

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Supporting their local lifeboat

January 2, 2025

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Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

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Rev Jack Kinkead & Fr Aquinas Duffy took part in the annual laying of wreaths at sea with Wicklow RNLI Lifeboat Station.

They said - Always a pleasure to support those who sacrifice their time for the safety of others.





Methodist Lay Leader visits Women's Aid Ballymena

The Lay Leader of the Irish Methodist Church, Elaine Barnett has visited the Women's Aid-ABCLN Refuge in Ballymena.

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Elaine was accompanied by colleague, Grace McGurk from the MCI Ministries Team to learn more about their work and the journeys of women living with domestic abuse.

"Journeying means not staying in one place; it means being open to change and transformation."

Rome and the Vatican inaugurate the 2025 Jubilee

Over 35 million pilgrims are expected to visit Rome in 2025 seeking forgiveness of sins and a chance to see the Pope.

On Christmas Eve, Pope Francis opened the first Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica, inaugurating the Jubilee year. This important anniversary, celebrated every 25 years, will mark an opportunity for the Catholic Church to celebrate the faith of its 1.3 billion believers around the globe reports RNS from Vatican City.

With a papal bull in March, called "Spes non Confundit" (Hope does not disappoint), Francis announced that the year 2025 will be centered on the theme "Pilgrims of Hope," at a time when the world is confronted with many wars, a worsening climate crisis and the ongoing aftershocks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pope opened the Holy Doors, which are usually sealed, in the major churches in Rome, including St. John Lateran and St. Mary Major. He also opened a door in the Rebibbia prison in Rome, a sign of repentance and mercy for



Commenting on a gathering and retreat for young adults that took place on 15 to 18 August, Father Willie Purcell, the director of the National Office for Diocesan Vocations, said, “It was great to be present at the Youth 2000 gathering in Clongowes Wood College SJ, in Clane, Co Kildare, and to join with over 500 young people who are so joyful and enthusiastic about living their faith.”

convicts. The U.S. Cardinal James Michael Harvey opened the door at Peter and Paul outside the Walls, where he is archpriest.

The most important aspect of the Jubilee-year pilgrimage to Rome is the granting of plenary indulgence to all who cross the Holy Doors, meaning the forgiveness of sins for faithful

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or on behalf of loved ones. The pope's plenary indulgence allows believers who have gone to confession, received Communion, prayed for the pope and renounced sin to forgo punishment in purgatory, according to Catholic tradition.

“The indulgence is a way of discovering the unlimited nature of God's mercy. Not by chance, for the ancients, the terms “mercy” and “indulgence” were interchangeable, as expressions of the fullness of God's forgiveness, which knows no bounds,” Francis wrote in the papal bull.

Faithful coming to Rome will also have the opportunity to take part in special pilgrimages organized by the Vatican: the traditional pilgrimages of the seven churches, a pilgrimage dedicated to the holy sites tied to European countries and one specializing in visiting churches dedicated to women patrons of Europe and doctors of the church.

[\[https://religionnews.com/2024/12/23/rome-and-the-vatican-prepare-to-inaugurate-the-2025-jubilee/?](https://religionnews.com/2024/12/23/rome-and-the-vatican-prepare-to-inaugurate-the-2025-jubilee/)

Archbishop Jackson calls for end to hostilities and release of hostages in Gaza and Israel

Statement by Archbishop Michael Jackson following news of further damage to Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City.

Photo shows damage to a doctor's clinic on the top floor of the Diagnostic Centre Building at Al Ahli Arab Hospital in

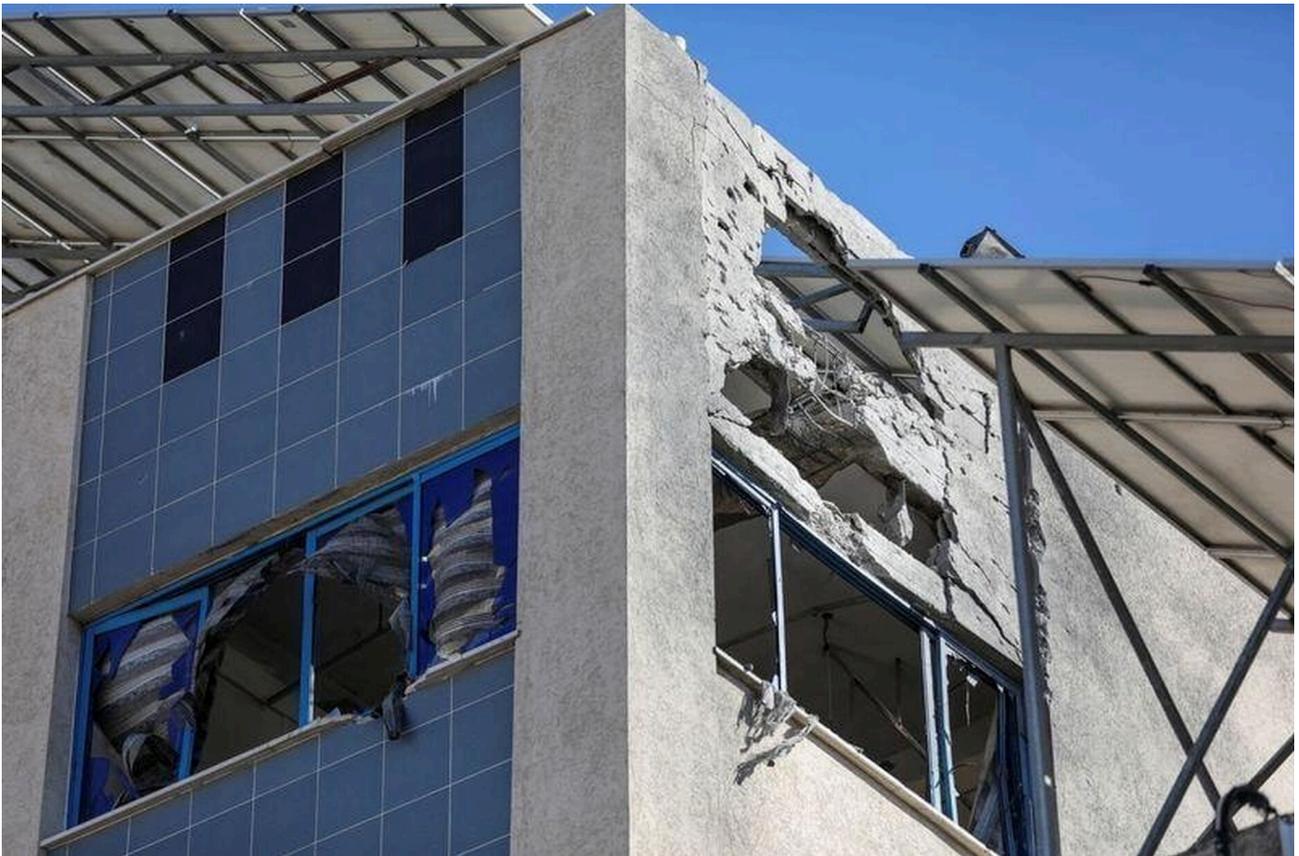


Photo shows damage to a doctor's clinic on the top floor of the Diagnostic Centre Building at Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City which is owned and run by the Diocese of Jerusalem. The building is currently functioning as a Chemotherapy Treatment Centre. (Photo: Diocese of Jerusalem)

Gaza City which is owned and run by the Diocese of Jerusalem. The building is currently functioning as a Chemotherapy Treatment Centre. (Photo: Diocese of Jerusalem)

As 2024 closes and as 2025 opens, it is with deep sorrow that we witness the hostilities in Gaza and Israel in particular as they enter their third calendar year.

My appeal is for the immediate cessation of all hostilities and the release of all hostages. Children, women and older

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people have borne the brunt of war in a way that most of us never expected or envisaged. My plea is that negotiations, which have suffered from the whiplash of start/stop, stop/start, be brought urgently to a compassionate and positive conclusion.

The most recent news, direct from the Diocese of Jerusalem this morning, of more destruction of Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza on December 29, combined with news of attacks on other hospitals and hospital personnel in Gaza in particular, fills us with alarm and grief. The creation and maintenance of the humanitarian corridor of response and care in Gaza is essential to the provision of an humane 2025 in the whole region.

In recent days I have been contacted by healthcare professionals in Ireland in the wake of the abduction of Dr Hussam Abu Safiyah, Medical Director of Kamal Adwan Hospital. I stand with those who have contacted me and call on all leaders to raise their voices nationally and internationally to call for Dr Abu Safiyah's release and demand that medical facilities, staff and patients are protected by all parties to this war, according to international law.

The United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough stands with the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East through The Epiphany Agreement, signed by myself and the then Archbishop of Jerusalem Suheil Dawani in January 2016 and continued today with Archbishop Hosam Naoum. The Diocese of Jerusalem continues to offer support and intervention to everyone who needs help and relief. Once again I thank all who have subscribed to the Shine a Light

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initiative which has attained its goal of one quarter of a million Euro.

It is in our call for divine mercy in human action that I call for peace as I wish those of you who can do so to have a happy New Year.

+Michael Jackson

Cathedral Calls

Cathedral organist and music director 'humbled' by honour

The organist and master of music at one of Scotland's major cathedrals has said it is "humbling" to be recognised in the New Year Honours list on the eve of his retirement.

Michael Harris took up the post at St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh in 1996 and has been involved in many events of historical and royal significance over the years.

He has been made an MBE in the honours list for services to music.

Mr Harris, who is due to retire from his role at the cathedral on December 31, said it was a lovely surprise to be recognised and paid tribute to his colleagues.

He said: "It's obviously very sort of humbling to receive this. And, you know, it's been an immense privilege being part of



St Giles' and its living history, and to be able to lead the music team during that time, it's a tribute to them, really, as much as anything else.

“Without the whole team in the choir and organists and others, without them none of the great occasions we've had in these past few years, as well as our weekly round of course, none of that would have been possible.”

Mr Harris started his musical education as a chorister at Gloucester Cathedral and was then an organ scholar at St Peter's College, Oxford, before continuing his studies at the Royal College of Music.

Before his move to Edinburgh in 1996, he held posts as sub-organist of Leeds Parish Church and assistant organist of Canterbury Cathedral.

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During his time at St Giles' Cathedral, Mr Harris has been involved with services to mark the return of the Stone of Destiny to Scotland in 1996 and the opening of the Scottish Parliament in 1999.

He was also director of music for royal events including a service of thanksgiving for the life of the late Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022 and a service of thanksgiving in July 2023 to mark the coronation of the King and Queen, saying he felt "really privileged" to have done that.

The 66-year-old said: "It really is somewhere that always has been at the centre of Scotland's history.

"One of my very first national occasions was the Stone of Destiny arriving in Scotland. And it's continued, of course, with the various things – it's been eventful."

He added: "It's never a dull moment. You never know what's going to come around the corner.

"There have been so many things, even such things as the great Christmas services, where you welcome so many people.

"And we had the big service in 1999 for the Scottish Parliament being instituted then, and then those royal occasions.

But you can find special moments in all sorts of things, really."

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St Giles' Cathedral has been a working church for 900 years, having been founded in 1124 by King David I.

Mr Harris, who is married and has a daughter, has played many concerts on the cathedral's Rieger organ, which was built in 1992, and has also given recitals at venues around the world.

His solo recordings include *The Organ At St Giles'*, while he has also directed the cathedral choir on a number of CD recordings.

Under his direction, the cathedral choir has carried out a number of international tours, including to Canada, Italy and the US.

He has also been very involved in organ and choral education, including lecturing in music at Edinburgh Napier University.

Clergy and ministry

Virginia Theological Seminary announces new application deadline for doctoral programs

Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS) has announced a new application deadline for its doctoral programs of February 1, 2025, for a spring 2025 start. The change



impacts both the Seminary’s Doctor of Ministry (DMin) and Doctor of Educational Ministry (DEdMin) degrees.

The decision to adjust the deadline from early January aligns the doctoral programs with the second application deadline for VTS’ master’s programs. It also recognizes that Christmas is a particularly busy season for those working in ministry and educational ministry, making it challenging for them to finalize an application during this period.

The Rev. Ross Kane, Ph.D., director of doctoral programs, said: “VTS doctoral programs give students tools to renew ministries in congregations, schools, hospitals, and many other contexts. The programs draw together cutting-edge academic scholarship with the practicalities of everyday ministry to empower faithful leaders. This later application

date better fits the schedules of applicants by avoiding the rush of the holiday season and New Year.”

VTS’ doctoral programs have four tracks, namely Ministry Development, Educational Leadership, Christian Spirituality and Christian Formation. They all use hybrid pedagogies that combine online courses and seminars with summer residencies. The programs are divided into two parts, a coursework phase, which takes between three and four years to complete, and a writing stage, during which students have between one and six years to complete a thesis.

During the coursework phase, students study a range of core areas including learning theory and educational design, the philosophy of education, sacred texts and education, and moral and ethical leadership. They can also choose from electives covering preaching, pedagogy and curriculum, information technology in the classroom or chapel, and human emotion and ministry.

The DMin is aimed at students with a Master of Divinity degree and three to five years’ experience in ministry, while the DEdMin is aimed at students with a master’s degree in a discipline related to educational ministry, as well as three to five years’ experience in a relevant field.

VTS doctoral programs recognize that the students are already experts in their fields, with significant experience, and that they can help each other by sharing this experience. As such, the case study component of the program uses an action-reflection model of learning, under which students reflect on their own actions in real-life

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situations and learn from them in order to be better or more informed practitioners when encountering similar situations in the future.

For more information about VTS' Doctoral programs visit: <https://vts.edu/admissions-academics/degrees/#doctorate>.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Women Mystics: Female Theologians through Christian History course

While male voices have dominated our understanding of Christian theology and history, significant work over the last fifty years has sought out and made available the voices of powerful and important female theologians through the history of Christianity. First and foremost, these voices belong to female mystics.

This online evening series, run jointly by Sarum College and The Church Times looks at five of the most important female mystics from Christianity in chronological order. Each session runs 7.30-9 PM on a Monday and is led by an expert on the mystic in question. Each webinar will consist of a lecture and a Q&A session.

The sessions are as follows:

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13 January: Hildegard of Bingen (<https://www.sarum.ac.uk/short-courses/hildegard-of-bingen/>), with Lauren Cole (<https://medievall Lauren.wordpress.com/>)

10 February: Clare of Assisi (<https://www.sarum.ac.uk/short-courses/clare-of-assisi/>), with [Michael Hahn](<https://www.sarum.ac.uk/about/our-people/dr-michael-hahn/>)

10 March: Julian of Norwich (<https://www.sarum.ac.uk/short-courses/women-mystics-julian-of-norwich/>), with [Hannah Lucas](<https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/people/Hannah.Lucas>)

14 April: Teresa of Avila (<https://www.sarum.ac.uk/short-courses/teresa-of-avila/>), with [Gillian Ahlgren](<https://chbookshop.hymnsam.co.uk/search-results?query=gillian%20ahlgren>)

19 May: Thea Bowman with Manuel Williams (<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2023/09/17/sister-thea-bowman-preaching-justice-246102>)

Each session will be recorded and a link to the video provided to everyone registered.

The series of five sessions is £80.

The image in this listing is a depiction of the Catholic Saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098 – 1178 CE). The stained glass window was created by the Ott Brothers in 1892 CE for the St. Foy Church in Sélestat, France. Credit: [World History Encyclopedia](<https://www.worldhistory.org/image/10406/depiction-of-hildegard-of-bingen-in-the-st-foy-chu/>)

Details -

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Category

Christian Spirituality (<https://www.sarum.ac.uk/short-course-category/christian-spirituality/>)

Tutor(s)

Dr Michael Hahn Guest Tutors

Course code

2543

Other Notes

This online evening series is run jointly by Sarum College and The Church Times. Each session runs 7.30-9 PM on a Monday and is led by an expert on the mystic in question.

Subsequent sessions are: 10 Feb: Clare of Assisi; 10 Mar: Julian of Norwich; 14 Apr: Teresa of Avila; 19th May: Thea Bowman

Each webinar will consist of a lecture and a Q&A session. The series of five is £80.

Each session will be recorded and a link to the video provided to everyone registered.

[<https://www.sarum.ac.uk/short-courses/women-mystics-2025/>]

In the media

‘I’ve worked in conflict zones...but I’ve never felt as unsafe as I did during the summer in Ireland’ - The Journal

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Volunteers who spoke to The Journal said their work is getting harder due to increased levels of harassment, writes Mairead Maguire.

A sea change in public attitudes towards immigration partly fueled by the spreading of disinformation has hampered the efforts of volunteers to help international protection seekers in Ireland, people working in the sector have said.

A report by the Irish Refugee Council last year gathered testimony from 49 volunteers, many of whom have experienced regular abuse online and in person from far-right agitators.

Long-time volunteers who recently spoke to The Journal say they've never felt more unsafe while undertaking the work.

Verbal abuse, unwanted filming and doxxing are common occurrences, and volunteers consistently cited the emboldening of toxic online communities as one possible reason for the increase in harassment.

Olivia Headon has been volunteering in Dublin since April, after returning to Ireland following 10 years of humanitarian work around the world.

“I've worked in conflict zones ... but I've never felt as unsafe [there] as I felt during the summer here in Ireland.”

Headon says she's been targeted by people who falsely claim she is getting paid, working for the United Nations or an NGO – an accusation frequently made by far-right agitators. More at -

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<https://www.thejournal.ie/asylum-seekers-volunteers-harassment-misinformation-disinformation-6577736-Dec2024/>

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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

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