

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – A Precious Gift from Gaza**

## Image of the day

### A Precious Gift from Gaza

**Canon Don Binder is an Anglican priest in St George's Cathedral, Jerusalem. He wrote this week -**

Normally when I celebrate the morning Eucharist, I wear both chasuble and stole. This morning, however, I chose to wear only the purple stole you see draped around my neck in the photo below.

That's because it's a very special stole: It's a gift from the Christian community of Gaza.

When I last visited our Ahli Hospital three days before the start of the war, the Hospital's Director, Suhaila Tarazi, gave an early Christmas present to me and to Bishop Graham Usher.

I waited until Christmas morning to unwrap my gift—and this lovely stole is what was inside.

Handcrafted by local Palestinian Christians, it and bears a pair of Jerusalem Crosses on the bottom of each length of fabric.

Since the stole is purple, I've had to wait until Lent to wear it. But somehow that seems fitting to the present crisis.

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I will continue to wear it throughout this penitential season, remembering especially the plight of those Gazan Christians from whose community this stole came—but also offering prayers for an end to the violence and bloodshed, relief for all those suffering, and the opening of a horizon for a just and lasting peace throughout this land where our Lord himself once took up his cross on our behalf. 🙏

## News

### Clogher Mothers Union Big Hymn Sing in St Macartin's Cathedral

**Everyone was welcomed by Very Revd Kenny Hall, Dean of Clogher.**

Mrs Heather Ellis, MU Diocesan President introduced the event and all were entertained to an evening of wonderful musical items.

Donagh choir, conducted by Ethne McCord, and accompanied by Gerard Toal sang four pieces. Members and guests were also entertained by Lynnea Hardy, Judith Anderson and Ellen Bloomfield, Jane McKinley, and Revd William Jeffrey. The Clogher Diocesan Mothers' Union Trustees also sang two items, accompanied by Diane Simpson.

Mrs June Butler. All Ireland MU President read the lesson.





Revd Dr Edwin Aiken (Curate at St Macartin's) and Valerie McMorris (Faith & Policy) led the prayers.



Rev Rebecca Guildea gave an insight into a grant which she obtained from 'Mums in May' for the Sunday School children in the parishes of Garrison, Slavin, Belleek & Kiltyclogher.





Bishop Ian Ellis gave a very interesting and appropriate reflection.

The organist for all of the hymns and for some of the singers was Glenn Moore.

A collection was taken up for 'Mums in May.' Heather Ellis expressed thanks to all who contributed to the evening.

## **Queens University commits to further collaborative work in Greater Shankill**

**Professor Sir Ian Greer the President and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University Belfast said recently, "We're committed to giving back and making meaningful contributions to society."**

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“Today we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Greater Shankill Partnership. This is a shared commitment to further collaborative work, to progress and enhance the Greater Shankill area.



**Army Benevolent Fund**

## All The King's Men Concert

Saturday 6th April 2024

**The Band, Bugles, Pipes & Drums of the Royal Irish Regiment return to Belfast's Waterfront Hall to perform an 80th Anniversary Concert for the ABF.**

Limited availability VIP packages available for £66pp, please call 02892 678 112.



**Tickets: £23-£33** - to purchase please scan the QR code.

Alternatively visit [www.waterfront.co.uk](http://www.waterfront.co.uk) or call **02890 334455**

To find out more about events near you, contact your local Army Benevolent Fund office:

Army Benevolent Fund NI  
Building 115, Thiepval Barracks  
Lisburn BT28 3NP

T: 02892 678 112  
E: [ni@armybenevolentfund.org](mailto:ni@armybenevolentfund.org)

[armybenevolentfund.org](http://armybenevolentfund.org)  
/ northern-ireland/



**For Soldiers. For Life.**

Army Benevolent Fund is a registered charity in England and Wales (1146420) and Scotland (SC039189) and registered as a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales (07974609).



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As Dr Jackie Redpath, CEO of Greater Shankill Partnership, said, “Queen's University Belfast has been walking with us from the first days of the Greater Shankill Children and Young People Zone. Their support on our journey to achieve better outcomes for this generation of children and young people has been invaluable.

“The work with Queen’s has now grown across many disciplines and we greatly welcome their on-going commitment to the Greater Shankill community as

## FESTIVAL SERVICE

11.45AM DOWN CATHEDRAL



The special guest at this year's Festival Service will be **The Rt Revd Dr Jill Duff, Bishop of Lancaster** and author of *Lighting the Beacons: Kindling the Flame of Faith in our Hearts*.

FULL PROGRAMME AT  
[DOWNANDDROMORE.ORG](http://DOWNANDDROMORE.ORG)



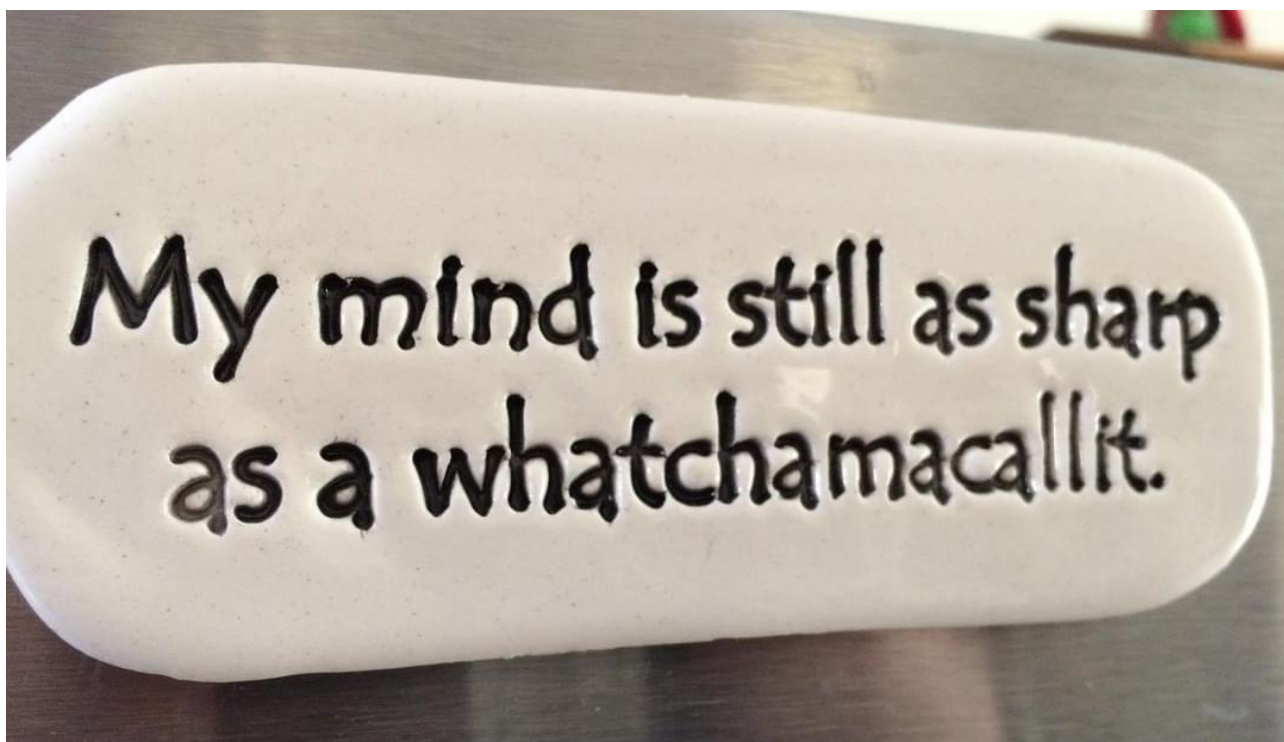
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expressed in today's signing of a Memorandum of Understanding."

Mary Montgomery, Principal of Belfast Boys' Model School, added: "The principals of the primary and post primary schools in the Shankill area are incredibly grateful to Queen's for its sustained, extensive, and multifaceted support of the pioneering, area based, school improvement work being done.

"This support has been both practical in terms of financial and strategic in providing advice and guidance to distil the work into a strategic and cohesive plan for the schools in the area.

"Queen's has shown its commitment to the Shankill area by investing in the health, wellbeing and professional development of school leadership, middle leaders and newly qualified teachers. In addition, Queen's has facilitated





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access to high quality teaching and learning resources for pupils.”

Find out more here: [ow.ly/N5ox50QH4t1](https://www.qub.ac.uk/News/Allnews/featured/greater-shankill-mou.html)

[<https://www.qub.ac.uk/News/Allnews/featured/greater-shankill-mou.html>]



## Liturgical Introduction at Fiddown Union

Recently a Liturgical Introduction of the Revd Dr Christine O'Dowd-Smyth as Priest-in-Charge of Fiddown Union was held.

St Paul's Church in Piltown is known for its attractive interior. The golden mosaics in the sanctuary depicting angels





looked at their best in the reflected evening light as a full church greeted the Revd Dr Christine O'Dowd-Smyth as she was introduced as Priest-in-Charge of Fiddown Union on Friday 23 February.

Preaching at the service, the Dean of Waterford, the Very Revd Bruce Hayes, spoke warmly of the ministry of his former colleague and curate. He reminded Christine that God has faith in each of us. His sermon was full of encouragement for Christine as she embarks on this next step in her ministry amongst people she already knows well.

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Following the service, speeches of welcome were made by Ms Ruth Kennington on behalf of the parish and by local community representatives. Christine responded and thanked those who were there to support her. The fellowship continued over refreshments in the parish hall afterwards.

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

### Take part in European Heritage Open Days 2024 - Registration is OPEN!

**Would you like to take part in European Heritage Open Days 2024 by organising an event or opening a historic property/building of interest to the public?**

If so, REGISTER to take part by 22 May at:  
<https://bit.ly/3uN8naw>

The open-door events will take place on Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 September. While Digital week will run from 9 – 15 September 2024. The theme for this year is Routes, Networks, Connections – links in our heritage.

“We’ll help you promote your offer to the public for FREE on our LoveHeritageNI social media channels, Department for Communities website, Discover NI website and in the new EHOD Web-APP. There’s help to manage bookings and find volunteers if needed and you’ll be given promotional material, all FREE”.



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European Heritage Open Days (EHOD) is Northern Ireland's annual celebration of local architecture, history and culture. Individuals, companies/ organisations & community groups are all welcome to take part.

We're appealing to all races, ethnicities, genders, ages & abilities to participate by organising workshops, walks, talks, tours, exhibitions, traditional skills demonstrations. Or take part by telling your story to the public through art, literature, song, dance, drama, film, food, crafts. For more ideas/ contact details at the above link.

Email: [ehod@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:ehod@communities-ni.gov.uk)

Telephone: 02890823207

Facebook

[www.facebook.com/loveheritageni](http://www.facebook.com/loveheritageni)

(external link opens in a new window / tab)

Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/loveheritageni/>

## **Freedom in Christ Holy Week Film Club at Belfast Jesuit Centre.**

**Join an unforgettable Holy Week Film Club experience at the Belfast Jesuit Centre.**

“Embark on a cinematic journey of faith, reflection and spirituality this Holy Week with our carefully curated film selection. Our theme is Freedom in Christ.”

How it works:

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In preparation for the Holy Week discussions which will take place via Zoom on Monday 25th, Tuesday 26th and Wednesday 27th March at 7pm, we will show the films here in the BJC on three Fridays: 8th, 15th and 22nd March at 7pm. There will be popcorn!

Alternatively, you can watch the films in the comfort of your own home and join us on Zoom during Holy Week to discuss them. We will be led by Fr Jake Martin SJ, who holds a PhD in Film Studies from Trinity College Dublin.

### **First Reformed (Paul Schraeder, 2017)**

Belfast Jesuit Centre Screening - Friday 8th March at 7pm

Witness the powerful exploration of faith, despair, and redemption as Reverend Ernst Toller grapples with his own spiritual crisis. This thought-provoking film is a captivating meditation on the complexities of belief and the pursuit of divine purpose.

### **The Quiet Girl (Colm Bairread, 2022)**

Belfast Jesuit Centre  
Screening - Friday 15th  
March at 7pm

Step into the enchanting world of "The Quiet Girl," a poignant and visually stunning film that weaves together themes of silence, contemplation, and the profound



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connection between spirituality and nature. Immerse yourself in this modern masterpiece that beautifully captures the essence of inner peace and divine presence.



### **Babette's Feast (Gabriel Axel, 1987)**

Belfast Jesuit Centre Screening - Friday 15th March at 7pm

Experience the feast for the senses with "Babette's Feast," a cinematic masterpiece that celebrates the joy of community, generosity, and the transformative power of a shared meal. This timeless classic explores the intersection of faith, culture, and the human spirit in a heart warming and visually sumptuous tale.

### **Why Attend?**

Deepen your spiritual journey through the lens of captivating cinema. Engage in meaningful discussions with fellow participants.



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Immerse yourself in stories that resonate with the essence of Holy Week.

Seize this opportunity to enrich your Holy Week experience and join us for an inspiring Film Club at BJC. Open your hearts to the profound messages within these films and let the magic of cinema illuminate your spiritual path. To request the Zoom link for the Film Club, email: [belfastjesuitcentre@gmail.com](mailto:belfastjesuitcentre@gmail.com)

If you attend the screenings in the BJC, you will be invited to make a small donation to defray costs.

Links to tickets for screenings can be found in the comments.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/851115949717?aff=oddtcreator>

## **Bangor Drama Club's Saint Patrick's Evening charity find raiser**

**Bangor Drama Club are once again raising funds for NI Chest Heart and Stroke at their Saint Patrick's Evening on Thursday 14th March.**


A fantastic evening of music, songs, poetry, hilarious sketches and Irish dancing - £12. Tickets -

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/1a-hamilton-road/studio-1a/bangor-drama-club-presents-st-patrick-s-evening/2024-03-14/20:00/t-lnargxp>

Bangor Drama Club proudly presents

# SAINT PATRICK

An evening of traditional music, Irish dancing and storytelling



Thursday 14th March 2024, 8pm,  
Studio 1A, Hamilton Rd, Bangor  
Tickets £12 - Bangor VIC, Tower  
House, Quay St. - 028 91 270069  
[www.bangordramaclub.com](http://www.bangordramaclub.com)

**BANGOR** Studio 1A  
**DRAMA CLUB** THEATRE

Proudly Supporting  
**Chest  
Heart &  
Stroke**

## Organ Podcast episode 2

Listen to episode 2 of The Organ Podcast to hear organist Martin Baker discuss his career, life after

ep 002



RCO

"Most repertoire is very conventional in what it asks for from an organ; as an improviser you can ignore all that and just make sound".

Martin Baker

Martin Baker joins The Organ Podcast to discuss his career, life after Westminster Cathedral, and his passion for improvising. Out now, wherever you get your podcasts.

## **Westminster Cathedral, and his passion for improvising.**

Presenter Mark O'Brien also explores one of England's oldest surviving pipe organs, and meets the man who recently discovered two previously unpublished pieces by Bairstow.

Listen and subscribe wherever you get your podcasts, or visit -



## In the media

### **Belfast Telegraph - Evangelical' Catholics on rise but growing number of people never read Bible or pray**

**Protestants are more secular than Catholics, according to some of the most detailed new research in almost two decades on religious observance in NI, while a quarter of the population never go to church - writes Sam McBride, Northern Ireland Editor**

For years the term 'evangelical' has been associated with right-wing republicans in the US and the DUP in Northern Ireland, but far more Northern Irish Catholics than previously thought identify with the Christian term, according to new research.

Some of the most detailed new polling into religious practice in Northern Ireland for two decades has found that 38% of practising Catholics in Northern Ireland describe themselves as evangelical — not far behind the 46% of practising Protestants who self-describe as evangelical.

That represents a significant increase in evangelical beliefs among those who adhere strongly to their faith.

In 2004, the Northern Ireland Life and Times survey found that just 14% of the population identified that way; this data

suggests it is about 21% of the population, even though religious observance as a whole has declined significantly.

Young people are far more likely to identify as evangelical — 70% of 18- to- 24-year-old practising Christians associate themselves with the term, in contrast to just 46% of over-65s. It is also more associated with men than women. Evangelical Christianity — which emphasises the centrality of the Bible, personal conversion, and proselytising — has long been identified with Protestantism.

The 2004 research found Protestants were three and a half times more likely than Catholics to say they were evangelical.

Indeed, the Evangelical Alliance (EA), which commissioned the research, is overwhelmingly a Protestant organisation. A search of its member database for Catholic churches returned no results, although it emphasises that it has individual Catholic members and works on a cross-community basis to promote understanding and reconciliation.

The research involved two separate components: a poll of more than 1,000 people by Savanta, and EA research of individuals who were likely to hear of the project because they have some link to it.

Just 0.9% of the responses to that self-selecting survey came from Catholics, emphasising the surprising fact that the polling of the general population found such high numbers of Catholics identifying as evangelical.

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The census gives an exceptionally accurate account of the population's religious beliefs, but not the strength of those beliefs.

The 2021 census showed that 42% of people said they were Catholic, 37% said they were Protestant, just over 1% adhere to another religion, 17% had no religion, and fewer than 2% declined to say.

The new polling, however, shows that 23% of people in NI say they go to church once a week.

That's a massive drop from research in 1993 which found that 68% of people said they were “frequent” or “regular” in church attendance.

The new research found that just over 12% of people read the Bible once a week, while almost 35% pray once a week.

Half of the population never reads the Bible, 31% never pray and 25% never go to church.

The data shows Protestants to be more secular than Catholics: Protestants are more likely than Catholics to never go to church (26% to 15%), more likely to never pray (32% to 20%) and less likely to say they are a practising Christian (46% to 62%).

In the general population, some 21 % of people said they had never even heard of the term evangelical before, with a stark demographic split.

Only 7% of over-65s said they hadn't heard the word 'evangelical', compared to half of 18- to 24-year-olds.



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In the poll, respondents frequently described evangelicals they hear in the media as being “extreme” or “loud”, but said that the evangelicals they know personally are “friendly”, “kind” and “honest”.

The polling shows that 31% of the population believe churches should be compelled to undertake same-sex marriages.

It also shows more Catholics (64%) than Protestants (47%) are welcoming of asylum seekers, refugees and other newcomers.

In EA's survey of evangelicals — which, unlike the poll, was self-selecting — evangelicals were far more religiously committed than Christians in general, with 95% attending church weekly.

It found that evangelicals are broadly similar to the general population in their political views on climate change, economics, refugees, peace and reconciliation and reform of Stormont, but they differ from the rest of the population on issues such as abortion and gay marriage.

The survey found that evangelicals are almost twice as likely as the general population to volunteer in their community.

But it also hinted at challenges for the ideology. One of those who said they used to identify as an 'evangelical Christian' no longer does so, she said, because of “what's happened in the USA” where “evangelicals there no longer

seem to believe what I believe in and are Trump worshippers”.

Large-scale polling by the Pew Research Centre in the US has shown that 85% of white evangelicals who attend church regularly voted for Trump in 2020 — even after four years in which they'd seen behaviour which is the antithesis of Christian.

In a report on the research, EA identified three types of evangelicals — something which suggests the word can mean very different things to different people.

Within 'broad-church evangelicals', which encompasses everyone who uses the term, it specified 'classic evangelicals', who are mostly Protestant and for whom worship, prayer and the Bible are central, and 'Catholic evangelicals', who associate with the 'new evangelisation' of Pope Francis and the broader opening up of the Catholic Church since Vatican II.

**Paddy Monaghan of The Evangelical Catholic Initiative** said: “Many Catholic respondents may understand the word evangelical to mean that they have come into a personal relationship with Jesus.”

**David Smyth**, who is head of **Evangelical Alliance in Northern Ireland**, said: “We always suspected that the Christian faith continued to play an important role in life here and this research confirms high levels of religious identification and practice. The findings in this report have challenged, surprised and encouraged us.

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“Evangelicals show up at church, but also in their local communities, and care deeply about wider society. Evangelical Christians are just like our neighbours in many respects, but are understandably distinctive in many ways too.”

**Dr Gladys Ganiel**, a professor in the sociology of religion at Queen's University Belfast, said she was “surprised that these surveys found such high rates of religious practice, as well as a much more widespread willingness to identify with evangelicalism, than I would have anticipated”.

She said the data is the first in almost two decades to provide such detail on religious belief in NI.  
Belfast Telegraph 27/02/2024

## 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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