

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – a Balmoral break

Image of the day



King Charles III arrives in Balmoral to begin his summer break



A Balmoral break

August 22,2025

King Charles greeted the public at the gates of Balmoral at an official welcoming ceremony. The King and Queen arrived in Royal Deeside at the weekend for their summer residence at the castle. Read more here:

<https://eu1.hubs.ly/H0mq8zN0>

News

Archdeacon's circuit of Dromore

Well done to Archdeacon Mark Harvey, who made it from Moira to Ballynahinch on day two of his Shankill 2 Shankill Parish Lurgan sponsored walk around the Dromore half of Diocese of Down & Dromore.

Thanks so much to everyone who came to encourage Mark with a warm welcome to Magheradroll (Ballynahinch) - and especially to Amanda and Janice for baking.

King Charles greeted the public at the gates of Balmoral today at an official welcoming ceremony. The King and Queen arrived in Royal Deeside at the weekend for their summer residence at the castle. Read more here:

<https://eu1.hubs.ly/H0mq8zN0>

If you want to cheer Mark on as he continues to put in the miles this week, you can sponsor him here:

https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/qr/pnA4mVaWutm_campaign=sharemodal&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=shortlink

C of I staff for safeguarding department

The Church of Ireland is seeking applicants for two positions within its safeguarding department:

The Case Officer, based out of Church House Belfast, will support the parishes and dioceses across the Church of Ireland where there is a child or adult safeguarding concern.

The Safeguarding Administrator will provide administrative support to the Church House Dublin Safeguarding Team.

For more information on these roles, click the links below:

Safeguarding Case Officer: <https://www.churchofireland.org/vacancies/990/safeguarding-case-officer-representative-church>

Safeguarding Administrator: <https://www.churchofireland.org/vacancies/991/safeguarding-administrator-representative-church-body>

Drug dealing allegations cast shadow over Westminster Cathedral

Westminster Cathedral, the UK's largest Catholic church, is facing scrutiny following reports of drug dealing both outside and inside its historic walls, even during Mass.

Worshippers have described witnessing “brazen” drug exchanges in the pews while services were underway, raising serious concerns about safety and reverence in one of Britain’s most iconic places of worship.

The Daily Mail reported that private security staff and local residents say drug activity around the cathedral has become increasingly visible and frequent, with the area plagued by anti-social behaviour.

Their recent investigation documented multiple drug deals taking place in alcoves outside the cathedral, where vulnerable people were seen purchasing Class A substances such as cocaine, heroin and synthetic drugs for as little as £5.

Locals report that rough sleepers and drug users regularly gather on the cathedral’s steps and in nearby chapels, adding to the sense of unease.

The Diocese of Westminster told Premier Christian News: “Westminster Cathedral takes seriously any allegation of drug dealing within its premises and urges anyone who witnesses such activity to report it immediately to our security team or the police. However, our team has received no direct reports of drug dealing inside the cathedral. We are confident that, each day, more than 5,000 people visit and experience a welcoming, prayerful and safe environment.”

The Diocese said it is continuing to work closely with police and the local authority to address the problem and is

August 22, 2025

encouraging the public to report illegal activity to support calls for a stronger police presence.

As concerns grow about safety at Westminster Cathedral, faith leaders and community members are calling for decisive action to protect worshippers and uphold the sanctity of this cherished Catholic site.

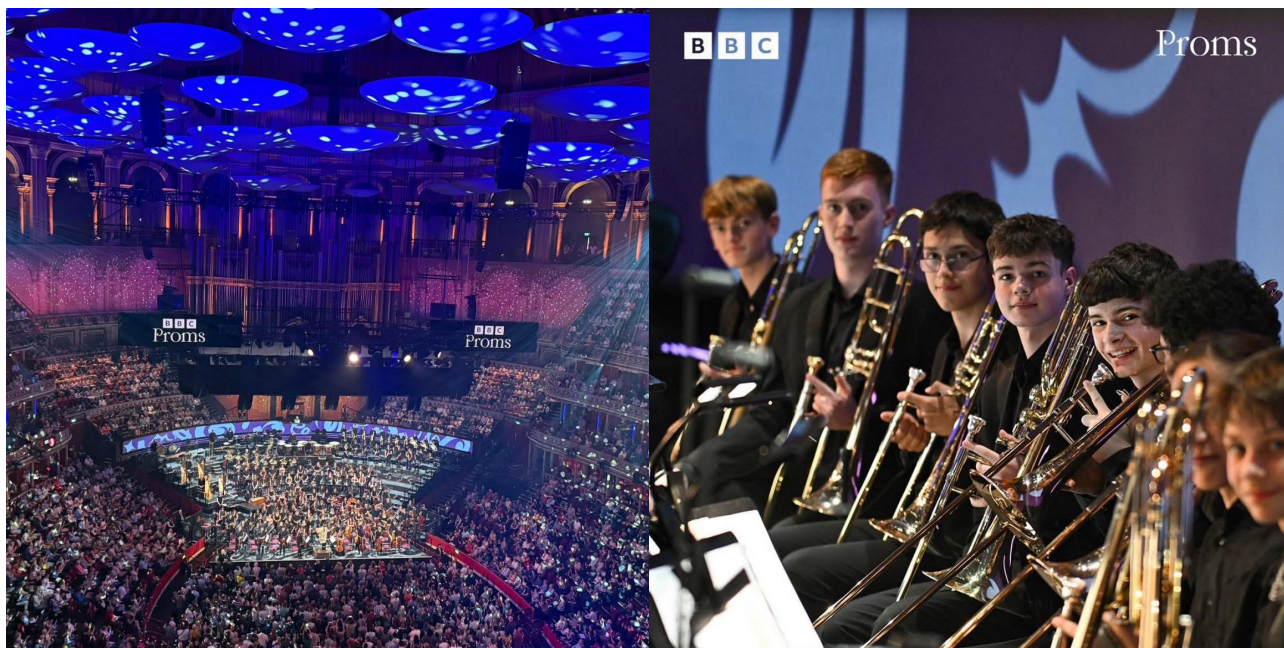
Education

Slemish student performs in Royal Albert Hall

Slemish College - Congratulations to our GCSE Music student, Michael Hickinson who performed in the Royal Albert Hall with the National Youth Orchestra last weekend, as part of the annual Proms concerts.



What an incredible experience and outstanding talent - we could not be more proud!



The full Proms concert (Saturday 9th Aug) is available on BBC iPlayer, but here is a little snippet from the orchestra's

opening piece:

[https://
www.bbc.co.uk/
iplayer/episode/
m002hp2n/bbc-
proms-2025-9-
john-williams-star-
wars](https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m002hp2n/bbc-proms-2025-9-john-williams-stars)



**Coleraine
Grammar
hockey reps**

**Well done to
Ruby, Gracie &
Nieve who
represented the
Ulster U16 and**

U18 teams this week against The Mentors.



New Principal of Wilson's Hospital School

The Board of Management of Wilson's Hospital School is delighted to announce the appointment of Mr. Noel Cunningham as Principal, commencing at the start of the new school year.

Noel will be taking over from John Galligan, who was Acting Principal last year and who has been appointed as Principal of Loreto College Cavan.

Noel brings a wealth of experience with him as a teacher of Physics, Applied Maths and Science in The King's Hospital School along with being Year Head and Transition Year Co-

ordinator. He also held the position of Acting Deputy Principal in The King's Hospital last year.

Mr Cunningham is looking forward to his new role and to meeting students, staff and parents in the coming weeks.

Cathedral Calls

Lunchtime concert on 400th anniversary of composer Orlando Gibbons' birth

On Wednesday 24th September, Westminster Abbey will celebrate the 400th anniversary of revered Tudor composer Orlando Gibbons' birth with a lunchtime concert, in honour of his life and work.

Gibbon was the Abbey's organist from 1623-25 and a parishioner at St Margaret's Church.

The concert will be sung by the St Margaret's Consort, a professional ensemble of male and female voices, conducted by Greg Morris, the Director of Music at St Margaret's, Westminster Abbey.

Book your tickets now to hear The Silver Swan and other works by Orlando Gibbons:

<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-events/choral-and-music/2025/september/a-celebration-of-orlando-gibbons-400th-anniversary-concert>

Events

SESTINA
MUSIC

PRESENTS

SINGET DEM HERRN
MOTETS BY BACH AND BRAHMS

9TH SEPTEMBER 7PM
FISHERWICK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
BELFAST

10TH SEPTEMBER 7PM
CHRIST CHURCH
DERRY

£20/£10

TICKETS AVAILABLE VIA EVENTBRITE & SESTINAMUSIC.COM

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

arts council
of Northern Ireland

200
FISHERWICK
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sestina Music presents a programme of motet

Sestina are thrilled to announce the opening concerts in their 2025-26 season.

Sestina Music presents a programme of motets by two German masters, written over 150 years apart.

Bach's Motets represent the pinnacle of polyphonic choral composition, featuring eight virtuosic vocal lines weaved into a thrilling, dramatic and beautiful texture.

In these concerts, three of Bach's monumental motets are heard alongside two sets of unaccompanied eight-part motets by Brahms, where the composer's rich and expressive harmonic language is used to full effect.

Although separated by nearly two centuries, these pieces share much of their musical language and heritage, and the immediacy and expressive potential of both composers' work means they are as vibrant and as colourful as ever.

Featuring a consort of world-class singers and players from across Ireland and the UK, with guest director Malachy Frame, this event presents a rare opportunity to hear these incredible works live in concert, and is not to be missed.

Belfast tickets available here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sestina-music-presents-singet-dem-herrn-tickets-1533823901579>

Derry Ticket available here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sestina-music-presents-singet-dem-herrn-tickets-1542319843169?aff=erelpanelorg>

Changes are coming to Divis and the Black Mountain

This autumn we are anticipating the beginning of major improvement works at our Visitor Buildings, including

Café Barn – creating a more welcoming, accessible and sustainable space for everyone to enjoy.

What's coming:

- A new café
- New Exhibition & community spaces
- Upgraded toilets and facilities
- Boot and Dog Wash
- New interpretation panels for visitors to learn about this unique landscape.
- Improved accessibility & shelter for all seasons
- Three new ponds for educational activities such as pond dipping.
- Renewable energy features like solar panels & ground source heat pumps

To make this happen, unfortunately the Café and visitor hub will temporarily close from 1st September, during the works and are due to reopen in Autumn 2026. The current toilet facilities will remain open until 4pm throughout September only. Clear signage, alternative routes temporary and toilet facilities will be in place. Our Visitor Experience Team will be here throughout the works as usual.

We know this may cause some disruption and we really appreciate your patience as we invest in the future of this special place.

Questions? Chat to our team, email us at belfast@nationaltrust.org.uk, or visit nationaltrust.org.uk/divis.



**Celebrating
125 years of
the Irish Guards**

Bangor | Saturday 6 September
Parade at 3pm, Performance at 4pm

Join us for a spectacular celebration featuring a ceremonial parade and musical performance by the Band of the Irish Guards.

More info:
ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/Irish-Guards-125


**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

Irish Guards 125th Anniversary Celebration in Bangor

Join us on Saturday 6 September 2025 as Bangor proudly hosts a ceremonial parade and musical performance to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Irish Guards.

Starts at 3pm
Parade through Bangor city centre

August 22,2025

Musical Performance from the Band of the Irish Guards at Bangor Castle

More info: www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/Irish-Guards-125

Resources

Methodist Prayer Focus

Download the Prayer Focus: Connexional Prayer Guide 2025-2026 and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your prayers.

You'll be joining hundreds of Methodists across the island and beyond who long to see God's transforming power at work in our world.

- Daily prayers or suggestions for prayer.
- More in depth guides about how to pray for specific areas of church life.
- Quotes on the difference that prayer makes.

Available now to download. (Making its way to churches this September).

→ irishmethodist.org/prayer-focus

In the media

Serious concern at Charity Commission's failure to address allegations of bullying and abuse of power in Presbyterian Church

Lord Alderdice has complained that the Charity Commission has still not pressed the Presbyterian Church for answers on allegations of bullying and abuse of power – three years after he submitted a report on the issues, Philip Bradfield writes in the News Letter 20th August 2025

The former speaker of the Assembly resigned as an elder from the church in June 2018, saying he was concerned about a new forthright expression of its stance against same sex relationships.

An elder of 30 years standing, he also disagreed with it loosening ties with the Church of Scotland – after it moved to approve same sex relationships – and its decision to leave the World Council of Churches.

After his resignation he worked together with former Presbyterian minister Roy Simpson to compile a dossier of allegations against the church containing interviews with 12 people.

He noted that despite submitting the 150-page report to the commission three years ago it has yet to question the church about the matter.

The Pride of Northern Ireland News Letter Since 1737



The former speaker of the Assembly resigned
as an elder from the church in June 2018



He therefore called into question whether the commission is “actually fit for purpose”.

“Is it actually there doing what it’s supposed to do? Three years on I have to say one has to be questioning that,” he told the BBC.

He also challenged the church’s use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) – legally binding documents that protect confidential information between two parties and prevent staff and ex-staff speaking publicly on specified issues.

“If ministers for example do open up and try to speak about things, they’re accused of contumacy, they’re accused of bringing the church into disrepute,” he said.m

In a number of cases which made headlines in recent years, the church has argued that disciplinary action against certain clergy or elders was justified because it considered that they had publicly countered official church teaching on marriage and same sex relationships.

The co-author of the dossier, Roy Simpson, claimed the report was “only really the tip of the iceberg”.

“These people are very decent people, they’re upright people, they’re people who have given their lives in service to the church, they’re not cranks and they don’t tell lies,” he said.

“They feel like they’ve been subject to spying, stalking, they’ve been subject to bullying, they’ve been subject to harassment and all sorts of derogatory comments said about them.”

The Charity Commission responded that the case is “complex” and is therefore taking longer than usual to complete.

“The Presbyterian Church in Ireland case involves a lot of detailed and sometimes quite complex information, which has resulted in the investigation taking longer than usual to complete,” it said.

“While we aim to deal with all cases as quickly as possible, factors such as how complex a case is, any potential risk to the charity’s assets or beneficiaries, whether other regulators or statutory bodies are involved and available resources all affect how long an investigation may take,” it said. “Some cases may also require ongoing monitoring.”

It hopes to move towards “a suitable outcome” over the next few months, it added.

The church responded that the commission only informed it about the dossier in June this year – prompted by a media inquiry – but has not yet asked it for any comment about the allegations.

“Should we be approached by the Commission to do so, we will cooperate fully,” it added.

Alf McCreery in his column in the Belfast Telegraph once again addressed the issue. He writes -

The other big topic in the news this week is the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) which received a grilling on Tuesday in the BBC's Talkback programme.

This is a topic that I have covered frequently.

For several years, the PCI has been accused of alleged bullying, a lack of good governance, and an intolerance of dissent. The latter is particularly damaging for a once broad church which itself was founded and sustained on dissent.

A well-researched dossier of allegations has been compiled by Lord Alderdice, the son of a Presbyterian minister, and Roy Simpson, a former PCI cleric.

It was sent to the Northern Ireland Charities Commission three years ago, but so far it has not produced any findings. These important issues were debated at length on Talkback by Lord Alderdice, Simpson, and Sunday Life journalist Angela Davison. It was not pleasant listening for the PCI which did not have a representative in the studio, nor did the Charities Commission.

I write about the PCI often more in sorrow than in frustration because this institution now bears more resemblance to a church fit only for the 17th century and not for the world in which we live.

I also believe that the lack of even one female Moderator in its history tells volumes about the narrowness of the PCI.

This will not change unless the women themselves start to campaign much more strongly for their rights as totally equal to men in the sight of God, but sadly at the moment they seem to have lost heart.

The PCI is now firmly in the spotlight, and this story is not going to go away. Credit is due to the media, including this newspaper, the BBC, RTÉ and others in bringing these important issues to light.

Has the PCI's behaviour been for the better or worse in the last 25 years? Many people, inside and outside the church, would claim that the answer to that is obvious.

Presbyterian Church in Ireland defends Non-Disclosure-Agreements (NDAs) after criticism from Lord Alderdice in Charity Commission row

By Philip Bradfield. Published 21st Aug 2025

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has defended its use of Non-Disclosure-Agreements after criticism on the matter from former Speaker of the House, Lord Alderdice.

The former Alliance Party leader was speaking out this week to highlight the fact that the Charity Commission had still not completed an investigation into the denomination after he lodged complaints about it in July 2022.

He resigned as an elder from the church in June 2018, saying he was concerned about a new forthright expression of its stance against same-sex relationships.

He later worked with former Presbyterian minister Roy Simpson to compile a dossier of allegations of bullying and abuse of power against the church, containing interviews with 12 people.

He also challenged the church's use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) – legally binding documents that protect confidential information between two parties and prevent staff and ex-staff speaking publicly on specified issues.

Their use use showed a lack of openness by the church, he said.

However, speaking to the News Letter, the church defended their use.

“PCI is a large organisation, employing over 600 members of staff," a spokesman said. "As in all such organisations, very occasionally, issues around employment arise.

“NDAs can be used by mutual agreement between parties as part of a resolution process and to support mutually agreed outcomes. This practice is not uncommon in organisations of our size and is always approached with care and discernment.

“The use of NDAs is limited, and guided by legal standards, ethical principles, and our commitment to fairness. Over the past 10 years, as part of mutually agreed settlements, PCI has been involved in a very small number of NDAs.”

Heritage

Joseph from Belfast Central Library is going to New York

After meticulous restoration from Brendan Catney, Joseph from Belfast Central Library is now on the next part of his journey to New York

August 22,2025

Joseph was carefully restored as he will be temporarily residing in The Heckscher Museum of Art as part of their **Emma Stebbins** retrospective exhibition. This will be the first time Stebbins' work will be showcased collectively.



The two statues in Belfast Central Library, Joseph and Mabel, were donated to the library in 1888 as part of the Dunville Family Estate. They are a beloved part of our library and almost became residents of Ulster Museum, Belfast in 1929!

Emma Stebbins was the first woman to receive a public art commission from New York City. She created the beautiful 'Angel of the Waters' which is the centrepiece of the Bethesda Fountain in Central park, New York.



As you can see, Joseph was safely packaged up and is now on his way. The exhibition 'Emma Stebbins: Carving Out History' will be available to view from the end of September 2025 to March 2026. If you happen to be in New York during this time, we would love to see photos of Joseph.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

August 22,2025

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**

Please recommend to your friends