in aid  
of Saint Columb's Cathedral  
and British Legion (Waterside Branch)



## Clergy and ministry



### Rector of Stranorlar

**Glendermott and Newbuildings Curate, Rev Johnny Lowden, has been appointed Rector of the Stranorlar, Meenglass & Kiltееvogue Group of Parishes in the Diocese of Raphoe.**

He will succeed Rev Adam Pullen who left in June 2023 to become Rector of Fanlobbus Union in the Diocese of Cork. Since then, Rev Canon Mervyn Peoples has been providing vacancy cover.

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Rev Lowden, who was born in Bangor but grew up in Downpatrick, was priested in September 2022, a year after his ordination. He is steeped in music, coming from a family who are well-known in the guitar-making business.

The parishioners in Stranorlar, Meenglass & Kiltcevogue will be interested to know that in his ministry, their new Rector is eager to help others to deepen their faith and apply it in daily life. He also describes himself as passionate about preaching, sacramental ministry, and social justice, and interested in the wide variety of traditions and perspectives present in the Church of Ireland.

He and his wife, Emily, are keen hillwalkers, and Rev Lowden's other interests include games – both computer and board – reading, following sport and, unsurprisingly, playing the guitar.

Rev Lowden says he is delighted to have been appointed Rector of the Stranorlar Group of parishes and is looking forward to joining the parishioners on their communal pilgrim journey together. A date has yet to be fixed for the Service of Institution.

## **Retirement of Rev Canon Paul Hoey**

**The Rector of St Canice's Parish Church in Eglinton, Rev Canon Paul Hoey, has announced that he will be retiring next month after 44 years in ministry – the last 10 of which were spent as incumbent in the Parish of Faughanvale.**



The news was shared with parishioners at the Morning Service in St Canice's Church. Canon Hoey said he would lead his final service as Rector there on Sunday 18th May.

There was warm applause in church when he finished his address to the congregation. Canon Hoey said he had stayed 18 months longer than he had originally intended, in order to further the development of the new Canice Centre – across the road from the church – which was "tantalisingly close" to completion.

"After a lot of prayer and reflection," Canon Hoey said, "and several chats with Bishop Andrew, I decided that this is the moment for me to retire." For some time, he said, he had had a sense that it would be someone else who would lead the parishioners to enjoy the fruits of having the Canice Centre as a means of reaching out with the Good News of Christ to everyone in the community.



"Isaiah's message [in today's First Reading, Isaiah: 43 v 16-21](#) is about a God who's able to do greater and newer things than we could possibly imagine. It's about God wanting us to be a future-focused, forward-looking people. And I believe that he will use the Canice Centre to do amazing things, to build this church, to reach out with his love to people in this community in the days ahead. And, If I'm honest, part of me would love to be starting off in ministry all over again, so that I could come in and use it for that purpose."

## **Ballyholme Parish say goodbye to much loved Diocesan Reader**

**The funeral has taken place at St Columbanus Ballyholme of Sandra Griffiths, commissioned as a Diocesan Reader in 2011 and well known throughout the Church of Ireland and far beyond.**

With readings and hymns chosen by Sandra herself, assisting Canon Simon Doogan at the service were four other Ballyholme lay readers Sandra had done much to befriend and mentor. Denise Wilson and Paula McIlwaine led the prayers, Michelle Savage read Psalm 139 and Jacqui Devlin read Sandra's favourite Bible text: Luke 15's Parable of the Prodigal Son.

Intending to stand down from regular reader ministry having reached her seventy-fifth birthday, St Columbanus had planned to present Sandra with flowers at its forthcoming Easter Vestry. Instead, a bouquet incorporating Sandra's



preaching scarf was arranged as a tribute on behalf of the whole church family.

In his funeral sermon, the Rector suggested that Sandra had felt drawn throughout her Christian life to the tested-to-its-limits mercy of the father of the Prodigal Son, and to the boundless yearning and grace of the God that father represents. How much more powerful and irresistible that image must have proved, he said, when, so suddenly, Sandra was confronted with the imminence of her life ending.

Sandra was a second generation Anglican Lay Reader, her late father having worn the blue scarf before her. On joining St Columbanus after a move from Belfast, Sandra's sense of call to reader ministry grew quickly, but all of Sandra's Church and life experiences prior to then informed and enriched that call, particularly her many formative years at Fisherwick Presbyterian and her childhood and teenage years at St Donard's Parish in East Belfast.

Sandra was frequently deployed in the wider Deanery and Diocese to assist with holiday and vacancy cover, but beyond the pulpit her servant heart was for the marginalised and, more recently, for the migrants. As a long time board

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member of Belfast City of Sanctuary, Sandra was a natural choice to Chair the Ballyholme Parish Missions Committee. Her focus over recent years with the Committee was on building a connection with the Asylum Seekers at the Marine Court Hotel.

Prayer Ministry was part of Sandra's life for decades. A course in Spiritual direction took that to the next level. But she added to those discreet and confidential spiritual appointments, the dozens if not more than dozens of people she met regularly for coffee or for lunch, all of whom were drawn to Sandra's warmth, kindness, care, interest and encouragement whatever their situation. It was spiritual mothering really, said the Rector, in a way that drew in and embraced and built-up and left people feeling included, valued and loved by God.

“Unabashed gladness might not be our first instinct as we say farewell to Sandra today, but it's undoubtedly the Lord's – for Sandra and for all who open their hearts to Him”.





Sandra passed away peacefully on Friday 28 March in Marie Curie Hospice, and the funeral took place on Thursday 3 April. Sandra is survived by her husband Dave, her son Aaron and her brother Trevor.

## Events



## Stainer's The Crucifixion on Good Friday in Coleraine

**Counterpoint Coleraine are pleased to join with St Patrick's Choir for Stainer's The Crucifixion on Good Friday, 18 April.**

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Free admission to enjoy this amazing work! Join us at 7.30pm

## **Seven Last Words of Christ on Maundy Thursday at music in Calary**

**Music in Calary is delighted to be able to open its 2025 season with the Seven Last Words of Christ by Joseph Haydn.**

Sokol Koka, who many will have heard previously playing at Calary, approached the organisers with a suggestion of playing this piece which Haydn wrote and was originally played in Cadiz on Good Friday in 1786. Haydn subsequently adapted it for string quartet in 1787. Sokol proposed playing it in Calary on Maundy Thursday (17 April) as it is appropriate to play it over Easter.

The Music in Calary team has decided to commence the 2025 season earlier than normal with this fantastic work being played by the Arteo Quartet.

Music in Calary would also like to thank Wicklow County Council for their support.

As usual, the concert will begin at 8 pm with free parking available. If you would like to book tickets or for further information, please email [derekneilson11@gmail.com](mailto:derekneilson11@gmail.com) or ring (01) 2818118.

Tickets for the concert are €18 and €15 for concessions and may be paid for by cash, cheque or card at the door.

## **Limerick Choral Union is Armed for April**

**Limerick Choral Union, one of Limerick and Ireland's oldest choirs, has been going from strength to strength consistently since its inception in 1964.**

LCU members have been working extremely hard since January to prepare for their next concert in University Concert Hall, Limerick at 8pm on Saturday 12th April. The diversity of the 1st half will set the scene for a stunning finale!

The concert begins with the undeniably beautiful 'Easter Hymn' from Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana"; the solo part of Santuzza being performed by renowned Limerick soprano Jean Wallace. The audience will be taken on a journey to Lambert's 'Rio Grande' with piano solo being performed by the brilliant Clíodna Shanahan. The lovely Gina Oberoi will perform the alto solo and members from AnCór and LSOM will form the second choir alongside LCU members.

By kind permission of music producer and composer, Craig Stuart Garfinkle and conductor and award-winning Eimear Noone, the 120 strong LCU, together with a 51-piece orchestra, are delighted to perform 'Baldur's Gate: The Dark Alliance II Suite' and 'Malach, Angel Messenger' bringing the first half to a close with this most thrilling soundscape from 'World of Warcraft, Warlords of Draenor'.

Karl Jenkins' "The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace", a powerful finale and work that charts the journey from the

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menace of war to hope of peace. Experience the evocative Agnus Dei, Sanctus, and the breathtaking Benedictus, with a soulful cello solo by Miriam Roycroft. Magnificent trumpet solo by Will Palmer.

Directed by Mr. Malcolm Green, and with soprano and alto solos, this will surely be a concert like none other!

Tickets are €30 and available from UCH box office or on the UCH website <http://www.uch.ie>

## In the media

### **Soldiers protect us. We must protect them - Daily Telegraph**

**France does not permit vexatious human rights cases against its troops. Why can't we do the same? Peter Wall writes**

As the British Armed Forces contemplate deploying to Ukraine, their forebears from the Northern Ireland campaign 30 years ago continue their battle in the courts. Activist lawyers appear to be gaming the judicial system in Northern Ireland for profit, while the terrorist factions that committed 90 per cent of all killings during the Troubles have immunity provided by the Good Friday Agreement.

The 1992 Clonoe shooting incident is an example of this activity. It involved a Special Air Service patrol dispatched to arrest a heavily armed Provisional IRA active-service unit that had just machine-gunned Coalisland police station.



Applying Article 2 of the Human Rights Act 1998, retrospectively and without any new evidence, the coroner overturned a previous verdict and found that the soldiers acted unlawfully, which now leaves them open to prosecution.

This absurd situation was partially corrected by the last government under the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act of 2023, which shut down all historical inquests from May 1 2024. That Act has since been repealed by the Starmer administration, which now plans to put soldiers in harm's way in Ukraine.

Veterans of operations in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria are increasingly concerned that they could be liable to retrospective legal challenges over split-second decisions taken years ago.

Today's soldiers are watching this closely and are drawing the right conclusion: the human rights legislation that might be applied, in retrospect, to any operational actions they undertake on behalf of the state is incompatible with effective military operations. It makes one wonder why anyone would deploy on operations at all, knowing that if they survive the threat of shot and shell, they will be vulnerable for the rest of their lives.

Fast-forward to Mr Starmer and Mr Macron building their "coalition of the willing". You would think that British soldiers and their French counterparts would operate under the same legal protection; but you would be wrong. The French military is protected by a derogation from ECHR legislation, while the British military is not. The Army is conditioned to

the voracity of the human rights industry from the trumped-up and fraudulent cases British lawyers brought against British soldiers who had served in Iraq.

If soldiers cannot trust the chain of command and the government that is putting them in danger, why should they be expected to risk their lives?

No such retrospective is given to the foreign policy or military strategy decisions to deploy military force, or the ministerial responsibility for signing off rules of engagement, or the advice of government lawyers who draft them. The most junior soldiers in the chain of command, and those closest to danger, are carrying the can. We imbue our soldiers with the Army's values of courage, discipline, respect for others, integrity, loyalty and selfless commitment, and owe them no less in return. This legal treatment flies in the face of these values and breaches the essential trust between the nation and its soldiery.

We urgently need to restore the primacy of the Law of Armed Conflict as a legal basis for UK military operations and establish statutory protection for soldiers from legal prosecution. And we must provide statutory protection for veterans whose lives are being ruined by the retrospective application of laws that weren't even dreamt of when they were putting their lives at risk to protect our society from Irish Republican terrorism.

Those former soldiers have been betrayed by the undermining of the contract between the soldier and the state through human rights activism. This is grossly unfair and the government should act now to restore that trust.

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General Sir Peter Wall is a former Chief of the General Staff – the professional head of the British Army.

Courtesy Daily Telegraph 06/04/2025

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## Church News Ireland

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