

# Church News Ireland

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# Image of the day – A Derry new year

And Fireworks on the Foyle

## News

### Christmas concert in New Ross raises funds for Special Olympics

**St. Mary's Church of Ireland was the place to be last Thursday, where Trad House New Ross, a traditional Irish music group, while promoting music lessons that won't break the bank, performed a variety of Christmas songs and trad music.**

The sing-a-long concert was filled with eager and enthusiastic children who were only delighted to show off their musical talents along with special guests, New Ross and District Pipe Band.

For some of the children, it was their stage debut and their first time performing in front of a crowd, and they performed brilliantly. And after their lively rendition of Jingle Bells, it summoned in the presence of a very special visitor, Santa Claus, who brought the concert to a close.

In total, €1,567.85 was raised, in which all proceeds are in of the New Ross Special Olympics group for the 2nd year. A donation was also made to St. Mary's Church for the kind letting of their space.

Trad House New Ross operates in the old CBS primary school every Friday from 5.30 p.m. until 9.30 p.m. and Saturday from 3.50 p.m. until 5.50 p.m. and offers group class in a variety of instruments such as the fiddle, banjo, mandolin, tin whistle, flute, concertina, button accordion, bodhrán and guitar.

Classes are available for all ages included adults, from the age of 5 and up. Solo lessons are also available throughout the week. For more information, contact Ellie on 086-4528226. Report courtesy Jessica O'Connor in the New Ross Standard. Photo gallery at - [\[https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wexford/new-ross-news/christmas-concert-in-new-ross-raises-funds-for-special-olympics/a535725274.html\]](https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wexford/new-ross-news/christmas-concert-in-new-ross-raises-funds-for-special-olympics/a535725274.html)

## Cathedral Calls

### Cathedral choristers among Grand Opera House's one million theatregoers

**The Boys' and Girls' Choirs of St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast, enjoyed Peter Pan at the Grand Opera House as a thank-you for their amazing hard work this year, especially over the Christmas season.**

Just over three years ago, in October 2021, the Grand Opera House reopened its doors post-restoration and welcomed audiences back to the Theatre.





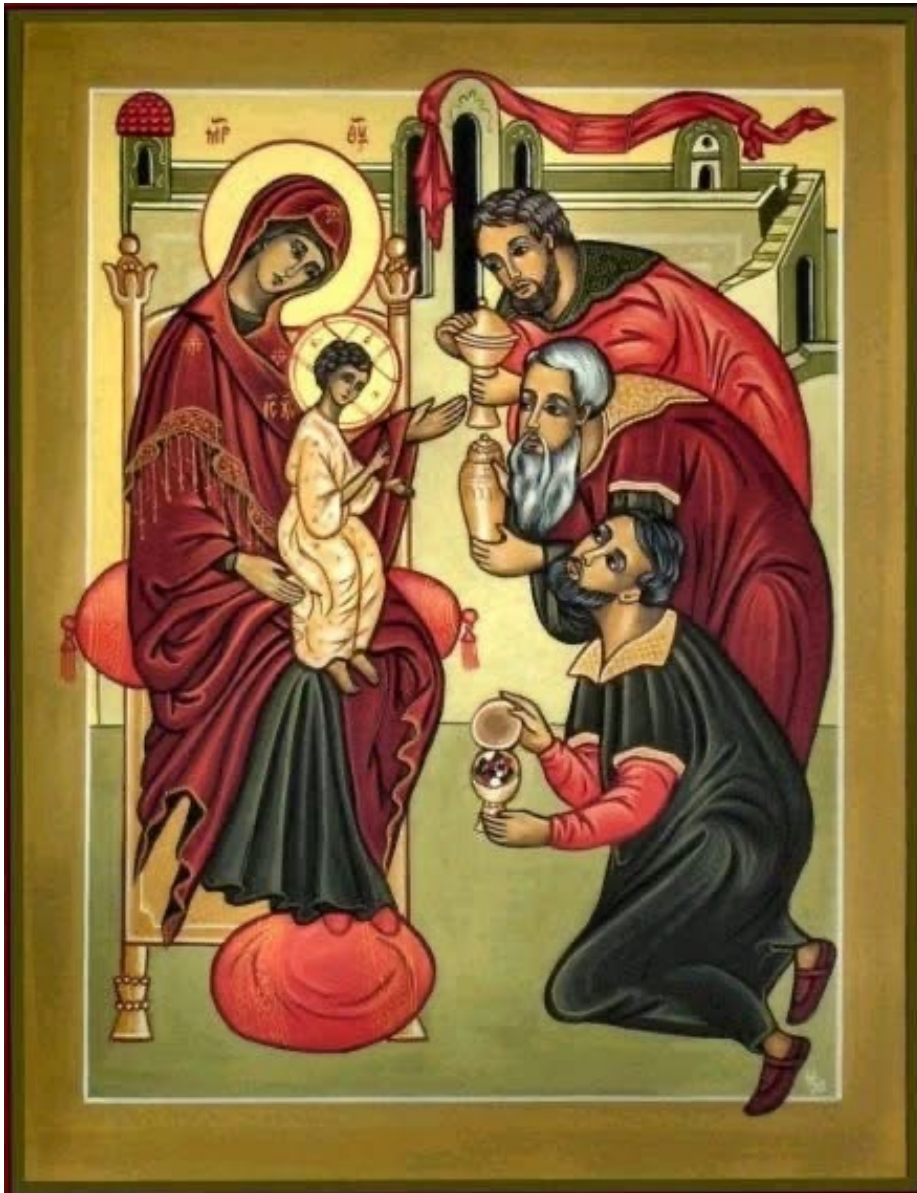




Since then, 1 million theatregoers have visited to enjoy outstanding musicals, drama, comedy, opera, dance, family shows and record-breaking pantomimes.



“A huge thank you for your continued support and we look forward to welcoming you to even more spectacular shows at your Grand Opera House in the future”.



## **Derry music for Epiphany**

**Yesterday at 4pm, St Columb's Cathedral Chamber Choir sang at a special service, Carols of the Epiphany, with music by Bach, Cornelius, Mendelssohn and Stopford.**

The Epiphany Sunday service of Choral Eucharist at 11am was sung by the Cathedral Choirs of Boy Choristers and Lay Clerks. Music included Richard Shephard's Wiltshire Service and Edward Elgar's Ave Verum.

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# Clergy and ministry

## Christmas Carol for Bishop's anniversary

**Written by Peter Stobart, Who is this Baby? is a Christmas Carol performed at this year's Service of Nine Lessons and Carols at St Fin Barre's Cathedral to celebrate Bishop Paul Colton's 25 years in the Episcopate.**



The words are taken from the sermon preached by Bishop Paul on Christmas Day 2016.

These stories were told and recorded to answer the question 'who is this Jesus born in Bethlehem?'.



There is no shell hole or hell hole where the love of God cannot reach. There is no darkness too dark; for he is the light who 'shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.' Alleluia.

Who is this baby, and what does he mean for us in our time?

He is Jesus, Saviour, Messiah and Lord. He is 'the Christ.' He is son of man, and son of God. He is Lord, Redeemer, the Way, Truth and Life; the light of the world; the star of Bethlehem, and Prince of Peace. Alleluia.

The Carol is available on YouTube.

## Recently ordained clerics on Sunday Sequence

**The panellists on yesterday's Sunday Sequence on BBC Radio Ulster were the Revd Leah McKibben (Ballynahinch Methodist), Fr Conor McGrath (Ballyhackamore Parish, Down & Connor), Revd Stu Armstrong (Curate in Charge of St Saviour's, Craigavon) and the Revd Paul Lutton (Newtownbreda Presbyterian).**

The episode is entitled 'First steps in the path of the fisherman' and features three recently ordained clerics telling Audrey Carville of their hopes, dreams and fears as they anticipate a life in ministry. It is available on the customary web site.



## Canon Charles Kenny

**The death has occurred of Canon Charles John Kenny.**

Born in 1939, Canon Charles Kenny was a graduate of QUB (BA 1961, M Ed 1978) and following studies at CITC he was made deacon in 1969 and served in St Paul's, Belfast. He



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was head of RE at Grosvenor High School, Belfast from 1971 - 1984.

He served as Vicar Choral at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast with Dean Jack Shearer from 1994 to 2000 when he retired. More recently he was one of the cathedral's assisting organists from 2022 to 2023. He completed the LGSM in 1974.

Changing Attitudes Ireland commented, "We are saddened to hear of the sudden passing of our former secretary and committee member, Canon Charles Kenny. We are grateful for Charles' service, support and contribution to the aims of Changing Attitude Ireland. He was a vocal advocate for same-sex relationships and same-sex marriage.

"There are also many Christians who recognise that loving relationships can obtain between persons of the same sex, who feel that nearly all human beings can be called to relationships of "mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other..." (as the Book of Common Prayer puts it), that any truly loving relationship is pleasing to God."

Charles was pre-deceased by his wife. His funeral will take place at 11:45am on Wednesday 15 January 2025 at the Church of St John the Evangelist, 141 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 6SX.

## **Ruth C. Duck: Theologian, poet and hymnist**

**Houston McKelvey writes - I was saddened this weekend to learn that Ruth Carolyn Duck had died albeit peacefully from pneumonia on December 26 with loved ones near her.**

Ruth was a close friend of my director of studies the late Linda Vogel at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary at Evanston near Chicago. I share here the message from the seminary. It is an accurate insight to the lady I enjoyed meeting and whose talents enhanced immensely the worship of God by innumerable people -

Born in Washington D.C. on November 21, 1947 to Jesse Thomas Duck and Louise Farmer Duck, Ruth grew up in Washington and in Annapolis, MD. At the age of sixteen she and her family moved to Memphis, TN where she learned of the ministry of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and soon became clear about the injustice of racism. She received her BA from Southwestern at Memphis University (now Rhodes College) in 1969, a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from Chicago Theological Seminary in 1973, a Master of Arts (M.A.) from the University of Notre Dame in 1987, and a Doctor of Theology (Th.D.) degree from Boston University School of Theology in 1989. Her academic work focused on liturgy, worship, and the Trinitarian baptismal formula.

An ordained minister in the United Church of Christ (UCC), pastor at several UCC churches in earlier years in the Midwest, a liturgical theologian and professor of worship who taught for twenty-seven years at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, Ruth was best known as the writer of some two hundred published hymn texts and psalm paraphrases. Her hymns appear in numerous hymnals and supplements; she is often among



those who have contributed the largest number of hymns in a given hymnal. She was a pioneer in the use of inclusive language that embraces everyone and enlarges our images of God in both hymn texts and other elements of Christian worship. All of her hymns are deeply scriptural, arising from Ruth's deep biblical knowledge. In addition, Ruth's sense of multiculturalism enabled issues of justice, equality, and care for God's creation to shape her creative crafting of hymns and worship resources.

Ruth was a life member of The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, which named her a Fellow in 2013, in recognition of her pioneering work in inclusive language for worship and her preeminence as a hymn poet and teacher.

She was a member and former president of the North American Academy of Liturgy; in 2018, she received its highest honor, the prestigious Berakah Award, that recognized her long-term contributions to liturgical scholarship and practice.

Ruth enjoyed her travels to many countries worldwide, lecturing, leading worship, and offering mentoring workshops on worship and hymnwriting. She has written and edited numerous books, articles, and worship resources about and for Christian worship. In the last seven years of her life, Ruth was a resident of Pilgrim Place, an intentional continuing care retirement community in Claremont, California.

Preceded in death by members of her small family, Ruth will be missed by cousins Elene and Larry Cooper, many loving friends, and numerous students, all of whom benefited from

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the gift of her hymns, her worship leadership, her teaching, and her inspiring life. A celebration of her life with singing of some of her hymns will take place in Decker Hall at Pilgrim Place in Claremont on Saturday Feb. 22, 2025, at 3 pm. The service will be live streamed and available afterwards online. To join the Zoom service: ZOOM ID: 832 0687 4402 Passcode: 996713 go to - [\[https://www.garrett.edu/ruth-c-duck-theologian-poet-and-hymnist/\]](https://www.garrett.edu/ruth-c-duck-theologian-poet-and-hymnist/) scroll down.

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

### Bonhoeffer's Final Days - 80 Year Anniversary tour in Germany

**So what really happened to Bonhoeffer? Author John McCabe has spent ten years researching the details of Bonhoeffer's final week and is pleased to offer this chance to imagine together the events of eighty years ago.**

“We will have the chance to enjoy all the amenities of excellent hotels, combining these with optional reflection and worship as we explore the Germany of Bonhoeffer and Klemperer. Starting in Berlin, and travelling on via Bonhoeffer's birthplace Wrocław, a section of our route will re-trace as closely as feasible the slow and winding journey made by Bonhoeffer and companions in the cramped, wood-burning Grüne Minna Police van. In order to anchor



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the experience in a wider German resistance setting, the tour will also encompass connections with Jewish diarist Viktor Klemperer, who happened to be in Regensburg on the same day as Bonhoeffer, with a visit to Klemperer's Dresden. The tour concludes by joining the 80 Year anniversary service in Flossenbürg."

Tour leaders, Rev Dr John McCabe and Rev Pippa Ross-McCabe, are experienced pilgrims and have worked with McCabe Tour Manager Sarah Reynolds to design this journey. "We are all looking forward to returning to Germany and joining new pilgrims in appreciating its turbulent history, enduring spirituality, and beautiful landscapes".

Prices from £2,995 pp Single Supplement £445

Next available tour: 01-04-2025

Tour leader: Revd Dr John McCabe

Call us or email us to find out more on

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McCabe Pilgrimages

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## Heritage

### 'The Quaich'- Scotland's traditional drinking vessel

**The word Quaich comes from the Gaelic 'cuach' meaning cup. Scotland's traditional cup of friendship or**



**love, used for celebratory occasions and often used to toast the New Year with whisky.**

This Quaich in the National Museum of Scotland dated 1746, was given to Flora MacDonald by Prince Charles Edward Stuart, also known as Bonnie Prince Charlie. Flora MacDonald (1722 – 1790) is famous for helping Bonnie Prince Charlie escape to France, after the Battle of Culloden in 1746.

The history surrounding the Quaich is part of a rich tapestry of Scottish ritual, folklore, and mystique. A popular theory suggests the shape is traditionally derived from the scallop shell, used by pilgrims in medieval times to drink water from springs and streams.



(Photo credit: National Museum of Scotland).

## In the media

### Religion has been in decline. This Christmas seems different - New York Times

**In March, I drove with my family up from Rome into the mountains of southeastern Umbria, to reach the town of Norcia and the monastery — now an abbey; it's been promoted since our visit — of St. Benedict on the Mountain, a community of Benedictine monks perched above a wide valley that was then just greening with the spring, Ross Douthat writes in the New York Times.**

The monks of Norcia are, as monks go, not obscure. They brew beer, they have a chant album, they were profiled in The Times in a story about their region's recovery from the terrible 2016 earthquakes. They also feature prominently in Rod Dreher's 2017 case for Christian retrenchment and renewal, "The Benedict Option" — for understandable reasons, since Norcia is the birthplace of Western monasticism, the home of St. Benedict, the place where medieval Christendom arguably got its start.

And it is a peculiarly resonant place to visit in this particular moment. Christianity in Europe, even in Catholic Italy, has been declining for generations, and now in the wake of de-Christianization comes depopulation. The countryside

around the monastery is emptying, with picturesque villas and ancient hill towns vacant — a process accelerated in Norcia by the toll of the earthquake, but part of a general phenomenon across an Italy that's growing ever older and having ever fewer kids.

Yet here sits a thriving abbey with its youthful monks, drawing pilgrims while its Benedictines pray the ancient Latin of the Roman church. It's not the fall of the Roman Empire all over again, but there is a strange rhyming quality, a similar sense of death and rebirth.

Every Christmas I try to write a column on religion, and over the years they've often circled themes of challenge, struggle and decline. In an essay this week on the discovery of God, my colleague David Brooks jokes that "entering the church in 2013 was like investing in the stock market in 1929," and something similar might be said about becoming a Catholic newspaper columnist 15 years ago: Traditional religious institutions have been scandal-racked and fractured throughout my years at this paper — suffering through an early 21st-century ebb tide, if not quite a vast withdrawing roar.

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This Christmas seems different. There is statistical evidence that the latest wave of secularization has reached some sort of limit. There is suggestive cultural evidence that secular liberalism has lost faith in itself, that many people miss not just religion's moral vision but also its metaphysical

horizons, that the arguments for religious belief might be getting a new hearing. Notre-Dame de Paris has been rebuilt from its ashes. I rashly predicted a religious revival earlier this year, and at the very least I expect religious trends in the later 2020s to be different from the trends of the 2010s.

But different probably means really different, not just a return to what existed in the past. The last bastions of the before times, the old religious establishments, are likely to remain in existential trouble.

For instance, Catholic Poland, one of Europe's last hubs of intense national religion, seems to be following the same de-Christianizing path as Ireland and Quebec and Italy. The American Protestant Mainline isn't about to leap up from its sickbed, nor is an all but expired Anglicanism in Britain. Likewise, groups such as the Southern Baptists and the Mormons, fast growing a few decades ago and struggling today, aren't going to automatically rebound or boom again.

Instead, any growth is likely to be nondenominational, subcultural (think Latin Mass Catholics or converts to Eastern Orthodoxy or communally oriented Protestants), mystical and sui generis, with notable flowerings in places where traditional faith has rarely grown before (like in the tech industry, say).

As part of my larger bet-on-America theory of the future, I expect any renewed religious vitality to spread from the United States back to the older Christendom of Europe. (The abbey in Norcia is a case study: Its founding Benedictines were a group of entrepreneurial Americans



whose community has since added European brothers, as well.)

And I also expect a stringency that the old religious establishments in their dotage conspicuously lacked. On our first night above Norcia, we took our kids to Compline, the evening installment of the daily monastic cycle. The prayers took 20 minutes or so; it was lovely, we trooped off to dinner, and one of the monks suggested that I wake up and join them for the beginning of their daily cycle, Matins, which they were scheduled to pray at roughly 2:30 a.m.

Sure, I can get up and pray for 20 minutes and then collapse back into bed, I thought confidently.

So I set my alarm and rose and shuffled to the chapel in the wee hours ...

... and almost two hours of Latin prayers later, I staggered back out into the starry Italian night, thankful to God for the experience, but also concerned that a real religious revival might not entirely be for me.

Merry Christmas.

## Poem for today

### Lovers on Aran

By Seamus Heaney

The timeless waves, bright, sifting, broken glass,

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Came dazzling around, into the rocks,  
Came glinting, sifting from the Americas

To possess Aran. Or did Aran rush  
to throw wide arms of rock around a tide  
That yielded with an ebb, with a soft crash?

Did sea define the land or land the sea?  
Each drew new meaning from the waves' collision.  
Sea broke on land to full identity.

## 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

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