

# Church News Ireland

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## **Speaking to the soul -**

Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

# Image of the day

## Cobh

**Cobh (pronounced "Cove") is a picturesque town on the south coast of Ireland, in County Cork. It is famous for its rich maritime history, colorful waterfront houses, and as the last port of call for the Titanic before its ill-fated voyage in 1912.**

Some key highlights of Cobh include:

**Titanic Experience Cobh** – A museum dedicated to the stories of passengers who boarded the Titanic from Cobh.

**St. Colman's Cathedral** – A stunning neo-Gothic cathedral with panoramic views of the harbor.

**Cobh Heritage Centre** – A museum exploring Ireland's emigration history, including its role in the Titanic and Lusitania stories.

**Spike Island** – A historic fortress-turned-prison accessible by ferry.

**Deck of Cards Houses** – A row of colorful houses on a steep hill, perfect for photos.

Photo courtesy [travelwith.style\\\_\\_](https://travelwith.style/)

## News

# Church Army UK & Ireland facing difficult decisions amid restructuring due to financial pressures

**Church Army UK & Ireland, a registered missional charity focused on evangelism among marginalized communities, has issued an urgent call for prayer as it faces severe financial strain—warning that job redundancies are “likely” and that “significant changes to the way we work” are imminent, Chris Eyte writes in Christian Daily International.**

A press release issued in February, followed by a LinkedIn post on March 24, announced that major restructuring is underway to address the financial shortfall, with changes affecting both the organisation’s structure and how it delivers its services.

To date, the charity has covered its operational deficits through financial reserves, but projections indicate those reserves will be exhausted within a year unless immediate action is taken.

“Like many other charities today, we are facing financial challenges,” stated the Church Army post on LinkedIn. “So, we are proposing a major restructure to become more sustainable, while also re-focusing on our core mission of igniting faith and restoring life across the UK and Ireland.





**Rector sponsors his local rugby club - Ballymoney RFC**  
posted : On Saturday, we welcomed Rev. Andrew Sweeney from St. Patrick's COI as match day sponsor to Kilraughts Road. Pictured are Bangor RFC President Jim Lacey, Rev. Andrew Sweeney and Ballymoney RFC President Des Nevin.

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“We’ll have to make some tough decisions, including likely redundancies and significant changes to the way we work.”

Employees were informed about the proposed changes on Feb. 26, with a formal consultation now underway. The charity said it is working alongside Anglican dioceses and other missional partners to explore sustainable solutions and prevent the closure of key projects.

Implementation of the changes is expected by April 2026.

“Yet, we know that as the world grapples with division, loneliness, and uncertainty, the role of faith in providing meaning and purpose has never been more vital,” the release said.

**Church Army CEO Matt Barlow** affirmed the organization’s ongoing commitment to gospel outreach, even amid transition.

“As we refocus our resources, we want to ensure that the message of Jesus Christ remains accessible and relevant to those searching for meaning in the midst of the challenges they’re facing,” Barlow said. “Thank you for standing with us as we pray for Church Army.”

The planned changes include a strategic shift from operating high-cost projects to prioritizing training and equipping people for evangelism—particularly in communities facing poverty and distress.

Church Army UK & Ireland has gained good standing for training evangelists in providing practical support to those in need, while sharing the good news about Jesus.

Barlow expressed deep regret over the impact the restructuring will have on staff and communities.

“We’ve had to make incredibly tough decisions to ensure a financially sustainable future for Church Army, while delivering more broadly on our mission and charitable objectives,” he said. “I feel deeply for every member of our

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team and the communities we serve who these proposed changes may impact. The changes are not a reflection of the passion and dedication our staff demonstrate every day in their work, nor a reflection of the positive impact we have had in the communities we serve.”

He added that the charity is investing in compassionate transition support, including career assistance and pastoral care.

**The Royal School, Armagh  
Music Department**



# Spring Concert

**Thursday 3rd April 2025 at 7.30pm  
St Patrick's Cathedral**



**Adult: £10  
Concession: £8**

However, Barlow also believes the charity still has an important role in addressing the issue of spirituality as the world struggles with “division, loneliness and uncertainty.”

“This restructuring is an opportunity to position ourselves to meet this growing openness,” he said. “We recognise the deep need for faith, hope, and connection in today’s world. As we refocus our resources, we want to ensure that the message of Jesus Christ remains accessible and relevant to those searching for meaning in the midst of the challenges they’re facing.”

“While the process of resizing and restructuring is immensely painful, we believe there is a bright future for Church Army. Returning to our core mission of training and equipping not just commissioned evangelists but anyone with a sense of calling to mission and evangelism, especially to those facing poverty and distress.”

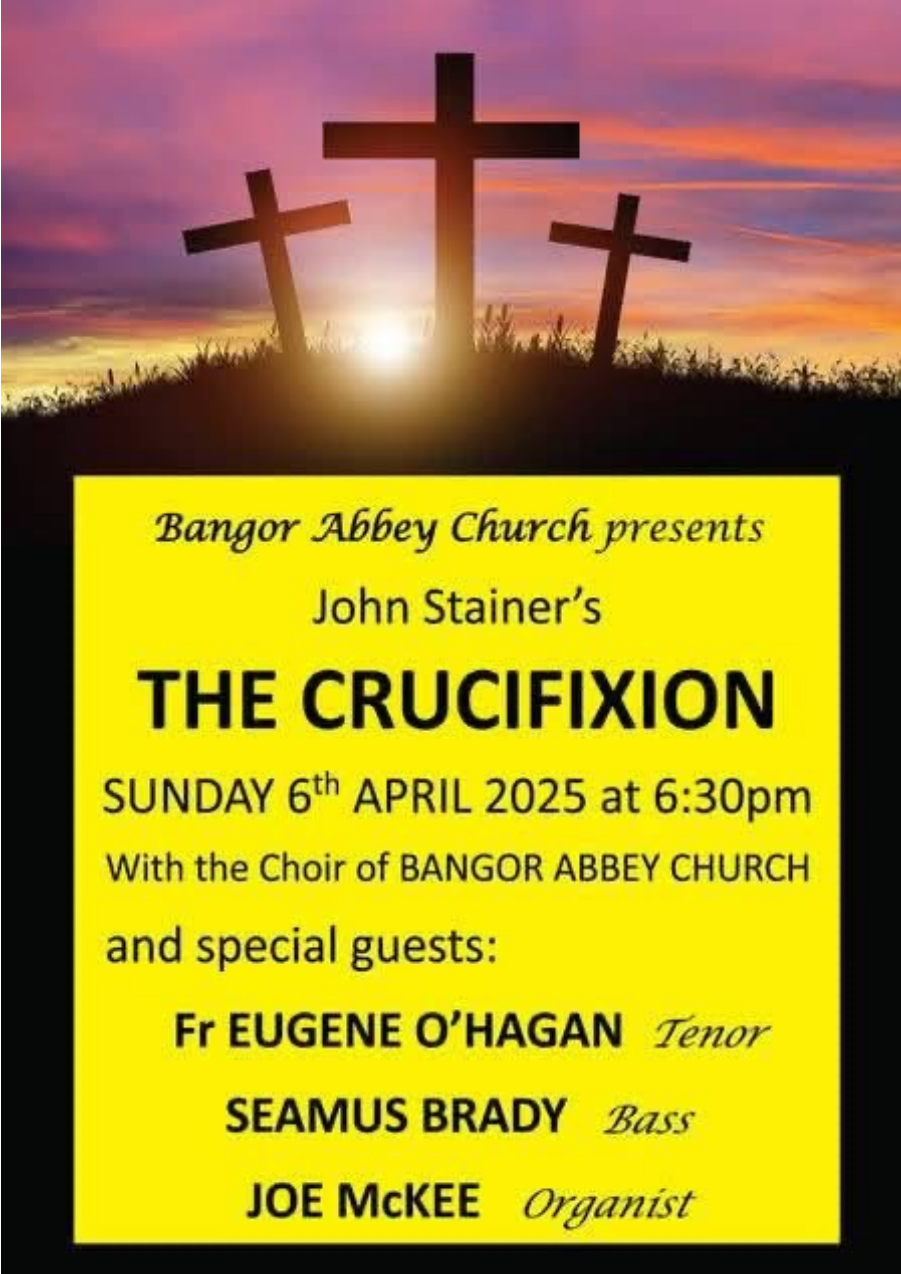
The Right Reverend Dr. Guli Francis-Dehqani, chair of the Board of Trustees, said the decision came after “deep reflection and prayer.”

“We remain committed to financial integrity, transparency, and mission-driven action and open to what God might be leading us towards next,” she said. “Our responsibility is to sustain the work of this 140-year-old charity for future generations.”



## Delegates from Irish churches will take part in Focolare community event in Rome this week

The Focolare community day on Sunday 23rd March was marked with variety, internationality, but most of all, an atmosphere of family. People from Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Lithuania, Ukraine and Italy were among the 80



*Bangor Abbey Church presents*  
John Stainer's  
**THE CRUCIFIXION**  
SUNDAY 6<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2025 at 6:30pm  
With the Choir of BANGOR ABBEY CHURCH  
and special guests:  
**Fr EUGENE O'HAGAN** *Tenor*  
**SEAMUS BRADY** *Bass*  
**JOE McKEE** *Organist*

## **or so people who filled the Focolare Centre in Prosperous, Curryhills, Co Kildare.**

The morning programme, where adults and children were together, featured music, a game with balloons, throwing a huge 'dice of love, a minute of silence for peace (Timeout), and a focus on this month's word of life: 'Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye'. (See Word of Life March 2025 @FocoB ).

In mixed age buzz groups, participants enjoyed a moment of introspection as they considered how they had or had not lived this phrase from the Gospel this month. One man commented that he liked the emphasis in the commentary of reviving a practice of the early days of Focolare: to see the people we meet – at home, school, work etc, as new..... covering everything with love. A woman studying psychotherapy shared how this introspection and non judgemental approach to people was perfect for counseling.

In the afternoon, the children and young people had a separate programme involving, among other things, games and planting trees, while the adults focused on the second pillar of the Focolare's spirituality: the Will of God. An audio visual presentation lead to an exchange of powerful stories from life highlighting the freedom and creativity released in people when they do God's will. (see The Will of God I Ep.2 "On Point: A Guide to Living a Spirituality of Unity").

The day concluded with some local news – two recent retreats for Confirmation classes in Curryhills; an upcoming

Ecumenical meeting in Rome next week to be attended by 14 delegates from Ireland from the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist and Catholic Churches; and an upcoming presentation of the Join the Dots Together initiative to NI Executive Office Committee next week. Join the Dots together involves over 100 faith groups who are working together for climate justice and peace.

## **Scottish Episcopal Church joins call for U.K. government to act on child poverty**

**On March 23, the Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Most Rev. Mark Strange, joined more than 30 faith leaders across the United Kingdom in sending an open letter to call for bold action on child poverty.**

The letter was sent to Liz Kendall, secretary of state for works and pensions, and to Bridget Philipson, secretary of state for education.

It reads in part, “We write to you as faith leaders from communities across the UK to encourage you to be bold and ambitious in your upcoming Child Poverty Strategy. We welcome the government’s acknowledgement in its manifesto that the UK’s increasing levels of child poverty and reliance on emergency food are a ‘moral scar’ on our nation. Without action this scar will deepen, with an additional 400,000 children set to be pulled into poverty over the next decade.”

Strange said, “This letter comes from a place of hope – hope that the call for action on child poverty [will](#) be

heeded by those in power, and that our representatives take the time to listen and learn from those most affected.

“Across the Scottish Episcopal Church there are congregations large and small that are doing their part in their local communities to target poverty; from hosting food banks, clothing banks and breakfast clubs, to offering warm spaces in cold weather or simply a place to be welcomed on Sundays or during the week.

“This is part of our call to minister, and as people of hope, we are always seeking to do more. This letter calls on our leaders to do the same – to seek to do more to support those whose lives are made that much more difficult due to the grinding effects of poverty.”

## **Vatican launches new pastoral guide to strengthen advocacy for human Life**

**Amid ongoing global challenges that threaten human dignity, the Vatican has introduced a new pastoral resource titled “Life is Always a Good: Initiating Processes for a Pastoral Care of Human Life”.**

The initiative, released to mark the 30th anniversary of “Evangelium Vitae”, seeks to inspire a renewed commitment to the defense and promotion of life in all circumstances.

Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life, highlighted the urgency of this initiative, emphasizing that every human life must be valued and protected. In his introduction to the resource, he drew



attention to contemporary crises—including war, violence, poverty, and discrimination—that make a pastoral approach to life more necessary than ever. He also referenced the Vatican’s recent declaration “Dignitas Infinita”, which reaffirmed the inalienable dignity of every human being, regardless of their condition or circumstances.

The document is the result of extensive dialogue with bishops from around the world, many of whom expressed their concerns during their “ad limina” visits to Rome.



*Fermanagh Choral Society*

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**FAURÉ REQUIEM  
&  
GOODALL ETERNAL LIGHT**

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**SUNDAY 13 APRIL 2025, 7.30PM  
ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH**

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**SOPRANO - ANNA GREGG  
TENOR - JOHN PORTER  
BARITONE - JAMES COOPER**

**ACCOMPANIST - GARETH KNOX  
MUSICAL DIRECTOR - KEITH ACHESON**

**WITH STRING ENSEMBLE & GUEST:  
MOUNT LOURDES SENIOR CHOIR**

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TICKETS - £10  
(CHILDREN & STUDENTS FREE)

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According to Archbishop Dario Gervasi, the Dicastery's Adjunct Secretary, this collaboration reflects a collective desire to enhance the Church's efforts in defending human life at all stages.

A webinar held in 2024 with representatives from episcopal conferences laid the groundwork for this process, ensuring that the pastoral strategy aligns with the Church's latest teachings.



**Harry Ferguson  
'100 Years of Design  
in Agriculture'  
Saturday 5th April @ 11am  
St Bestius Church Hall,  
Killeter**

We invite you to bring your tractors and come along to hear the story of Harry Ferguson told by Mr Stephen Patterson. A short tractor run will also take place around 2.30pm. Refreshments will be provided.  
Donation - £20 per tractor

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A Synodal Approach to Defending Life The new resource offers a method for applying synodal discernment to life-related issues, helping dioceses develop tailored pastoral programs suited to their specific cultural and geographic contexts. Rather than providing rigid guidelines, it encourages an open and dynamic approach, allowing local churches to adapt their strategies according to their needs.

Bishop Gervasi underscored the importance of collaboration in this endeavor, stating that the goal is to equip dioceses



**Lay Mission Committee invites you to**

**“WE NEED TO TALK!”**  
Fifth of the webinar series

**A National Voice for Laity and Lay  
Mission in Ireland  
- The European Experience -**

**With Guest Speakers from**  
Josian Caproens, President, John Smartt, Secretary,  
European Laity Forum (ELF)  
joined by Dr. Karlies Abmeier  
ZDK Germany

**Tuesday 8 April 2025  
7:00-9:00 pm**

Please register your attendance here:  
<https://forms.gle/3P6PP8m1T7gAyM8q9>

Places are limited and will be offered on first come first served basis

with the tools necessary to train laypeople effectively and engage younger generations in the defense of life.

The hope is that the resource will inspire a broader movement, reaching not only clergy and religious leaders but also parents, teachers, and youth. Free Access and Global Distribution To ensure widespread accessibility, the document has been made available for free in Italian, English, and Portuguese on the Dicastery's website ([www.laityfamilylife.va](http://www.laityfamilylife.va)). French and Spanish versions are set to be released soon.

The Vatican urges clergy and laypeople alike to study the resource and take active steps toward integrating its principles into pastoral work

## Education

### Shared education STEM event

**Year 10 pupils from Rainey Endowed school and St Patrick's College, Maghera, participated in a shared education STEM event.**

As part of the event, the students toured Specdram Ltd, a leading manufacturing facility in Mid-Ulster specialising in conveyor systems. During the visit, they observed various advanced manufacturing processes, including plasma cutting, sheet metal laser cutting, metal folding presses, welding, painting, and assembly. They also gained valuable



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insights into the business operations through a group board meeting.

Day two of the event is planned for after Easter, when we will reunite with St Patrick's College to collaborate on a shared project inspired by this experience.



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A huge thank you to St Patrick's College, the staff at Specfab, and Mrs. Cooke for making this event possible!



## Wallace HS attend UCAS Discovery Event

**Year 13 students  
recently attended  
the UCAS  
Discovery Event,**

**where they had the opportunity to speak with  
representatives from a range of UK and Irish  
universities.**



This event marked an important step in their university research and career planning.

## St Dominic's off to the Old Bailey after win in mock trial contest

**Students from a Belfast school will visit the Old Bailey next month after being judged the best in Northern Ireland in a courtroom competition, Mark Bain writes.**

Year 10 pupils from St Dominic's Grammar got a taste of courtroom drama in the Young Citizens Magistrates' Court Mock Trial competition.

After losing out by a point in the judging last year, they made no mistake making the case when they returned for the regional heat at Newry Courthouse.



They will now be judged against some of the best young legal minds in the UK in the national final.

“It has given everyone a real buzz of excitement,” said teacher-in-charge Katy Tweed.

“We lost out last year to Strathearn School and the girls were determined not to miss out this year.

“They all put in hours of preparation, working on the case notes, making sure they knew everything inside out.”

In the Northern Ireland final, St Dominic's were pitted against Belfast Royal Academy — taking it in turns to play defence and prosecution in a bid to win the case involving possession of an offensive weapon at a football match.

“It gave them all an incredible insight into what it takes to run a courtroom,” added Ms Tweed.

“There were plenty of nerves ahead of the case being heard, but it was fantastic for the girls to have the help of barrister Lauren Bohill — a perfect young female role model for them to aspire to when they were preparing the case.

“And now they'll likely have to do it all again. We're just waiting anxiously to see what the case will be for the national finals.

“Even being in and around Newry courthouse sparked a real enthusiasm in the pupils.”



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All those involved in judging the performance of the schools were professional court judges, KC barristers and magistrates.

“The pupils got a lot of great feedback from the judges and it's really helped some of them believe it might be a career they wish to follow,” Ms Tweed said.

“They all showed a great maturity in what they were able to show in a courtroom setting.

“They're 13-14 years-old and it was remarkable to watch them perform so professionally in what was a high-pressure setting. They managed to win both as prosecution and defence.” Courtesy Belfast Telegraph 27/04/2025



## **Ballyclare Secondary School at CAFRE**

**On Friday 21st March, A Level Biology and OS Horticulture visited the Discover CAFRE Campus at**



**Greenmount. We had a tour of Agriculture and enjoyed the dairy farm including the maternity ward.**

Then we headed for different experiences; Horticulture admiring the blooms in the walled garden and an inspiring talk about landscape maintenance from a past pupil.





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We viewed the horticultural glasshouses for talks on pest control and Hydroponics. Biology headed to look closely at the wet lands and hedge laying at the nature trail and also completed quadrant surveys in the meadows. After plenty of walking and fresh air, a good lunch was required. Thank you to Toni and her staff for their hospitality at #discoverCAFRE.

## Cathedral Calls

### A Golden Cope and Magnificent Mitre

**This object of the month is an impressive cope and matching mitre from the collections, which were made for Archbishop Robert Runcie.**



Did you know?



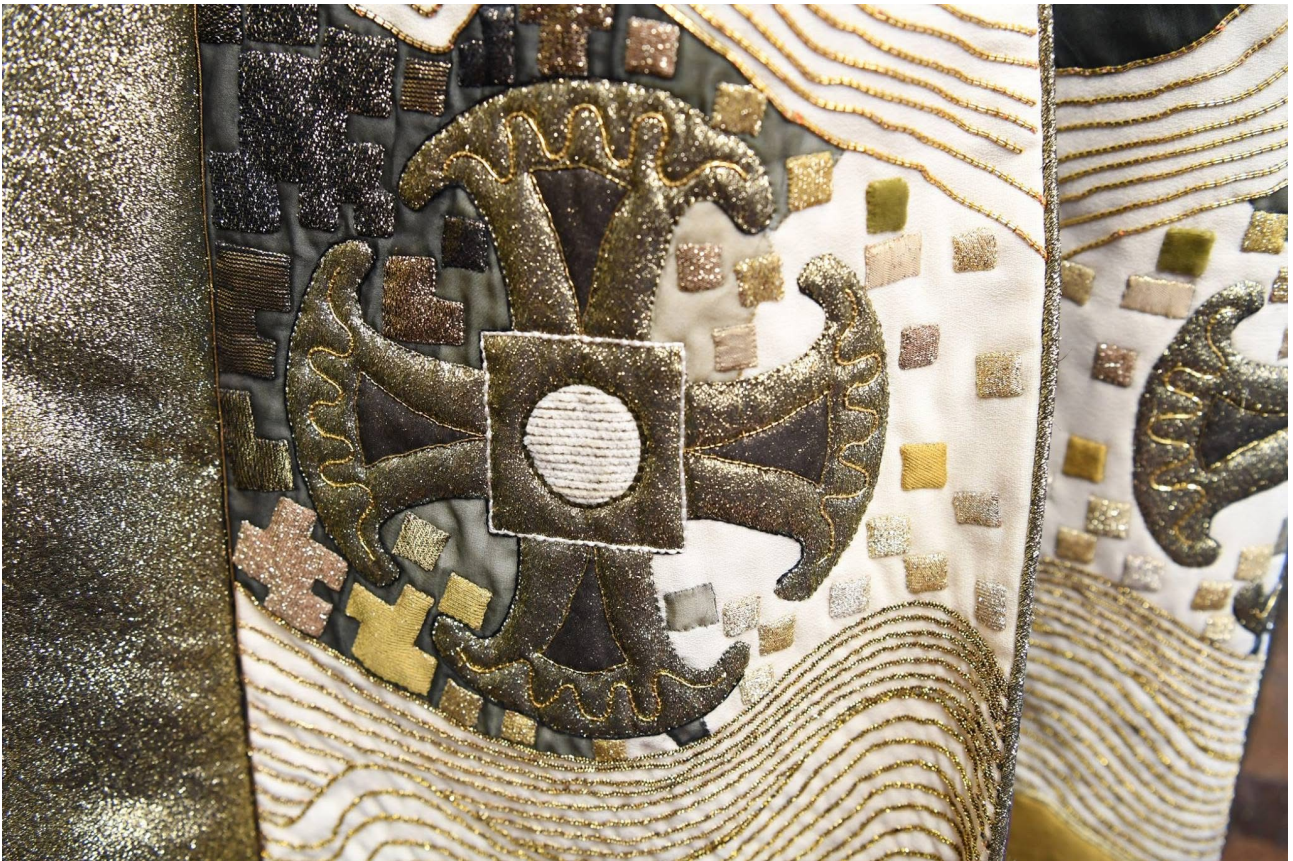
This year marks the 45th Anniversary of Robert Runcie's enthronement on 25 March, 1980.

A 'cope' is a semi-circular cloak worn by clergy for major ceremonies; a 'mitre' is the headwear of bishops, and a symbol of their office.

The cope and mitre were designed by Beryl Dean (1911-2001), one of the most important embroiders of the 20th century, who developed a distinctive and ground-breaking style of church embroidery. The cope was worked mainly by Elizabeth Elvin, and the mitre by Pamela Waterworth.

They were worn by Runcie for a Eucharist on 26 March 1980, the day after his enthronement - a day which was also Budget Day. This cope is made from gold lurex fabric and





other materials, with rich embroidery and appliqué, lined in brown cloth. Its clasp, known as a 'morse', was made by Jim Brasier, the then Head Virger. The embroidery design is based on ordnance survey maps of Kent. The Canterbury Cross features in the design of both cope and matching mitre.

Visit the exhibition area in the Western Crypt, where they can be seen on display - included free with your Cathedral admission ticket.

## Events

### Britannia Concert evening to remember Ken Goodman

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**A musical evening in memory of Mr Ken Goodman by Britannia Concert band and friends is planned for Friday 4th April 2025.**

“We also invite past playing members of Britannia and pupils of Ken to come and play alongside us. If you are interested please get in touch on 07719141306 or message the page for arrangements.”

## **Meet the Presbyterian Chaplaincy team at QUB, Stranmillis and Union**

**Derryvolgie Hall Open Day on Saturday 5th April 2pm - 4pm. Introduction by Chaplaincy Team 2.15pm**

No booking necessary - come and visit our open day to get a nosy around the accommodation and hear from staff and current residents.

Our application process will open at the end of this month so keep an eye on our social media for more info!

## **Connor GATHER nights**

**This is a new type of event that will be running over the course of the year throughout Connor Diocese.**

GATHER nights are an opportunity for young people to come together to worship God, hear His word taught and to connect with other young people from all over Connor.



Their first Gather will be held on **6th April** in St Patrick's, Ballymena and the organisers would love to see as many youth groups and leaders there as possible. Later in the year they will have GATHER nights in different parts of the diocese. Please share on socials, with your friends and with youth leaders in church.

## Mozart Requiem with St George's at St Peter's

**St George's Singers, with Saint George's Orchestra and Soloists present Mozart Requiem at St Peter's**



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**Cathedral, Belfast BT12 4BU on Wednesday 9th April at 7:45 pm.**

Tickets £25 (Student Concession £15), available from Choir Members or at the door, or send Email to:  
[contactstgeorges@gmail.com](mailto:contactstgeorges@gmail.com)

## **Celebrate 50 years of Derry Cathedral Youth Club**

**To celebrate 50 years of the Cathedral Youth Club, Saint Mary's College School Orchestra and Saint Columb's Cathedral Choristers are joining forces to provide an evening of musical entertainment.**

These young musicians will be joined by the very talented Anne Marie Hickey and Roisin Rice!

Admittance is free on the night! See you on Thursday 10th April at 7pm in Christ Church, Infirmary Road.

## **Cancer Focus Ni moonlit water**

**Join us under the stars and immerse yourself in the refreshing moonlit water of Portrush East Strand on Friday 25 April**

All monies raised will allow us to continue to support local people impacted by a cancer diagnosis.

Sign up today:

<https://cancerfocusni.org/event/northcoastdip/>



## **Braid debut for Farmers' Choir NI Spring Concert**

**The members of the Farmers' Choir are delighted to be singing at The Braid for the first time.**

With a membership of almost 60, the choir consists of farmers, farmers' wives, farm family members, rural dwellers as well as those with a connection to the agri-food industry. They are a group of like minded individuals who enjoy singing together and a good conversation about rural affairs.

The choir's Spring Concert includes many well known and uplifting melodies, selected by Musical Director, Barkley Thompson. From a farming family himself, Barkley is no stranger to The Braid. He has conducted many groups at this venue, in his role as music teacher at Ballymena Academy. Under Barkley's leadership, the choir has performed at Parliament Buildings, Stormont and other venues across Northern Ireland. Numerous members have recently been involved in the BBC's Big Sing event, staged at the Ulster Hall. You are guaranteed a great night's entertainment with the Farmers' Choir and you can enjoy a chat, after the concert, over a cup of tea.

**Wednesday 30th April 2025** at 7.30 pm. Approximate Run Time - 1 hour and 15 minutes. Show suitable for all ages.

# 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

[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)

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

**Please recommend to your friends**