

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – Rector does Elvis with his blue suede shoes**

## Image of the day



### **Rector does Elvis with his blue suede shoes**

**There was a standing ovation in St Canice's Church in Eglinton in Derry diocese, on Sunday evening, as Andy Rodgers brought his Elvis tribute performance to an end.**

For the previous hour and a half, the Coleraine man had treated his audience in Faughanvale Parish Church to many of Presley's best known Gospel songs - and some of his



greatest hits -  
in a set that  
spanned the  
entire duration  
of the star's  
career.

The  
performance –  
a fundraiser for  
the parish's  
Building Fund

– marked a  
return for the impersonator to a venue he had last  
performed in seven years ago. And it was a tribute to him  
that quite a few of the people who saw him in 2017 were  
back in St Canice's for this latest event.





The Rector of Faughanvale, Rev Canon Paul Hoey, got into the spirit of the evening – donning a pair of blue suede shoes specially for the occasion, and he



almost brought the house down when he appeared at the end of the performance in full Elvis costume. Describing it as "not quite a service and not quite a concert", Canon Hoey talked those present through Presley's religious upbringing, and pointed them to the strong religious influence that underlay many of Elvis's best known songs.

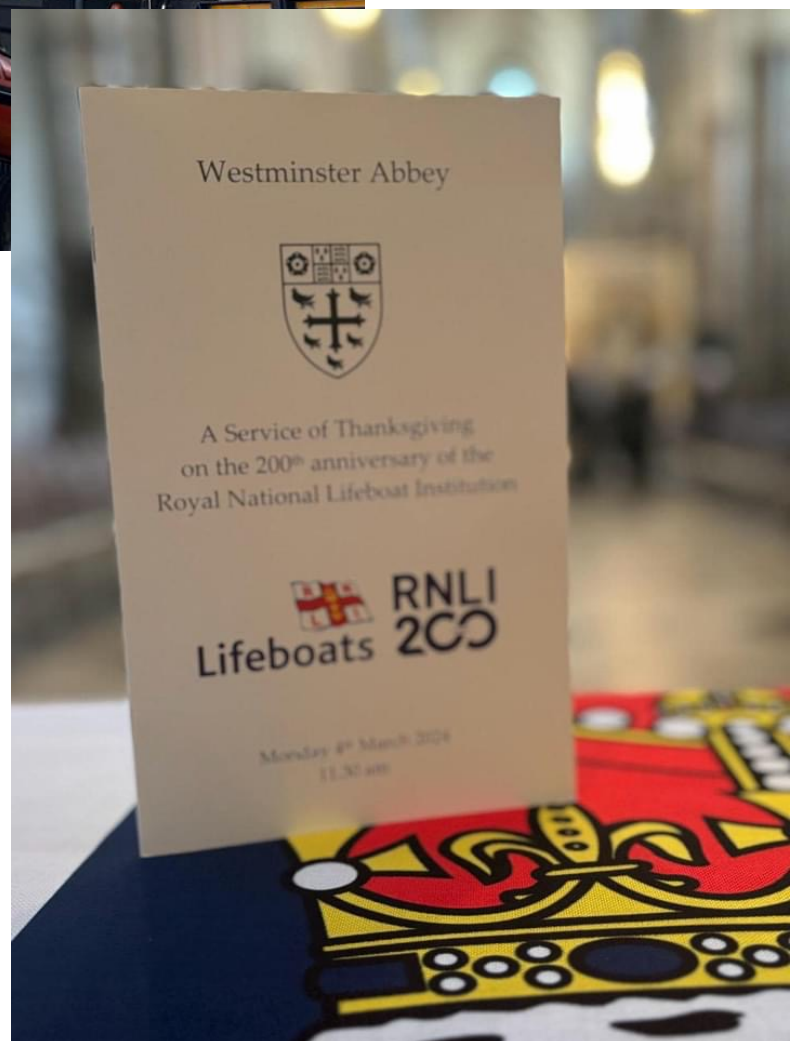


## News

# Royal National Lifeboat Institution 200th anniversary service at Westminster Abbey

**Yesterday morning Westminster Abbey welcomed volunteer lifeboat crews from across the UK and Ireland to a service marking the 200th anniversary of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.**

Ahead of the service,  
[Church News Ireland](#)



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three lifeboats were on display outside the Abbey:

- The William Riley, an oar-powered lifeboat built in 1909
- A D-class lifeboat, introduced to the RNLI fleet in 1963
- A modern, waterjet-propelled Shannon-class boat

## Down & Dromore Youth Week at Castlewellan

**Young people from Down & Dromore had a fantastic week at Castlewellan Castle Christian Conference Centre**

The team reports - “We had an amazing time with 180 people packed into the castle with a packed programme!

“Huge thanks to Logos Ministries International for coming and speaking to us and inspiring our



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young people to be those who call others to faith and those who recognise that what Jesus says is so important! “

Plenty of tired heads, body's and minds... Participants returned to all sleep night in their homes in the following parishes -

Belvoir Parish Church, St Saviour's Craigavon, Dromore Cathedral, St Philip and St James, Holywood Parish Church, Moneyreagh Community Church, Loughbrickland, Donaghmore & Scarva, St Mark's Newtownards, and Ballylesson.Church

## Scottish Parliament recognises church of John Knox in 900th anniversary year

**A motion has been laid in the Scottish Parliament celebrating the prominence of St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh as it celebrates 900 years.**



The poster for Union Theological College Open Days features a dark blue background. On the left, the text 'Open Days at Union' is displayed in a white serif font, with '2023 | 2024' in a small box below it. To the right, the title 'Union Theological College Open Days' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below the title, two dates and times are listed: 'Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 17.00 - 19.30' and 'Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May 10.00 - 12.30'. A photograph of a young man with dark hair, smiling, is positioned in the lower-left corner. In the bottom right corner, the Union Theological College logo and name are visible. A small 'JOIN US' section with text is located in the upper right area of the poster.

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St Giles' Cathedral was founded by King David I of Scotland in 1124 and was later at the centre of the Scottish Reformation when John Knox preached Protestantism from its pulpit in the 1500s.

Today it plays an important role as Scotland's national cathedral and was where the late Queen Elizabeth II lay at rest before her funeral in London. It later held the Honours of Scotland service for King Charles III after he was crowned at Westminster Abbey.

The motion from the Scottish Parliament recognises St Giles' as an "iconic" cathedral and says it has been "a

# We Invite You to Join Our Team.



**Agherton**  
Parish Church  
PORTSTEWART

## **Position Available:**

### **Pioneer Family Well-being Coordinator**

Part time: 15-20 hours per week

We are seeking an experienced person for this part time position to work with the Rector, Parish Nurses and volunteers within the Parish Ministry team. This position seeks to deliver support and care to families living in the Portstewart area.

Salary is commensurate with experience and qualifications (28k - 30k pro rata). There is a possibility, subject to approval, that the role may be extended to a full time post in conjunction with the Pioneer Ministry Project in the Church or Ireland.

Email [aghertonoffice@gmail.com](mailto:aghertonoffice@gmail.com) for an application pack. Closing date for returns is **Monday 18th March** at 12 noon.



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prominent part of the life of Edinburgh and Scotland for 900 years".

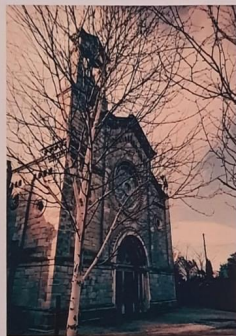
It recognises the cathedral's various projects that are "designed to reach out to people of all ages, backgrounds and faiths across the city".

The motion was laid down by Lothian MSP Miles Briggs and has been circulated for other MSPs to sign.

The Grouped Parishes of Sandford and St Philip's Milltown

## Choral Compline

a short service of evening prayer  
sung throughout



at Sandford Parish Church  
every Friday during Lent at 6 pm  
(23<sup>rd</sup> Feb, 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> March)

All are welcome to come to this beautiful  
meditative service, which provides a  
welcome respite from the busy Friday  
rush-hour

It states that 1.5 million people visited the cathedral from around the world last year alone, a statistic "underlining its status as a dynamic centre celebrating Scotland's heritage and culture, as well as being an active place of worship".

Commenting on the motion, Rev Dr George Whyte, the interim

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moderator of St Giles', said: "We very much appreciate the recognition given by the Scottish Parliament and we remain committed to continued service in the years ahead."

## Cathedral call



## We three deans

On Sunday 3rd March 2024, the Third Sunday of Lent, during Choral Evensong at Saint Mary's Cathedral, Limerick the Very Revd Canon Diane Machett, Dean of Tuam, was installed as the Prebend of Athnett in the Cathedral Chapter.

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Three Deans together in St Mary's Cathedral Limerick. Left: The Very Revd Richard Marsh, Dean of Killaloe Centre: The Very Revd Canon Diane Machett, Dean of Tuam. Right: The Very Revd Niall Sloane, Dean of Limerick. Photo - Stephen Fletcher.



## **Become a Workshop Facilitator at Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin**

The team sheet reads - “We’re on the lookout for freelance creatives in Music, Art, Drama, and History to bring magic to our school and family workshops. Get paid per session, and the frequency is all up to the demand!

“While we've spotlighted music, art, and drama, we're open to your fantastic ideas on other subjects for our Education Programme.

“Ready to inspire? Find out more:

<https://www.stpatrickscathedral.ie/workshop-facilitators/>

## Verger assistant referee

The choirs of Exeter and Truro challenged each other to a ‘friendly’ football match outside the Devon place of worship between Sunday’s morning Eucharist and evensong. It’s the first time the traditional fixture has been played since the end of the pandemic.

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



**International Organ Day is taking place on Saturday 20 April. King Charles writes.**

**How will you be celebrating?**



CLARENCE HOUSE

It is with the greatest pleasure that I welcome you to the Royal College of Organists' Organ Week and International Organ Day, a week-long exploration of the organ in its many guises in the United Kingdom, and culminating in a global celebration.

Mozart called the organ "The King of Instruments" and so it is fitting that it should be the only instrument which has a Royal College devoted to its advancement, and that it should enjoy the Patronage of Her Majesty The Queen.

Her Majesty Queen Victoria granted the College a Royal Charter in 1893 and, in 1939, my grandfather, His Majesty King George VI, consented to become its Patron. Today Her Majesty The Queen holds the title.

The College, formally established in March 1864, was the brainchild of City of London organist, Richard Limpus, who said:

"It will be readily admitted that, as a body, we do not hold the same position in the eyes of the world as the medical and legal professions. Yet mankind generally prefers music to either physic or law."

While I could not possibly comment on the relative merits of those very different callings, it is certainly true that music can provide both healing and peace and, as such, plays its own vital part in the wellbeing of our society.

As Patron of many church conservation charities, I have a great interest in this "Wondrous Machine", as Henry Purcell described the organ so memorably in his "Hail! Bright Cecilia". Its playing has been central to important national events for longer than any of us can remember. Therefore, I hope the forthcoming broadcasts will prove immensely enjoyable and that they may inspire some to consider taking lessons, as it is vital that we continue to produce the players who can ensure that the many splendid instruments with which this country is blessed can delight us in years to come.

As you celebrate this great occasion, I send my most heartfelt gratitude to the Royal College of Organists for its 157 years of dedicated service and, in thanking you all for your generous support, I can only wish you every possible success in the future.

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Organists around the world are invited to throw open venue doors to let music lovers across the globe hear your music and explore the instrument.

For resources and information on how you can get involved, from open days and workshops to recitals and performances, visit: <https://bit.ly/47wjl1J>

## **International Women's Day webinar 'Inspiring leadership.'**

**Bishop Vicentia Kgabe for the Diocese of Lesotho will be one of the special guests on our International Women's Day webinar 'Inspiring leadership.' Speaking recently about women in leadership she said:**

“They will have to blaze a trail, which won't be an easy process. They must be confident in themselves and believe that they are meant to lead and that they, too, belong in those rooms and spaces where important decisions are made, and love and care are shown.”

Friday 8 March – 10.00 UTC

Register today: <https://bit.ly/3wEmslc>

## **In the media**

**RTE - What new surveys reveal about religion and identity in Northern Ireland, by Gladys Ganiel**

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## **Analysis: 50% of people in Northern Ireland describe themselves as a practising Christian and one in five consider themselves to be evangelical**

**By Gladys Ganiel, Queens University Belfast**

The late preacher-politician Rev Ian Paisley casts a long shadow over this island's popular imagination as the embodiment of evangelicalism in Northern Ireland. As founder of the Free Presbyterian Church and the Democratic Unionist Party, Paisley's fusion of religion and politics was stark and apocalyptic, with Catholicism cast as an eternal enemy, the very anti-Christ.

Paisley frequently referred to Ulster as 'the last bastion of evangelical Protestantism in Western Europe'. Writing in the Protestant Telegraph in 1968, he asserted "we are the defenders of Truth in this Province and in this island. ... Ulster is the last bastion of Evangelical Protestantism in Western Europe; we must not let drop the torch of Truth at this stage of the eternal conflict between Truth and Evil."

Two new surveys confirm both the strength of evangelicalism and the unusually high levels of religious practice among both Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. But there are some surprising results in the surveys, commissioned by the Evangelical Alliance in Northern Ireland, around who evangelicals are, as well as their political views.

As the report puts it, 'more people go to church each week than attend a local football match in a year.'

One survey was a representative poll of the general public across Northern Ireland, conducted by Savanta ComRes (1,005 participants) and weighted by age, sex, and council region. This is the most comprehensive survey of religious identification, practice, and viewpoints in Northern Ireland in two decades. The other survey was a self-selecting online questionnaire distributed by the Evangelical Alliance, largely via email and its social media platforms. A total of 2,083 responded, mostly Protestant evangelicals.

While evangelicals' numerical strength might mean that they continue to constitute a 'bastion', these surveys confirm that it is a 'bastion' that is much more varied and complex than Paisley's rhetoric implied. Further, Northern Ireland remains much more religious than the Republic of Ireland, UK, and indeed Western Europe.

## **Religion still matters in Northern Ireland**

Church attendance in Northern Ireland has declined markedly since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. According to the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey in 1999, 77% of Catholics and 52% of Protestants attended religious services on a monthly or more basis. By 2019, both Catholics and Protestants recorded monthly or more attendance of around 46%.

By contrast in the Republic, monthly or more mass attendance has declined from about 80% in the 1990s to 28% by 2020. In the UK, there are more people of 'no religion' than there are of any religion, and less than 15% attend religious services on a monthly basis



The Savanta survey confirmed Northern Ireland's unusually high levels of religious practice. Some 50% of the entire population chose to describe themselves as practising Christians, with 36% reporting attending church on a monthly or more basis (23% on a weekly basis). 46% of Catholics and 32% of Protestants attend on a monthly or more basis. As the Evangelical Alliance report puts it, 'more people go to church each week than attend a local football match in a year.'

35% of people pray and 13% read the bible weekly. Many people think religion is about more than private practice: 65% agreed there is a role for faith in society.

## **Who are the Evangelicals?**

Scholars have long disputed how to define evangelicalism. Most agree that evangelicals emphasise a 'born again' experience, take the bible very seriously and strive to live out their faith actively, whether that is through converting others or in service that promotes a common good.

A massive 47% of Protestants and a startling 38% of Catholics who considered themselves practising self-identified as evangelicals.

Throughout the Troubles and in the years immediately after the Agreement, scholars estimated that between 25 and 33% of the Protestant population could be considered evangelical. Few considered that Catholics might call themselves evangelical.

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In the Savanta poll, 21% of the general population chose to identify as evangelical, including 42% of those who considered themselves 'practising' Christians. Young practising Christians (aged 18-24) were the most likely to identify as evangelical at 70%, compared to 46% of practising Christians over age 65. Evangelical Alliance's survey of its own members and associates revealed exceptional commitment: on a weekly basis 96% pray, 95% attend church, and 92% read the bible.

In the Savanta poll, a massive 47% of Protestants and a startling 38% of Catholics who considered themselves practising self-identified as evangelicals. While we do not have the data to accurately chart what appears to a significant rise in evangelical Catholicism, this is a surprising finding that merits further research.

In his later years, Paisley enjoyed a warm relationship with Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness, a former member of the IRA, and it was reported that Paisley and McGuinness prayed together. Even so, what might have Paisley thought of Catholics joining Ulster's evangelical bastion?

## **Politics and social justice**

Because of Paisley, Northern Ireland evangelicalism has been not only associated with an uncompromising brand of unionist politics, but with the policing of sexual morality. After all, Paisley was also famous for his 'Save Ulster from Sodomy' campaign.

The surveys found that evangelicals continue to differ from the general population in their beliefs on abortion and same

sex marriage. 92% of Evangelical Alliance respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed that abortion should be available for any reason, compared to 34% of the general population. 96% of Evangelical Alliance respondents and 40% of the general population disagreed/strongly disagreed that churches should be compelled by the government to promote same sex marriages.

On the issue of asylum seekers and refugees, evangelicals have more in common with the political left than would have been supposed

Yet the two surveys confounded some stereotypes of evangelicals. 81% of Evangelical Alliance respondents agreed that asylum seekers and refugees should be supported in practical ways and made to feel welcome, compared to just 56% of the general population. On this issue at least, evangelicals have more in common with the political left than would have been supposed.

The surveys also revealed that 82% of the general population and 83% of Evangelical Alliance respondents agreed that more effort is needed to promote peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland; while 81% (general) and 83% (Evangelical Alliance) agreed it is time to reform the Assembly.

The surveys did not ask if people would take it upon themselves to promote peace and reconciliation. It is impossible to say therefore if evangelical agreement that 'more effort is needed' will translate into more effort on the part of evangelicals. But even if evangelicals prove to be more concerned about such issues, the time for Paisley's

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'eternal conflict between Truth and Evil' seems to have passed.

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## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## Church News Ireland

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