

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – Downhill Castle**

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### **News -**

1st Old Boys Band Belfast need assistance

Principals get Google to remove reviews of schools

Golden jubilee of Limerick's St Brigid Church

US churches challenged by Trump administration's removal of holidays and observances of people of colour, women, LGBTQ+

### **Education -**

Holocaust Memorial Lecture

Study visit to Berlin

### **Cathedral Calls -**

Canterbury Cathedral Sung Eucharist

Salisbury Cathedral: Sermon at Choral Evensong In Memory of Robert Willis by Bishop Rowan Williams. Choral Evensong

### **Events -**

Music in the Chamber at Bangor Castle

Look North 2025 arts festival. Belfast

Three Choral events: Belfast and Dublin

Kilcluney Parish patchwork exhibition

### **Resources -**

Support from Cancer Research UK

### **In the media**

Cowards who planted bomb should be giving inquiry answers, says ex-officer. Belfast Telegraph

### **Speaking to the soul -**

Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

## Image of the day

### Downhill Castle

**Downhill Castle is a ruined mansion in County Derry.**

It was built in the late 18th century by Frederick Hervey, the 4th Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry. The castle sits on a dramatic clifftop overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and Lough Foyle.

It is part of the Downhill Demesne estate, which also includes the famous Mussenden Temple. The temple of the winds, inspired by the Temple of Vesta in Italy, was constructed in 1785 as a library and dedicated to Hervey's cousin, Frideswide Mussenden. The area is managed by the National Trust. Photograph courtesy Gary Marshall

## News

### 1st Old Boys Band Belfast need assistance

**The band members last weekend began renovations to the ground floor area of their new band hall.**

They posted - If any of our friends have spare:

Coffee machines, Sofas, Lamps, Fridges



February 1, 2025

And would be willing to donate to help spruce up our new social area, we would very much appreciate it

Just message our Facebook page and we will sort the rest 🙌



## **Principals get Google to remove reviews of schools**

**Google is to remove online reviews of Irish schools by parents, students and others from its maps and search listings after a successful campaign by The National Association of Principals**

The National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) provided the tech giant with evidence of serious difficulties that had arisen for schools and teachers caused by negative reviews posted on Google platforms.

Issues included serious instances of bullying and unfounded allegations of child protection breaches aimed at individual teachers.

"These types of issues have caused a huge amount of stress," said Rachel O'Connor, deputy director of the NAPD, which raised the matter with Google.

Principals increasingly have to deal with unsubstantiated and unfounded allegations against named individuals in schools that are appearing online.

"There has been very serious stuff posted by parents, students or past pupils and things that school leaders had very little control over," said Ms O'Connor.

Nicola Byrne, founder and executive chairman of RiskEye, which monitors and protects the reputation of organisations online, told the Sunday Independent there is still much work to do with "very harmful stuff" happening across other social media platforms.



## Golden jubilee of Limerick's St Brigid Church

**Launch of history book coincides with church's 50 years of being a place of worship**

St Brigid's Day was celebrated in style in a city parish with a special Mass to mark the golden jubilee of the church named after the patron saint, and to launch an accompanying book.

Bishop Brendan Leahy was the chief celebrant of the Mass in St Brigid's Church located in St Patrick's Parish, Dublin Road.



He was joined on the altar by current and former priests of the parish. The choir from St Brigid's Primary School added to the celebrations which was fitting as the church is located in Singland.

Following the Mass, an accompanying book entitled St Brigid's Church - Fifty Years Serving a Grateful Community was launched in Fairview Rangers Soccer Club.

It was compiled by renowned local history buff Sean Curtin, formerly a long-serving member of this parish. Sean found one fantastic aerial photo of the parish taken in 1954 which shows how almost rural it was. The construction of Garryowen had not yet been started.

Bishop Leahy wrote a piece for the book in which he congratulates and prays God's blessing upon the people of the parish of St Patrick as they celebrate the opening fifty years ago of St Brigid's Church.

"The church building is located on a site in the townland of Singland - one of the high places of Limerick Diocese - that is the reputed location of an early monastic settlement with a thousand-year-old tradition that St Patrick himself visited this place," wrote Bishop Leahy.

Canon Joseph Shire, parish priest, also shared his thoughts in the book.

"This book will cover a lot of memories for people down the years in the life of the parish and every aspect is covered from the social, culture and sporting.

In the Church we are grateful to all the priests who have ministered in the parish.

“We are grateful to the parish pastoral council and the finance committee for continuing to make the parish active and vibrant,” wrote Canon Shire.

## **US churches challenged by Trump administration’s removal of holidays and observances of people of color, women, LGBTQ+**

**As the new Trump administration leads public and private entities to remove calendared holidays and observances commemorating the contributions of people of color, women, LGBTQ+ people and people with disabilities, Episcopal leaders are reflecting on how the wider church can ensure that those Americans are never erased from the public’s consciousness.**

“This decision to pause **Black History Month** celebrations and DEI work puts us in a profound moment to reflect out loud what as a church – as a people – do we choose to remember and choose to forget?” the Rev. Lester V. Mackenzie, The Episcopal Church’s chief of mission program, told Episcopal News Service. He also leads the church’s Department of Ethnic Ministries, which includes the Offices of African Descent Ministries, Asiamerica Ministries, Indigenous Ministries and Latino/Hispanic Ministries.





*Episcopalians of African, Asiamerican, Indigenous and Latino/Hispanic heritage gathered on the opening night of the 81st General Convention, June 23, at Cathedral of the Assumption in downtown Louisville, Kentucky, for the New Community Festival hosted by The Episcopal Church's Department of Ethnic Ministries. Photo: Wilfredy Alexander Carmona Arias*

“Too often, institutions, including our own, have been complicit and slow to act ... so how are we adjusting to what is unfolding socially in our dioceses, or in our congregations and local ministries?”

February is Black History Month, the annual acknowledgment of Black Americans' accomplishments and contributions to the making of the United States.

Celebrations are underway in the church, including worship services commemorating the feast of the Rev. Absalom Jones, the first Black Episcopal priest. Jones stands among the Rev. Pauli Murray, Thurgood Marshall, King Kamehameha and Queen Emma of Hawai'i, Enmegahbowh and many other clergy and activists of color on The Episcopal Church's calendar of Lesser Feasts and Fasts.

Some congregations, such as St. James' Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, are hosting Black History Month events throughout February, including workshops and lectures. Washington National Cathedral is also hosting several events, including a special worship service on Feb. 16 honoring historically Black colleges and universities.

Commemorations and events are necessary, and so is the need to educate younger generations about why they are necessary, the Rev. Ellis Clifton, rector of St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church in Virgin Gorda, Diocese of the Virgin Islands, told ENS.

"We've spent all these years celebrating what our predecessors accomplished, but we forgot to teach what caused the need for these celebrations – their work and struggles – and how the benefits that we have come about," said Ellis, who sits on the church's African Descent Ministries' council of advice and previously served as the Midwest regional director of the Union of Black Episcopalians.

At the federal level, the government's emphasis on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion dates back at least to 1961, when **President John F. Kennedy** signed an executive

order prohibiting federal contractors from discriminating based on race.

And after 15 years of activism following the 1968 assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., **President Ronald Reagan** signed a law in 1983 designating the third Monday in January as a federal holiday to honor the civil rights leader's life.

Last month, in his first hours back in office, President Donald Trump signed an executive order banning DEI initiatives, prompting federal agencies and now some private corporations to discontinue commemorating certain holidays and observances: Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, Black History Month, Women's History Month, Holocaust Day and Days of Remembrance, Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Pride Month, Juneteenth, Women's Equality Day, National Hispanic Heritage Month, National Disability Employment Awareness Month and National American Indian Heritage Month.

The president didn't officially call for the erasure of cultural observances, though federal agencies interpreted the executive order as such and sent memos calling on staff to pause them. On Feb. 11, Google removed Black History Month and other cultural observances from its calendar, saying that maintaining those references was not "sustainable."

Last week, **Julia Ayala Harris, president of The Episcopal Church's House of Deputies**, released a statement of solidarity and standing up for marginalized groups:

“Like the psalms of lament that turn to praise, Dr. [Pauli](#) Murray understood that hope is not passive optimism, but an act of holy defiance, a declaration that the struggle for justice is worth enduring,” Ayala Harris said in the Feb. 6 statement. “Their life reminds us that we are called not simply to lament the injustices of the world but to act — to sing our own songs of hope in a weary time, to advocate, to organize, to protect, and to uplift.”

The **Deputies of Color** also released a statement broadly condemning Trump’s executive orders: “We must address how these policies impact vulnerable populations and stand against the injustices they face. In doing so, we honor our commitment to serve God through serving our neighbors.”

A nationwide surge in interest in diversity, equity and inclusion, including by employers, paralleled the calls for racial justice after the death of George Floyd in May 2020. That year, Episcopal Church leaders encouraged Episcopalians to observe Juneteenth – the anniversary of June 19, 1865, when in Galveston, Texas, the last formerly enslaved people learned they had been freed.

A year later, in 2021, **President Joe Biden** signed legislation making Juneteenth a federal holiday to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States. Since then, more churches have participated in Juneteenth events every year.

**Episcopalians also observe notable events in history that aren’t official U.S. observances.** This month, for example, St. Peter’s Episcopal Parish, a historically Japanese church in Seattle, Washington, marked the 83rd



February 1, 2025

anniversary of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's executive order to authorize the incarceration of Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II. Some 45 years later, the United States officially apologized for the unjust incarceration, damages and post-war discrimination, and offered restitution to survivors.

There's a long history of discrimination against Asians in the United States. For people of Asian and Pacific Islander heritage, removing the observances of Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month obscures both the accomplishments and the challenges that still exist today, said the Rev. Jo Ann Lagman, the church's Asiamerica Ministries missionary.

More at -

[\[https://episcopalnewsservice.org/2025/02/13/episcopal-leaders-respond-to-federal-governments-removal-of-cultural-holidays-observances/\]](https://episcopalnewsservice.org/2025/02/13/episcopal-leaders-respond-to-federal-governments-removal-of-cultural-holidays-observances/)

## Education

### Holocaust Memorial Lecture

**We invite you to join us on 27 February for our Annual Memorial Lecture, where Anthony McElligott will discuss the last Greek transport of Jews to Auschwitz.**

Register here: <https://ow.ly/vVc350UQaAS>

Annual Memorial  
Lecture

**SURVIVING  
LIBERATION**

**1945-1948**

**REGISTER  
NOW**

Trinity College Dublin  
27 February 2025  
18:30-20:00



**PRESENTED BY**  
**Prof Anthony McElligott**

**MORE INFO:**  
[info@holocausteducationireland.org](mailto:info@holocausteducationireland.org)



**STUDY  
VISIT TO  
BERLIN**

**21-24 APRIL 2025**

A REFLECTIVE JOURNEY THROUGH BERLIN'S  
HOLOCAUST SITES, EXPLORING THE PAST  
AND ITS LASTING IMPACT.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT US AT  
[INFO@HOLOCAUSTEDUCATIONIRELAND.ORG](mailto:info@holocausteducationireland.org)

## Study visit to Berlin

Spots are filling up quickly for our upcoming Study Visit to Berlin.

Don't miss this opportunity to explore key historical sites and gain a deeper understanding of the Holocaust in one of Europe's most significant locations.

Secure your spot here: <https://ow.ly/l28650UQkgs>

# Cathedral Calls

## Canterbury Cathedral

**Sung Eucharist** by the Plaxtol Scholars  
Third Sunday before Lent

[<https://www.youtube.com/live/-ZZM\ KoN9Fw?si=py2MMYfH20rdNIAU>]

## Salisbury Cathedral

**Sermon at Choral Evensong In Memory of Robert Willis**  
02/02/25

By Bishop Rowan Williams  
[<https://youtu.be/8nflqTDufu0>]

### **Choral Evensong**

with the Licensing of the Revd Jules Barnes as Vicar of the Close 16/02/25

[<https://www.youtube.com/live/PqbjRUEBGNI?si=EH7M4Eyozep-0yTn>]

# Events

## Music in the Chamber at Bangor Castle

**Moving On Music** will present two of Northern Ireland's finest classical musicians for a rare duo outing, flautist **Aisling Agnew** and harpist **Richard Allen**.



**MUSIC  
IN THE  
CHAMBER**

**Aisling Agnew and Richard Allen**  
Bangor Castle | Thursday 3 April | 8pm

Tickets £15 | Booking at: [www.andculture.org.uk/whats-on](http://www.andculture.org.uk/whats-on)

Ards and  
North Down  
Borough Council

Aisling and Richard will present a beautiful programme of music from the vast flute and harp repertoire including music by well-known composers such as Hamilton Harty and Rossini, alongside a new arrangement of a piece by local composer Greg Caffrey.

The duo are in great demand as soloists, chamber musicians and are regularly seen playing with the Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble, Opera North, RTE Concert Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra and BBC Philharmonic to name a few.



Don't miss this evening of exquisite and rarely heard music by two virtuoso musicians, as they bring you on a journey of music from the 18th century to present day.

Bangor Castle. Thursday 3 April. 8pm. £15

Book at: <https://andculture.org.uk/whats-on/music-chamber-aisling-agnew-and-richard-allen>

## LOOK NORTH 2025

**Join us for LOOK NORTH 2025 - the arts festival that celebrates the vibrant cultural past, present and future of North Belfast.**

This year's festival runs from 28 Feb - 2 March 2025, delivering a packed programme of events across the north



The poster is set against a light-colored, textured background. At the top left is a red circular logo with 'MK' inside. At the top right is a red stamp that says 'ABANA'. The main title 'Creativity in Christ' is written in a large, elegant cursive script, with 'at Kilcluncy Parish Church' in a smaller, similar script below it. In the center, the dates 'Friday 14th - Monday 17th March 2025' are printed in a bold, teal, sans-serif font. To the left of the dates is a square image of a quilted elephant in shades of purple and teal. To the right is a circular graphic with a dashed red border containing the text 'PATCHWORK QUILT EXHIBITION' in a black, sans-serif font, with a small red heart above the word 'PATCHWORK'. Below the dates, the text 'By Sandra Weir of Hollow Oak Quilts' is written in a cursive script. At the bottom, two lines of text in a teal, sans-serif font read: 'Refreshments will be available in the Church Hall' and 'In support of the 2025 Mission and Building Projects in Uganda Charity no. NI 104086.'

*Creativity in Christ*  
*at Kilcluncy Parish Church*

**Friday 14th - Monday  
17th March 2025**

*By Sandra Weir  
of Hollow Oak Quilts*

**PATCHWORK  
QUILT  
EXHIBITION**

Refreshments will be available in the Church Hall  
In support of the 2025 Mission and Building Projects in Uganda  
Charity no. NI 104086.

February 1, 2025

of the city including music, literature, talks, tours, architectural heritage, poetry, stand-up comedy and more...

## Choral

22.2.25 – The Green Road I Chamber Choir Ireland & Eamonn Dougan, Pepper Canister Church, Dublin

23.2.25 – Dvorak's Mass in D Major, Pepper Canister, St Stephen's Church, Mount St Crescent, Dublin 2

23.2.25 – The Green Road I Chamber Choir Ireland & Eamonn Dougan, Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, Belfast

## Resources

### Support from Cancer Research UK

**I'm Lisa, a Relationship Manager at Cancer Research UK, dedicated to supporting communities across Northern Ireland in the fight against cancer.**

Cancer affects every family here—it's a heartbreaking reality. **Every year, over 10,000 people in Northern Ireland are diagnosed with cancer**, and we all know someone—a friend, a family member, a colleague—who has faced this devastating disease. But together, we can change the story.

My role is about bringing people together—supporters, businesses, community groups—uniting us all in the mission to fund life-saving research. I've seen first-hand the power

February 1, 2025

of our local community when we rally behind a cause, and I'm here to help you make an impact in whatever way works for you.

Whether it's setting up a fundraiser, joining a local group, or partnering with us, I'd love to hear from you. Every step we take brings us closer to a world where cancer no longer steals our loved ones.

E mail - [lisa.bailey@cancer.org.uk](mailto:lisa.bailey@cancer.org.uk)

## In the media

### **Cowards who planted bomb should be giving inquiry answers, says ex-officer**

**Off-duty RUC Constable moved dead bodies after explosion in town - Jonathan McCambridge's report in the Belfast Telegraph 19/02/2025**

A retired police officer who moved dead bodies following the Omagh bombing has said the "cowards" who left the explosive device should be providing answers to a public inquiry.

Richard Scott, who was an RUC constable in the Co Tyrone town in 1998, described scenes at a hospital following the blast as "like a scene from Vietnam".

He told the Omagh Bombing Inquiry that his life had been “forever changed” by his experiences on the day.

He was off-duty on the day of the Real IRA bombing, but told the inquiry he had heard the explosion from his house and travelled to the town's police station to pick up first aid kits.

He drove towards the scene with a colleague who then ran towards the town centre with the kits before returning to the car.

Mr Scott said: “He was as white as a ghost and he said, 'This is bad, this is really bad'.”

The retired officer said he put tape across the top of Market Street, where the bomb had exploded and then brought an injured woman to Omagh Hospital in a police car.

He said: “As I drove up all I could see was people walking about, dazed and confused, it was just like a scene from something in Vietnam.

“There was an Ulsterbus at the top of the drive and I remember blood coming down the steps of that bus. There were people coming off it.”

He said he was told that the hospital was full and a member of the public volunteered to bring the injured woman to another hospital. The inquiry heard she survived.

Mr Scott said he returned to the bomb site, which he described as “total devastation”, and began searching buildings for survivors.



He said: “On the left hand side of the street as I walked up, I noticed the engine block of the car. On that same side there was water gushing down the left hand side and it was tainted with blood.”

The former officer added: “I stood with my colleague in the middle of the street, not far from the remains of the car.

“He said to me, 'This is terrible, there are bodies everywhere.'

“I said, 'I can't see any bodies.'

“He said, 'Look down at your feet.'

“I looked down at my feet and there was a body at my feet. Then, as I glanced round I could see bodies to my left, bodies to my right.”

He said they then tended to an injured young person.

“It was obvious there was nothing we could do. I felt absolutely useless ... it makes me sick thinking about that.”

Mr Scott said a decision was taken to move bodies from Market Street to an entryway, as members of the media were gathering nearby.

He said: “I suppose this was the worst time of the day for me as we lifted young and old with varying degrees of injuries.

“The sights I saw still live with me ... needless to say it was horrific and still disturbs me.”

Mr Scott, who still lives in Omagh, said he had experienced nightmares and flashbacks, but told the inquiry that no counselling was available in the immediate aftermath of the bombing.

He said: “I was quite a confident police officer in those years but I lost all my confidence and the only thing I could do was function in a desk job.”

Mr Scott was diagnosed with PTSD in 2002. He said he later medically retired from the police. He said: “People say you move on, you forget about things, but you don't. You don't function, you survive. Every day is a day of survival.”

He added: “The admiration I have for my colleagues who were there on the day of the bomb and did their best to clear that scene and who tended to the dying and the injured, was exemplary.”

The retired officer said the terrorists who planted the bomb could tell exactly what had happened in Omagh.

But he said: “They don't have the guts to own up. They are the cowards who came into our town and they devastated lives.

“The terrorists need to come forward and take responsibility for their cowardly acts and the death and destruction they left behind them on August 15, 1998.

“It is they who should be paying for the pain and the distress they have caused to those who have suffered since and will do so in the future.

“It is they who should be here today to explain the impact of their deeds.

“They, and those who have remained silent ever since.”

## Heritage

### Discover the real history of the Islandmagee Witches

**A new ‘project hub’ is now open at Carrickfergus Museum allowing visitors to explore the story of the Islandmagee Witches – the last witch trial to take place in Ireland.**

Visitors to the museum will be able to freely access some of the outputs from the collaborative project, between Ulster University and Carrickfergus Museum , including:

◆ Examinations and Depositions taken in the Co. Antrim Respecting Witches, Mar. 1710/11.

These statements were taken before the trial, in early March 1711, from key witnesses by Edward Clements, Mayor and Justice of the Peace of Carrickfergus.

◆ Animations



A series of bespoke hand-drawn 2D animations, created by the Islandmagee Witches Ulster University project team and award-winning animation studio Enter Yes, Belfast.

◆ Graphic Novel

A supernatural graphic novel filled with haunting visuals set in a misty isolated town off the coast of County Antrim.

◆ Game

A choice-driven video game in which you play the role of a witch finder following the trial.

Carrickfergus Museum is open Monday to Saturday, 10am – 4pm.

For further info, contact, T: 028 9335 8241 or E: [carrickfergusmuseums@midandeastantrim.gov.uk](mailto:carrickfergusmuseums@midandeastantrim.gov.uk)



# 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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# Church News Ireland

[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)

Link in Monday through Saturday from early morning

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