

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Rev Sam's 89 mile walk along St Patrick's Way

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Rev Sam's 89 mile walk along St Patrick's Way

Rev Sam, the rector of Comber was uplifted by the support of folk who contributed at Comber's Farmers' Market to Rev Sam's 89 mile Time to Walk



from 13th to 16th March along St Patrick's Way to raise funds for renovations required to the church tower built in 1840.

The tower is a landmark, a clock and a bell to orientate and call to worship for the folks of Comber.

If you would like to sponsor Sam he and his support team would be delighted and very appreciative. You can donate online www.stmarysparishcomber.com/walk or use the QRCode. The church office is open Monday, Wednesday

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and Thursday 9.30am to 1pm if you wish to drop in with a donation.

Prayers very welcome too especially for 13th to 16th March.

News

Operation Christmas Child thanks Lisburn parish for its generosity

The Operation Christmas Child Team have expressed their thanks to St. Paul's Parish Church, Lisburn for its efforts and generosity prior to Christmas last year.

Darryl Nesbitt Samaritans Purse Volunteer Relations and Ireland Manager wrote to the parish -

“We wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for taking part and generously donating shoeboxes to the Operation Christmas Child appeal in 2023. Across Northern Ireland 24,490 shoeboxes were donated which contributed to the 237,735 shoeboxes collected from across the UK.

“Three lorries left Northern Ireland in December and safely arrived in Moldova and Bosnia. Your treasure-filled shoeboxes were gratefully received by children.

“**Corina's story**

“All Corina wanted for Christmas was a pink piglet with sparkling eyes that she saw in a shop window. As Moldova



Archbishop Dermot Farrell (left) said that he had asked the Pope for an auxiliary to assist him “in light of the rapidly changing needs of the archdiocese”. The prelate pointed out that the diocese has a population of 1.5 million, two-thirds of whom identify as Catholic, spread over 197 parishes. <https://www.irishcatholic.com/aux-bishop-elect-praises-dublins-strength-in-challenging-times/>

is the most struggling economy in Europe, her mum explained to her that like many other families, she didn't have a lot of money. Corina's mum promised if there was enough money left over then she would purchase the piglet for Corina. Christmas passed and unfortunately, there was no money left to purchase the piglet. One day Corina received an invitation from a local church to attend an outreach event. At this event, Corina heard about Jesus' love for her and received a shoebox gift. When she opened her shoebox, she was stunned, inside was a pink piglet with

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sparkling eyes. In Corina's joy, she began to cry, this was all she wanted for Christmas. Corina's mum was also overjoyed, she thanked everyone and said, "Truly God knows what we need and what we want, the proof is today's shoeboxes."

"I would also like to take this opportunity to invite you and your group to consider coming along to our Operation Christmas Child Processing Centre during the third week of November. This takes place in Newtownards and is where we gather all the shoeboxes from across NI and prepare them for final shipment. This is a great fun activity. If you would like to hear more information please do not hesitate to contact me and I can share more about how you can be involved. We are also available for speaking engagements in 2024, please do not hesitate to contact us regarding this.

"We are already planning for 2024 and hope that you will join us once again in packing shoeboxes later this year".

Story theme at C of I Youth Forum

How can the Church convince young people that God loves them?' This was the question put to young people from across the Church of Ireland who participated in the CIYD Youth Forum at the end of January.

The focus of this year's Forum, which took place over two days in Dromantine Conference Centre, Newry, was on maintaining positive mental health and the importance of story – their own story, listening to other stories, and the story of the Gospel.

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The annual CIYD Youth Forum was facilitated by Susie Mapledoram, Diocesan Youth Officer for the Diocese of Manchester, with special guests Mark Wells (Bible Society in Northern Ireland) and Ben Jones (Missional Generation).

You can read all about it on the Dublin diocesan website here: <https://dublin.anglican.org/news/2024/03/05/how-can-the-church-convince> attached.

Snapshots of MU literacy classes in Burundi

Literacy classes have been transforming lives in Burundi for over twenty years. But the benefits go far beyond the ability to read and write.



To put it into numbers...

👉 165,000 people (77% women) have participated in the programme in some of the most disadvantaged and hard to reach communities.



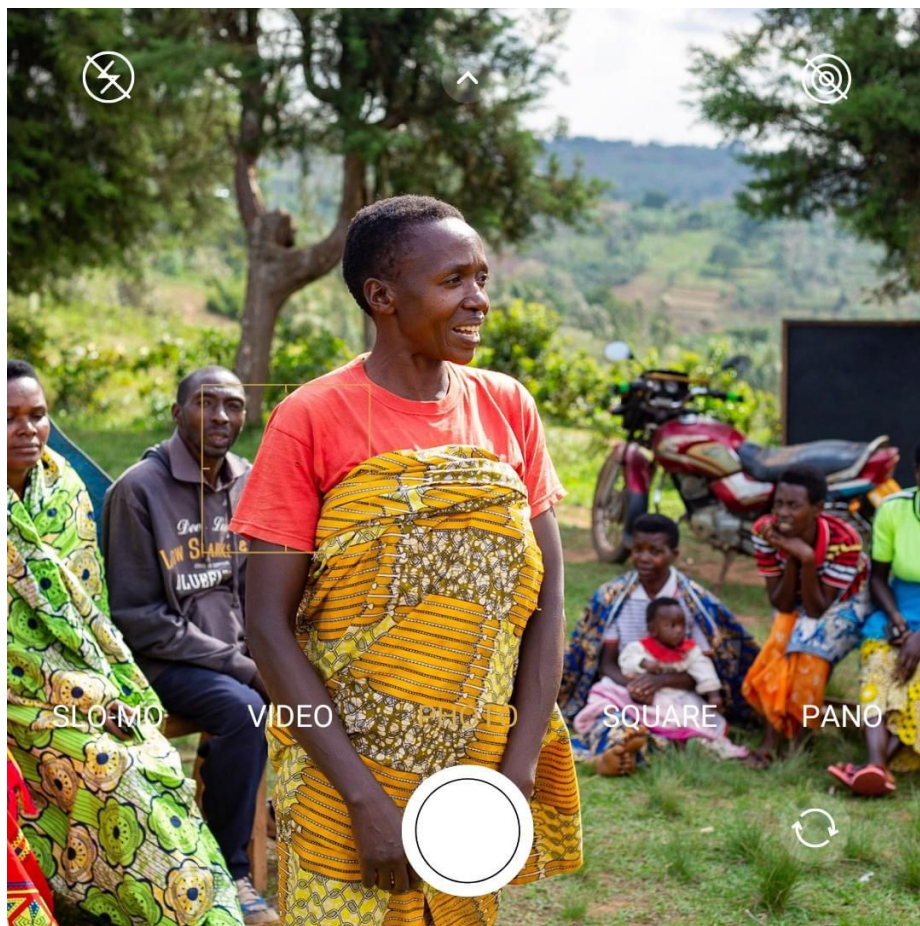
👉 Over 144,00 have learned to read and write and now have formal literacy qualification.

👉 96% of attendees can now afford health insurance, and 88% of female participants have seen an increase in their income. 👉 98%

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of participants can now read the Bible - changing their relationship with God and the local church.

Literacy is key to investing in women and girls and accelerates progress dramatically.



Want to find out more?

Go to mothersunion.org/BurundiReport

Credits: Taking Pictures, Changing Lives

Treasurer (65) admits cashing cheques from church account

A church treasurer has admitted abusing his position of trust to cash cheques for his own benefit.

Edwin Reginald Wallace (65) entered a guilty plea to the single charge against him when he appeared at Newry Crown Court on Thursday.

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The 65-year-old, treasurer of Clonallon/Warrenpoint Parish Church in Co Down, cashed cheques from the parish bank account between August 13, 2019, and October 12, 2021.

Defence counsel Kevin O'Hare applied for sentencing to be adjourned to allow time for a pre-sentence probation report to be compiled.

He also suggested the matters could be dealt with after the Easter break.

Judge Paul Ramsey KC granted the application and adjourned the case to April 19.

Wallace, of Elmfield Villas in Warrenpoint, was freed on bail.

The judge told the fraudster it was in his interests to properly engage with probation services.

He added: "It's important to give them as much information as you can about your background and the circumstances of the offence, so that I have all the information before me when I come to sentence you".

Presbyterian Church in Ireland in recruitment drive to seek out new ministers

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is holding an open day for those interested in becoming a congregational minister writes Billy Kennedy in the News Letter.

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The 'Minister Taster Day' at Union theological college in Belfast next Saturday (March 16) is open for men and women thinking about becoming ordained Presbyterian ministers and who feel God is leading them in this direction.

Encouraging anyone who would like to find out more about becoming a minister in PCI to attend, the Rev Professor David Leach, the church's director for ministry, said one would be surprised at the different backgrounds ministerial candidates come from.

"Over the years I have had many conversations with people thinking about God's call on their lives. They come from a wide background. Our current cohort of students is reflective of that."

Professor Leach, began his working life as a primary school teacher in east Belfast, before training to become a minister.

"We recognise that the Lord leads people in different ways, and at various stages in their lives.

"The 'Ministry Taster Day' is for anyone in the wider Presbyterian family considering ordained ministry to begin to investigate the opportunity.

"We are constantly in need of ministers and have many vacancies across Ireland, so we want to support those who are sensing God's call on their lives and want to help them explore that."

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Those attending the event will hear from Union College staff on what it is to study theology, Biblical languages, and how that applies in everyday life and work in the context of a local church.

“There will also be interviews with ministry trainees at different stages on the path towards ordination, and with parish ministers about ministering in 21st century Ireland.”

Professor Leach explained that from seeking nomination as a candidate for the ordained ministry, to being eligible to being called to a congregation as a minister, normally takes around six years.

“The application process takes a year, and if accepted, is usually followed by three years of study and 26 months as a full-time assistant in a congregation.”

Currently, the Irish Presbyterian church has more than 500 congregations, served by just over 300 ministers. Its ordained ministry is open to men and women on an equal basis. Upwards of 50 people have signed up for the March 16 event.

Andrew Ferguson, who did not grow up a Presbyterian, is now a third-year ministry student: “I had begun to explore my sense of call to ministry before attending the taster day, but the event was a great opportunity to hear more about Union College and the training pathway to ministry.”

Andrew is now a student assistant at Saintfield Road church in Belfast.

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“I enjoyed my time at Union College, with the broad variety of modules and friendships that I have formed with fellow students, and would encourage those who have a sense of ministry to attend the ‘Taster Day’ as it gives a flavour of what is involved,” added Andrew.

Anyone wishing to attend the event can register by emailing Rev Professor David Leach at Union College:
d.leach@union.ac.uk

Cathedral call

Dublin cathedrals on BBC Radio this week

Radio listeners around the world will have the opportunity to listen to services from both Dublin cathedrals next week.

On Wednesday March 13 the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, will sing Evensong live on BBC Radio 3. Meanwhile on St Patrick’s Day (Sunday March 17) the BBC’s weekly Sunday service will come from St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin.

Choral Evensong on BBC Radio 3 is broadcast around the world and is the BBC’s longest running outside broadcast programme, now in its 98th year. The Christ Church Cathedral Choir will sing music by Francis Jackson, Bairstow, and a specially commissioned work by former Organist, Jack Oades.

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Those wishing to attend are required to be seated by 3.45pm and are not permitted to leave during the service. There is no need to register. If you would like to listen at home, you can do so here on the day at 4pm and on Sunday March 17 at 3pm. The service will be available afterwards here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006tp7r>

Then on St Patrick's Day the BBC's weekly Sunday service will come from the Church of Ireland's National Cathedral and will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 from 8.10am and BBC Radio Ulster from 10.03am.

This Service of Matins, a traditional form of Anglican worship in mornings, will be introduced by the Dean of St Patrick's, the Very Revd Dr William Morton, and led by the Dean's Vicar, Canon Charles Mullen. The preacher will be Canon Simon Doogan, who is rector of Ballyholme parish in Bangor, County Down.

Music will be led by Stuart Nicholson, as Master of the Music, and the organist will be Dr Harry Meehan. The service will include an anthem by the Dublin-born composer Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924), who had connections with St Patrick's in his early years while growing up in the city.

The programme will be available to play back after broadcast at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001xcgx>



St Peter's Cathedral Music at St Genevieve's High School

Musical Director James and Rebecca from St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast, visited St Genevieve's High School last week for a workshop and auditions with the girls for their new Girls' Choir.

“We had such a fantastic response



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and are looking forward to working with the girls at the Cathedral soon! Huge thank you to Mrs Savage and Mrs McQuillan for their warm welcome!”

Support sought for Charles Wood Festival Saunders Scholarship

Theo Saunders (1957-2016) loved music. Throughout my brother’s life, he put music to work in Christian worship, writes his brother Tim in the News Letter.

As organist, choirmaster and teacher, he served in schools and churches on both sides of the Irish Sea.

But it was from St Patrick’s Cathedral, Armagh, that he made his greatest contribution.

Theo loved Armagh and the surrounding districts. He loved the land and its spiritual heritage and, above all, he loved its people.

Whether at worship, in local churches, or in support of voluntary action in the nearby townlands, Theo dedicated himself to the community which had been so kind to him.

Theo’s commitment to education, and his respect for heritage, made the Charles Wood Festival a precious part of his life.

Particularly important to him was the annual summer school, which enables musicians of different generations to work together.

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The school has therefore established the Theo Saunders Scholarship, which enables a young organist to attend the festival free of charge for a week, alongside the Charles Wood Singers and under the guidance of the artistic director.

I should like to invite Theo's many friends to consider making a donation to the scholarship.

The relevant bank account details are as follows: 15005046; 93-81-65.

Allied Irish Banks plc, Scotch Street, Dungannon, Co Tyrone.

Further information is available from the hon treasurer, Ms Patricia McAllister, of 7 Mellifont Park, Armagh, Co Armagh, BT61 9HS.

Tim Saunders, Caerdydd/Cardiff, Cymru/Wales

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Grants for post-primary school visits to NI War Memorial extended to R of I

The Northern Ireland War Memorial is pleased to offer FREE tours of the museum for local post primary school classes.

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Pupils can visit the museum to learn about Northern Ireland during the Second World War including the Belfast Blitz, the American presence, the Ulster Home Guard and the contribution of local industries to the war effort.

“As a charity we offer a Travel Grant of up to £200 per school to assist with transport costs to the museum. There are a limited number of grants available which will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

“For the first time we are also offering this Travel Grant to post primary schools based in the Republic of Ireland. Tours of the museum are particularly relevant to students studying the topic ‘The pursuit of sovereignty and the impact of partition, 1912-1949’ including the case study ‘Belfast during World War II’ on the Leaving Certificate History syllabus.

“For more information visit our website: <https://www.niwarmemorial.org/learning/post-primary> or contact our Partnerships and Engagement Lead Michael via email at outreach@niwarmemorial.org.”

MindMatters: Spring initiatives

Spring sees new initiatives commence for MindMatters.

Mindmatters has announced the commencement of their 2024 mental health awareness programme. This includes a new round of seed funding and an enhanced training programme, developed with the chair of the project, Bishop Pat Storey, and in partnership with the Representative

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Church Body. You are encouraged to visit the project website or email -

https://mindmatters.ireland.anglican.org/2024/03/05/spring-sees-new-initiatives-commence-for-mindmatters/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook

Belsize Square Synagogue Choral Shabbat

Friday Night Services live from Belsize Square Synagogue, London. 18.45

<https://youtu.be/SBGj7t-bfuQ>

If you would like to find out about upcoming events at the Synagogue please click www.synagogue.org.uk/programme

In the media

Shock upset in Ireland over family issues vote

Varadkar admits being given a ‘walloping’ by voters after resounding defeat in referendum, Michael Murphy writes

Leo Varadkar admitted Irish voters had given his government “two wallops” yesterday, after a shock upset led to a resounding defeat of his double referendum on changing the constitution’s language on family issues.

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Sixty-seven per cent of people voted against the family referendum and turnout for the votes was 44.36 per cent, a significant drop from the abortion referendum in 2018 which had a turnout of 64 per cent.

The highest “no” votes in the family referendum came in Laois-Offaly with 75.7 per cent, Mayo at 75.5 per cent and Longford-Westmeath with 74.6 per cent.

The Irish prime minister had pushed for proposals to modernise constitutional references to marriage being the foundation of the family and a “mother’s duties in the home”.

Mr Varadkar had pitched the referendum vote, held on Friday to coincide with International Women’s Day, as a chance to delete some “very old-fashioned, very sexist language about women”.

His government had urged the Irish public to not take a “step backwards” by voting No and polls suggested it would easily pass.

But even before the final results had been published, Mr Varadkar was forced to admit that the amendments were “defeated comprehensively on a respectable turnout”.

He said voters had delivered “two wallops” to the government.

“Clearly, we got it wrong,” he added. “While the old adage is that success has many fathers and failure is an orphan, I think when you lose by this kind of margin, there are a lot of people who got this wrong and I am certainly one of them.

“It was our responsibility to convince the majority of people to vote ‘yes’ and we clearly failed to do so.”

The referenda were the latest attempt to reflect the changing face of Ireland from a conservative, Roman Catholic country to an increasingly diverse and socially liberal society. The two proposals – called the family amendment and the care amendment – aimed to change the text of Article 41 in the Irish constitution, written in 1937.

The first asked citizens to expand the definition of family from those founded on marriage to also include “durable relationships” such as cohabiting couples and their children.

The second proposed replacing old-fashioned language around a mother’s “duties in the home” with a clause recognising care provided by family members to one another.

Carol Nolan, an Independent TD for Laois-Offaly, described the result as a “political earthquake” which showed “how far the Irish government is out of touch with ordinary people”.

Ms Nolan said the referenda were championed by a number of “unelected NGOs”, including the National Women’s Council of Ireland, and were as much about the “dominance that NGOs have in our current political system as about anything else”.

The constitution, the core legal text of the nation, can only be modified through a national referendum.

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Opinion polls had suggested support for the “yes” side on both votes, but many voters remained undecided as Friday’s polling neared and some said they found the issue too confusing or too hurried to change the constitution.

All the major political parties had supported a “Yes-Yes” vote and, until recently, polls predicted a smooth passage for both proposals.

But No campaigners argued the concept of “durable relationship” was undefined and that women and mothers were being “cancelled”.

Campaigners also said the changes could constitutionally protect polygamous relationships and increase immigration via migrant family reunions – claims all denied by the government. Mary Lou McDonald, the Sinn Fein leader, told reporters the government had failed to convince voters to vote “yes” by not consulting with the opposition “or with other stakeholders”.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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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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