

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – 4 Corners Festival begins

January 31, 2025

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News -

There are Open & Welcoming Congregations right across the island of Ireland
Burns in Belfast

Education -

Top appointment for Wallace High Principal
Pupils 'having fun' switching from one language to another
Queen's opens a campus in India
Full Accreditation for Army Chaplains' Museum

Cathedral Calls -

The solar panels at York Minster are turned on

Clergy and ministry -

Nexus Lunchtime Webinar Series

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books -

Christ Church, Derry, first Wednesday Recital
Arts Council NI funding

Perspective -

An Episcopalian responds to President Trump

In the media -

Irish Stew

Speaking to the soul -

Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

Image of the day - 4 Corners Festival begins

Belfast's 4 Corners Festival begins today Friday 31 January and runs to Sunday 9 February 2025 in a number of venues across the city.

The festival will inspire connection, reflection and community through a dynamic programme of events spanning art, music, discussion, sport and other activities.

The festival was established as a way to inspire people from across the city to transform it for the peace and wellbeing of all.

For festival information and tickets, go to [4 Corners Festival](#) (link opens in new window).

Now in its 13th year, the festival was conceived as a way to inspire people from across the city to transform it for the peace and wellbeing of all.

The 2025 4 Corners Festival is once again set to inspire connection, reflection and community through a dynamic lineup of events spanning a wide range of disciplines, such as art, music, discussion, sport and other activities.

This year's programme revolves around the central theme of HOME? - an exploration of the complex and multifaceted idea of a place which holds both connection and disjointedness.

According to the organisers 2025's theme of HOME? is deeply rooted in Scripture, offering a spiritual dimension to the conversation, with passages like Psalm 68:6 and Revelation 21:3 forming an inspiring foundation for many of the festival's events.

Speaking on what the upcoming theme means for the organisation, **Steve Stockman, 4 Corners Festival co-founder**, identified that the focus is rooted in Belfast and its community.

He said: "Home is a powerful metaphor, used by poets, preachers, politicians and others seeking to paint a picture of a sense of belonging to a place.

"The idea is also used in various encouraging and challenging ways within the Old and New Testament scriptures, but not all homes are happy.

"From the beginning of the 4 Corners Festival we have aimed at encouraging people to get out of the physical corners of this city we call home, and to feel more at home in different parts of their own city; to realise that their home is bigger than they thought.

Fellow festival co-founder Father Martin Magill, hopes the theme of HOME? will bring awareness to the city's residents, not just shedding light on the encouragement of tourists to the area.

Martin said: "The strapline for Belfast City Council's current tourism strategy is 'Make Yourself at Home', with a laudable emphasis on inclusion.

“But what about those who already call Belfast their home – be they people whose families have lived here from before it became a city, to those who have settled here from all over the world for all kinds of reasons; those who rarely leave their corner of the city, to those who left it years ago but love to come ‘home’ for special events, including the 4 Corners Festival; those who live in a comfortable home in a vibrant community, to those who are some of the many unseen homeless in our city, not just those who sleep on our streets; those who know every nook and cranny of our city and its complex history, to those who feel uneasy with the direction that the city seems to be heading in the future?”

For more information about the festival and to keep up to date with programme updates go to 4cornersfestival.com

Your starter for ten - Introducing Naming Belfast

Learning about street names in the four corners of Belfast at The Duncairn.

Belfast has a deep history and legacy that spans many centuries.

Dr Paul Tempan, Fr Martin Magill, Linda Ervine along with singer songwriter Brian Houston will take a journey down the years to explore the rich tapestry woven throughout the city by our streets, their stories and their names.

Join us at 7:30pm on Monday 3 February for an interesting evening where you're guaranteed to learn something new.

January 31, 2025

We are upfront in our welcome for LGBTQIA+ people and same-sex couples.

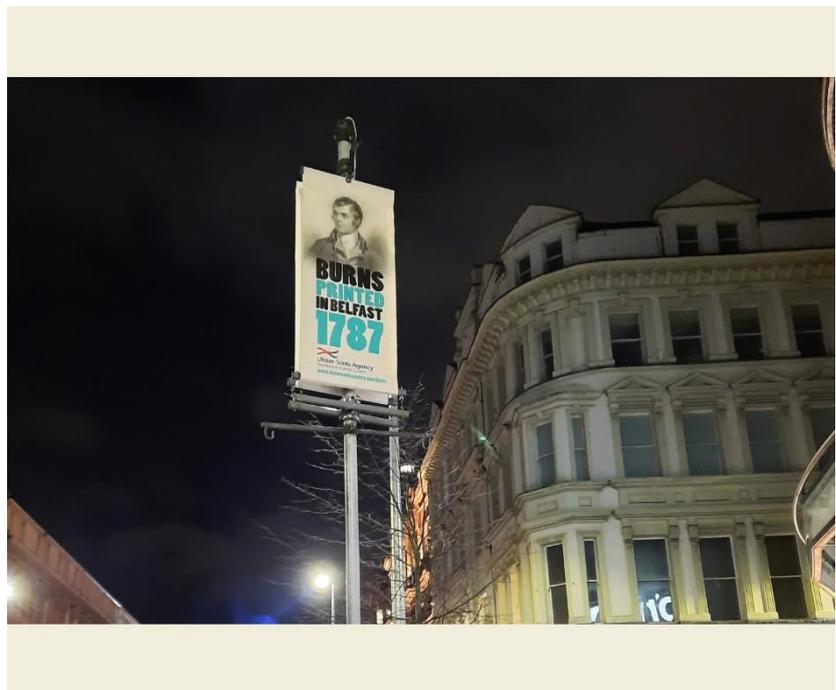
We recognise committed same-sex unions at social events, in church services and other aspects of Church life. We welcome clergy regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Parishes that register with CAI as Open and Welcoming Congregations are listed on our website and you can search our listings to find one near you.

If you'd like to join our Open and Welcoming Congregations, get in touch!

Burns in Belfast

If you've been out and about in Belfast recently, you may have spotted the Ulster Scots Agency's Robert Burns banners located around the city centre... they also have taken over the window display in the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre for the next week.



Both the banners and boards feature key years which highlight the poet's historical relationship with the city:



- 1787 - Burns' work was first printed in Belfast
- 1844 - Burns is celebrated in Belfast
- 1859 - Burns centenary is held in Belfast
- 1872 - Burns Club is founded in Belfast.

To learn more visit - <https://tinyurl.com/drdiv9t6p>

Education

Top appointment for Wallace High Principal



Wallace High Principal has been appointed as Chairperson of the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

Read the full story: <https://www.northernirelandworld.com/education/wallace-high-school-principal-appointed-as-chairperson-to-the-council-for-the-curriculum-examinations-and-assessment-ccea-4963879>

Pupils 'having fun' switching from one language to another

An excellent report by Robbie Meredith for BBC NI describes how Irish is the latest language nine-year-old Soham can now confidently speak.

The St Malachy's Primary School pupil also speaks Marathi, Hindi and English.

The Belfast school is one of over 80 in Northern Ireland taking part in the Scoil Spreagtha scheme. Organised by the language organisation Gael Linn, it encourages English-medium schools to use Irish too.

Soham told BBC News NI that Irish is used widely in his school. "In assembly, we talk to each other a bit in Irish," he said. "It's fun just switching from one language to another. During the day in school we mostly use English and Irish, but in my house I use English, a bit of Irish sometimes and Hindi and Marathi."

Queen's opens a campus in India

Exciting news QUB declared - "We're opening a campus in GIFT City, India, and we're the first UK Russell Group university to do so.

"GIFT City is a thriving international finance and technology centre, and our campus is set to welcome the first cohort of students in January 2026, and will initially offer five postgraduate programmes aligned to the needs of the Indian economy. These are designed to equip students with skills in finance, technology and business analytics.

January 31, 2025

“In the coming years, we plan to increase the range of courses and welcome PhD students, so that we can further develop the campus into a hub for research and innovation.

“We are delighted that work is underway to bring Queen’s University’s world-class education to the wider student base in India. Our campus will offer opportunity and potential for a diverse range of students whilst also delivering social value and economic impact to the region.” (Professor Sir Ian Greer, President and Vice-Chancellor).

Click here to find more about the project:

<https://ow.ly/Ocg550UPinE>



Full Accreditation for Army Chaplains' Museum

January 31, 2025

The Royal Army Chaplains' Museum, located near Shrivenham Station's Beckett Gate has received Full Accreditation from the Arts Council England.

Museum Curator, David Blake, said: "Accreditation is the nationally agreed standard to ensure all museums are sustainable, focused and trusted, inspiring the confidence of the public, funding, and governing bodies.

Read more at <https://ow.ly/jggq50UHPwV>

Cathedral Calls

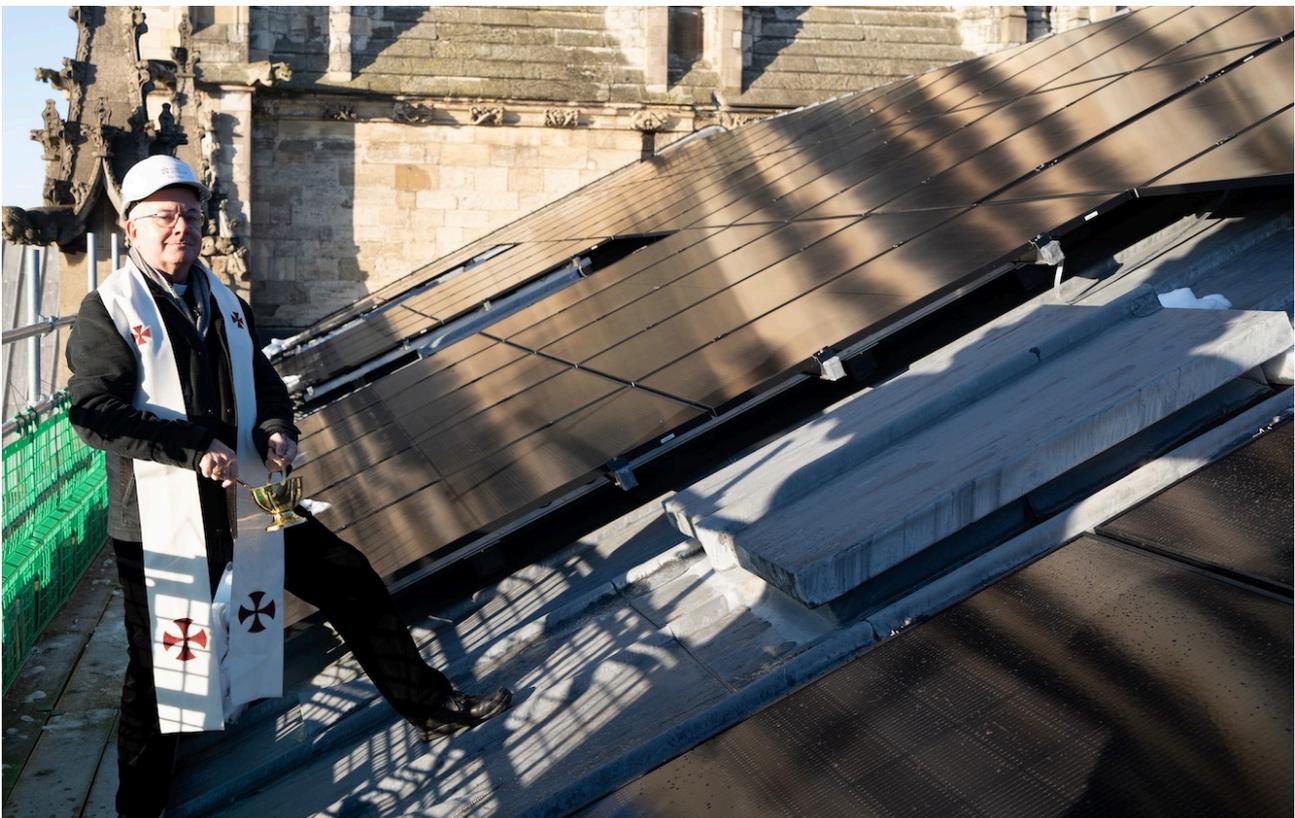


The solar panels at York Minster are turned on

January 31, 2025

184 solar panels on the roof of York Minster were switched on for the first time during a blessing ceremony led by the Dean of York.

The discreetly placed panels, installed over the last four months on the south Quire roof, will generate 70,000 kWh of energy, enough to deliver a third of the Minster's electricity requirements and are a significant step on the Minster's journey towards decarbonisation and to reduce its energy consumption.



This is the fourth solar installation on the Minster estate, which together will generate 120,000 kWh of energy per year – enough to power 41 average UK homes.

The solar panel installation is one of many projects underway across the Minster as part of its Neighbourhood

Plan, which was adopted in 2022 following 32 weeks of public consultation.

The plan, which has recently attracted international awards for innovation, is designed to address the challenges of the 21st century, principally responding to the climate emergency and the impacts of climate change on the fragile masterpiece that is York Minster's 800-year-old building.

Alex McCallion, Director of Works and Precinct at York Minster, explained:

“Extreme weather, brought about by climate change, is the greatest threat to the fabric of York Minster. These solar panels signify a significant step forward in our decarbonisation journey and is a significant project of our Neighbourhood Plan.

“This project joins our existing solar slates on the York Minster Refectory, solar panels at the Heritage Quad and solar film on the Works & Technology Hub, to help reduce our energy consumption by a third – a huge leap forward toward a net zero future.

“The closing statement of COP29 reminded us of the perilous state of our climate when the UN Secretary General noted ‘COP29 comes at the close of a brutal year – a year seared by record temperatures, and scarred by climate disaster, all as emissions continue to rise’.

“Our adopted Neighbourhood Plan is delivering ambitious change in our estate as we take bold action to get our buildings to net zero. These renewable energy systems,

January 31, 2025

together with retrofits to insulate our buildings and reduce energy consumption, should be celebrated as a major step forward and show that if we can do it at York Minster, everyone can and should.”

Clergy and ministry

Nexus Lunchtime Webinar Series

This Sexual Abuse & Sexual Violence Awareness Week Nexus will be hosting a series of online lunchtime webinars exploring the realities of sexual abuse in a digital world under the theme of 'Online Harms' ⚡

3 February 2025 - 7 February 2025

During the week beginning Monday 3rd February, join us to gain critical insights from leading experts as we delve into pressing topics such as:

The impact of pornography

Intimate image abuse

Artificial intelligence and its risks

Internet subcultures

Child abuse imagery

Online peer pressure among young people

The role of influencers

These sessions are an invaluable opportunity to stay ahead of emerging threats, deepen your understanding of emerging online abuse tactics, and the importance of

January 31, 2025

protecting children, young people, and yourselves from online harm.

Whether you're a professional working with children, young people, or adults, or a parent/carer wanting to learn more about keeping your young ones safe in the online world, you'll not want to miss this!

Each session costs £5 to cover administration and system costs. Please note that tickets are transferrable (e.g. to a colleague) but non-refundable.

Register at - [<https://register.enthuse.com/ps/event/NexusLunchtimeWebinarSeries>]



**Webinars, music,
resources, broadcasts,
and books**

**Christ Church, Derry,
first Wednesday Recital**

**Date: Wednesday, 5th February
2025. Time: 5:00 PM**

**Location: Christ Church, Derry,
Infirmary Road**

Join an enchanting evening of
music as **Joanna Higgins,**

January 31, 2025

acclaimed soprano, performs a stunning collection of French songs. She will be accompanied by the talented Dr. Derek Collins on piano.

Experience the beauty of French melodies brought to life in this captivating recital – the perfect midweek treat for music lovers! Admission: Free with retiring collection.

Arts Council NI funding

The Council says - We have announced funding of £159,999 to support twenty arts and community organisations across Northern Ireland in delivering a series of community-based arts projects benefitting older people.

The funding is part of the National Lottery Arts and Older People Programme, a pioneering initiative funded by The National Lottery and Public Health Agency, which aims to tackle loneliness as-well as promote positive mental health and well-being among older people, through engagement with the arts.

Find out more -

<https://artscouncil-ni.org/news/older-people-benefit-from-arts-funding-for-creative-projects>

Let's be Pilgrims of Hope during Jubilee 2025

What does that mean?

Find out more about the theme that underpins this journey of faith and action.

<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/jubilee-2025>

Perspective

An Episcopalian responds to President Trump

1. Much like those who do not want you to be president, you do not get to decide whether a bishop's office is legitimate. She was chosen by the people of her diocese to be their bishop. Then, she was granted consent to be a bishop by other bishops and standing committees of our church's dioceses. Beginning by calling her a "so-called" bishop is an obvious low blow to discredit her as a person, rather than what she actually said that you disagree with. The Episcopal Church was legitimate enough to hold your third wedding, the funeral of Melania's mother, and the baptism of your son, Barron. Barron also attended an Episcopal day school. Now you have an issue with how we do things when it doesn't go your way?

2. You didn't have an issue with politics being brought into the church by the ministers who spoke at your inauguration, or by yourself for that matter. They were blatantly partisan, crediting God for your political success: "Mr President, the last four years there were times I'm sure you thought it was pretty dark, but look what God has done," Franklin Graham said.

3. She wasn't nasty in tone, plain and simple. I can't remember ever hearing a homily given in such a gracious manner and calm tone. If you disagree, listen to her speak. You may disagree with what she said, but her tone was in no way "nasty." Additionally, insulting her intelligence, rather than quoting what you disagreed with, is a very typical play coming from a narcissist.

4. The vast majority of people who have committed crimes in the US are US citizens. Defending yourself about being asked to have mercy on immigrants by saying a "large number of illegal migrants came into our country and killed people" is a gross misrepresentation and does not make sense. By that logic, we should be locking up or deporting all Americans because the majority of crimes were committed by citizens. We do need to improve our immigration system, but scripture commands us as Christians to have mercy. Mercy is a central tenet of our faith. Matthew 5:7 says "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Leviticus 19: 33-34 says, "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God." If you have a take issue with this, take it up with God.

5. Saying the service was boring and uninspiring is a move to discredit the event, rather than what specifically was said. However, it's worth mentioning that the purpose of a service is not to be "exciting". There are several purposes for our services, such as honoring God, bringing us closer to God, and being in community with one another. Being "exciting" is

not one of them. As far as inspiration goes, that is in the eye of the beholder. You get as much out of it as you put into it.

6. The bishop does not owe you an apology. Our church does not owe you an apology. All you were asked to do is what scripture directly asks us to do. If you could quote one thing she asked of you that isn't asked of us in scripture, we would apologise. Someone recently reminded me of something I often heard growing up in church. If you are offended by a minister's sermon or feel that it was a personal attack, look to see if you can find anything they said that was out of line with scripture and the teachings of Jesus. If you can't, that feeling is what we call, "being convicted of your sin". The fact you are so offended by what was said shows you know there is truth in it. To your supporters who also feel offended by it, the same goes.

In the media

Irish Stew

London Times editorial on President Higgins's Holocaust address

Michael D Higgins, the president of Ireland, had one function on Auschwitz Memorial Day : to mourn the brutal slaughter of millions of Jews, gassed, beaten, starved and worked to death. He could have expanded the brief to include the Poles and Roma, the physically handicapped and the children killed in medical experiments.

But this is not the president's way. Instead he chose to lecture his audience, to draw a line between the systematic Nazi murders and the current war in Gaza, an Israeli bombing campaign against the Hamas terror group. It was a masterpiece of false equivalence, one they should make the republic peer more closely into its darkest corners.

Ireland's Jewish leaders - the community numbers barely 3,000- had warned in advance that the president was a poor choice for the day of remembrance given his past "grave insensitivity to Irish Jews". The ceremony went ahead anyway in the Mansion House in Dublin; some silent protestors turned their backs and were shunted out.

The conflation of the savage misery of Auschwitz with the current war in the Middle East was more than another flash of Higginish clumsiness. It reflect the paradox of a country that, while projecting itself as a soft power bastion in a Europe at war, remains a huffing and puffing bystander on the big issues.

Ireland is a neutral state with an underfunded defence budget, a glorified tax haven that is too dependent on the whims of the new US president, and an erratic foreign policy.

Fed up with Dublin's Gaza posturing, Israel's foreign minister Gideon Sa'ar declared that Ireland's action was aimed at "delegitimising the Jewish state". Ireland was the last European state to host an Israeli embassy. Now almost three decades later it is the first EU state to close one, joining North Korea and Somalia in this notorious club.

January 31, 2025

In December its government called on the International Court of Justice to broaden the definition of genocide to include Israel's military actions in Gaza. In the leaders' debate before the last election all the candidates agreed that Ireland should boycott Israel.

These postures have deep historical roots. During the Second World War there was the warped notion held by some that Britain's enemy must be, in some sense, Ireland's ally. The Irish Republican Army leadership seemed to believe that a German victory in the Second World War would bring about a united Ireland, and conspired with German intelligence in planning an anti-British operation.

And on May 2, 1945 the taoiseach Eamon de Valera hastened to give his condolences to the German legation in Dublin on the death of Adolf Hitler.

Ireland's rulers seem to believe that the country still has a historical and sentimental duty to champion the underdog, to fight the colonial overlord. For a while this even brought together the Provisional IRA with the bomb makers of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

Times have changed however, and Ireland has become the most dogmatic of neutral states at a time when neutrality is losing its strategic meaning in Europe (Finland and Sweden have long since joined Nato).

To reinvent itself, the country needs a president with imagination, dignity and sensitivity. Mr Higgins would do well to study the careful phrasing and choreography surrounding the King's visit to Krakow and Auschwitz"

In response a commentator wrote -

There is one factual error in the editorial: Israel chose to close its embassy in Dublin because of Ireland's attitude towards Israel. Ireland didn't close the embassy, the Israeli ambassador to Ireland remains the Israeli ambassador to Ireland and Israel hasn't closed the Irish embassy in Tel Aviv.

This editorial will be read with interest in

- the US State Department and possibly in the White House, in the chanceries and foreign ministries of Europe and beyond,
- in the headquarters of the US tech giants which play such a major role in the Irish economy and its tax revenues
- by people in Northern Ireland, Britain and elsewhere contemplating the prospect of unity with an Irish republic which has now become obsessed with opposing Israel, the only democratic state in the Middle East and the only Jewish majority state in a world which has over 50 Muslim majority states.

The good news is that President Higgins will complete his second seven-year term of office in November 2025. The bad news is that Ireland lacks an obvious candidate to succeed him who is untainted by Higginism."

January 31, 2025

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

Church News Ireland

www.churchnewsireland.org

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

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