

Church News Ireland



Happy 105th Birthday from HM The King

August 30, 2025

Happy 105th Birthday from HM The King

Col Neil Salisbury OBE DL, representing the Lord-Lieutenant of County Antrim, presented Miss Ellen Ferguson from Ballymena with a birthday card from HM The King and HM The Queen.

News

Derry's Reloved Charity Shop is officially reopening

All Saints Clooney in Derry says it's thrilled to announce "that our newly decorated café at Reloved Charity Shop is officially reopening on Friday 12th September 2025 at 12 noon... ✨"



RELOVED

Charity Shop & Heavenly Hub Cafe

GRAND REOPENING CELEBRATION

FRIDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 12 NOON

COME ALONG AND BE ONE OF THE FIRST TO ENJOY OUR FRESH NEW LOOK, A WARM CUPPA, DELICIOUS TREATS. WHETHER YOU'RE A REGULAR OR A FIRST-TIME VISITOR, WE'D LOVE TO SEE YOU THERE!

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...Come along and be one of the first to enjoy our fresh new look, a warm cuppa, delicious treats, and of course—our welcoming atmosphere that you know and love.

Whether you're a regular or a first-time visitor, we'd love to see you there. Every purchase supports a great cause, so pop in, relax, and help us make a difference.



Down & Dromore Bible Week uplifted by 'Anthem' worship band

D & D comment - Thank you for turning out in such great numbers for uplifting worship and clear and challenging teaching from Pastor Colin Smith.



Shout out to the 'Anthem' worship band who led us. Anthem is part of the diocese's initiative to train young worship leaders and we're so



grateful to Jude Frame and Simon Burrows for leading it.

The venue is St Philip and St James, Holywood Parish Church
Down & Dromore Bible Week



Down & Dromore Bible Week

Ballymena and Kirkonriola effort for India and Uganda

Recently after Mass, a cheque was presented to Fr. Joe and Fr. Aloysius for the India/Uganda appeal. A word below from the organisers.

Now that things have settled down and the new total is £15,530.50, we would like to thank all those who contributed to the cycle run and those who gave their time so generously - our sponsors of the car, the cyclists who turned out on the day, those who sponsored the food and bananas, Claire and Martha for cooking and providing refreshments, Gillian, Noleen, Eimear and Dawn, and a very special thanks to Charlie Dickson for all his help.



Down & Dromore Bible Week

Massive thanks to everyone who contributed to make it all a resounding success.

Warning that theology and religious studies are hardest hit by university course closures

The former archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has joined 75 academics, faith leaders and public figures in signing an open letter coordinated by Theos, a Christian think tank, warning that theology and religious studies are among the hardest hit by university course closures.

The letter highlights that soon only 21 higher-education institutions in England and Wales will offer theology degrees, compared with 90 offering history, 80 offering music and 101 offering sociology.

Hannah Rich, senior researcher at Theos, told Premier Christian News: "We're seeing Theology and Religious Studies hit hardest by cuts when institutions are under financial pressure. But these are subjects vital to our society, intellectually, ethically and culturally."

Among recent closures is Spurgeon's College, a 170-year-old Christian institution that taught theology to about 200 students. It announced that all courses are shutting down due to "significant financial challenges...driven by declining student numbers and an increasingly complex and difficult financial landscape".

The letter warns this trend may lead to theology becoming the "preserve of the elite", as course closures create educational "cold spots" across the UK.

The impact is already being felt in schools. Rich told Premier Christian News: "More than 50% of religious education (RE) lessons are now taught by teachers without a specialism in the subject."

"Fewer theology graduates means fewer qualified RE teachers and that affects the entire education system!"

"In an increasingly polarised world, theology provides space for interfaith dialogue and understanding," Rich said.

"Without it, we risk losing the ability to build bridges across belief systems."

Signatories, including actor James Norton, faith leaders and academics, are calling on universities and the government to prioritise and safeguard theology education.

Martin Smyth was an MP of ‘integrity and Christian principle’, service told

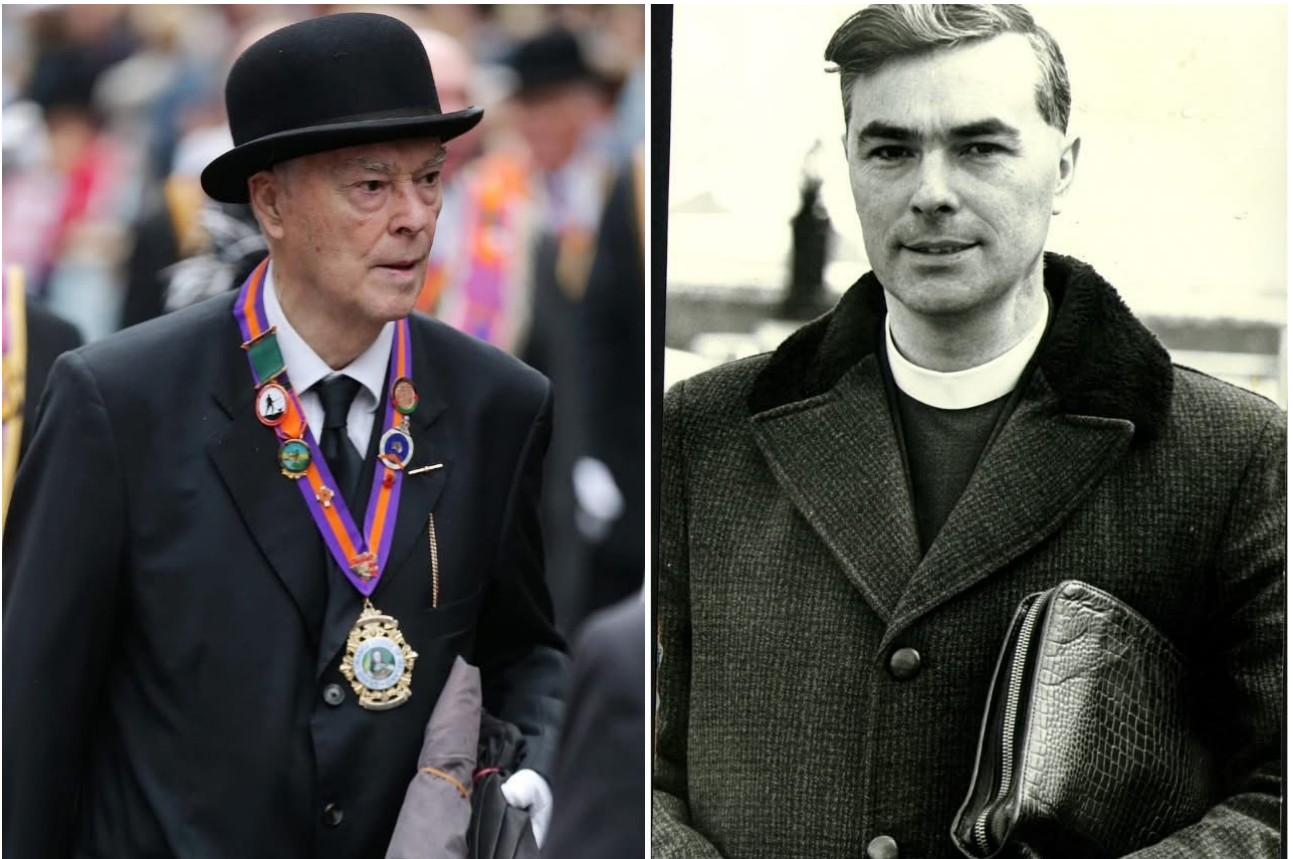
Former Ulster Unionist MP Rev Martin Smyth had a career defined by integrity and strong Christian principle, a church service has heard.

Rev Smyth, a Presbyterian minister who served as South Belfast MP for more than 20 years and also led the Orange Order during the height of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, died last week at the age of 94.

A service of thanksgiving for his life was held in north Belfast on Friday in Alexandra Presbyterian Church, where he once was minister.

Rev Johnston Lambe, who was Rev Smyth's own minister for 25 years, told the service how his long-time friend was driven to enter politics after the IRA murder of then-South Belfast UUP MP Rev Robert Bradford in 1981. He won the subsequent by-election the following year.

"He wrestled long over that decision and I remember chatting about this," said Rev Lambe.



“Many of his friends tried to persuade him to remain in ministry, some even called it foolish. However, he believed that God was calling him to this work but he never resigned as a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, remaining under the care of North Belfast Presbytery.”

The service heard how Rev Smyth himself became a target for the IRA, with a bomb once planted at a church manse where the family lived.

“This left the whole family living under great pressure, eventually having to move house,” recalled Rev Lambe.

In 1995, Rev Smyth ran for the leadership of the UUP, but lost out to David Trimble.

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Current UUP leader Mike Nesbitt was among mourners at Friday's service. DUP leader Gavin Robinson and TUV leader Jim Allister also attended.

Rev Lambe told mourners that Northern Ireland had "lost a statesman".

The minister extended sympathies to Rev Smyth's daughters Rosemary and Heather and the wider family. The former MP was predeceased by his late wife Kathleen and late daughter Margaret.

"His career stands as one of integrity and strong Christian principle, never afraid to call out wrong doing and always ready to show compassion," said Rev Lambe.

"His constituency surgery was open to all and used by all regardless of creed, colour or gender. Many can testify to his faithful support."

After the service, Rev Smyth's remains were taken on to Carnmoney Cemetery for a committal service.

Education

From Foyle to Cambridge

Congratulations and best wishes to two Cambridge undergraduates from the Foyle Class of 2025, Emer and Leah.

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Emer will read
English
Literature at St
John's
College,
University of
Cambridge,
and Leah will
read
Geography at
Robinson
College,
University of
Cambridge,
from
September.



Another great success story from Student Paramedics

In the weeks after many of our Volunteers have received A-Level and Leaving Cert results here is another great success story...

Katie-Ann from Order Of Malta Ireland - Ambulance Corps - Omagh and Cathal from Order of Malta Ireland - Ambulance



Corps - Castlebar on their last shift as #StudentParamedics after three years of study at the University of Ulster yesterday.

Both were cadets and progressed to seniors within the Ambulance Corps and the skills they learned and developed within the Order of Malta Ireland Ambulance Corps have played a pivotal role in their career development. Katie-Ann is currently a cadet leader making sure the next generation are continuing to leave #LifeSaving skills and general life

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skills like caring for others, keeping calm in a crisis and leadership.

Best of luck in the next stage of your career and well done!

Whether you would like to learn First Aid, want to develop vital skills for a career in healthcare, or just want to make friends and a difference in your community - we are always looking for new members. Email: info@orderofmalta.ie for more information and to be linked to a unit near you!



New Year 8 pupils at Wallace

It was wonderful to see our new Year 8 pupils in their Wallace HS uniforms for the first time.

The Class of 2032 were greeted by Principal Mrs Reid, Head of Year 8 Mrs Rogers, and our Senior Prefect Team.



Welcome to the Wallace family.

Clergy and ministry

Founder of Renew Wellbeing to speak in Down & Dromore

How can your church simply, safely and sustainably attend to mental and emotional wellbeing for both church and community?

Renew Wellbeing is a Christian charity which was started by Ruth Rice after she suffered her own mental health crisis.

It works with many Christian denominations and is delighted to now be partnering with the Church of England to bring Renew spaces into many more parishes. [Click here for more information](#)

Ruth, Director and founder of Renew Wellbeing, will speak in both Magheralin and Willowfield parishes, Diocese of Down and Dromore, on **Sunday September 28**, as follows: 1000 am in Dollingstown, 1130 in Magheralin and 0700pm in Willowfield

The rector of Magheralin Parish, the Rev Simon Genoe, said anyone who is interested would also be welcome to visit the Renew Wellbeing space hosted by Magheralin Parish, which is open every Monday afternoon.

Simon said: “I would commend Renew Wellbeing to every parish.

“Our Magheralin Renew Room is a sacred space where people, both from within and beyond the church community, gather for a time of peace, gentle games and activities, and meaningful friendship, all with a focus on wellbeing. There are optional prayer activities for those who wish to take part, but there is absolutely no pressure.

“I personally love dropping into Renew now and again for a coffee and a game of Scrabble, and to hear how this special place, where it’s OK not to be OK, has been a real lifeline for so many.”

You can read more about the charity at www.renewwellbeing.org.uk.

Kildare and Leighlin Liturgy Conference

Kildare and Leighlin Liturgy Conference is now open for bookings on www.kandle.ie.



Dr Jessie Rogers

Dr Jessie Rogers is a scripture scholar and Director of the Centre for Mission and Ministries in St Patrick's College, Maynooth. She is also a founding member of Godly Play Ireland, and is part of the Tarsus Scripture School team. Jessie is originally from South Africa.

"How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"
Proclaiming the Word when the words feel foreign and the world feels fragile.



Martin Foster

Martin Foster is Director of the Joint Lectionary Project for the Bishops' Conferences of Australia, Ireland, and New Zealand, preparing a new edition of the Lectionary using the Revised New Jerusalem Bible and the Abbey Psalms and Canticles. Before this, he was Director of the Liturgy Office of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. He is a parish musician and composer with music published in UK and US, and on his website www.bearmusic.info.

Sunday Liturgy - A place of Encounter
The Sunday liturgy is, in some ways, both a model and school of synodality as a place of encounter, listening and dialogue. But it is also where our hope meets reality. What are the opportunities from the moment we are welcomed to make the celebration more engaging and inclusive?

"Join us for an exciting day of talks, workshops and prayer. Workshops will fill on a first come basis so early booking is advised".

Choice of Workshops

- A Engaging Children in the Scriptures through Godly Play - Gemma Mulligan
- B Art and Environment that Supports and Deepens our Worship throughout the Liturgical Year - Fr Robert Petrisor
- C Let us Pray: The Call to Celebrate Lay Led Liturgy in our Parish - Mary Connolly
- D The Art and Practice of being a Minister in the Liturgy - Fr Peter O'Kane
- E Why Sunday Matters ... the Importance of Sunday and our Celebration of It - Julie Kavanagh
- F* Supporting our Congregations to Sing the Liturgy through the Seasons - Ian Callanan

* Please note, if you book into the music workshop you will do two music workshops. You cannot book another workshop. Music workshop participants are very welcome to form part of the choir for 6:15pm Mass when some of the workshop music will be sung.

Timetable

9:00am **Registration**
Carlow College

9:30am **Welcome & Morning Prayer**
Cathedral

10:00am **Keynote Speaker: Dr Jessie Rogers**
Cathedral with Q&A

11:00am **Break**

11:30am **Workshop Session One**
Cathedral and Carlow College

12:45pm **Lunch**
Attendees are invited to bring a packed lunch or avail of lunch in Carlow town. Tea/coffee provided in Carlow College.

2:15pm **Workshop Session Two**
Cathedral and Carlow College

3:45pm **Keynote Speaker: Martin Foster**
Cathedral with Q&A

4:45pm **Closing Remarks and Prayer**
Cathedral with invitation to 6:15pm Mass

Parking in Carlow College
R93 A003



Events

Commonwealth Remembrance September

🇬🇧 Calendar of ceremonies - September - Belgium 🇧🇪 |



Check out the schedule of upcoming military rededications and reburials ceremonies in Belgium for the month of September:

 - 11/09  16:00  Tyne Cot Cemetery 

Rededication of Corporal William Benjamin Cunningham 

 - 16/09  14:00  Wytschaete Military Cemetery 

Reburial of an unknown soldier 

Let's pay tribute to these missing persons who have been identified or reburied so that we don't forget them.

City of Derry International Choir Festival


August 30, 2025

Early Bird tickets are here! The 2025 City of Derry International Choir Festival is set to be one of our most exciting yet, and the full programme is out now.

Expect spectacular opera, world-class vocals (and body percussion), international competitions, and even late-night choral serenity!

There's truly something for everyone and here's the best part: Early Bird prices are available until 31 August.

Plan your visit to Derry, book your seats, and join us for 5 unforgettable days of choral music, 22-26 October 2025.

 <https://derrychoirfest.com/2025-festival/programme-of-events>

Resources

Check out Connor Connections e-paper

Wherever you live in the world, you can keep up with the goings on across Connor Diocese by checking out the 'Connor Connections' magazine in e-paper format.

You can read the current issue, and also access past magazines in pdf format. The most recent magazine is the summer issue – our autumn issue is also available in churches from mid-October. To contribute to the magazine, email dco@connordiocese.org.



Poem for today

The Rock of Cashel

By Aubrey de Vere

Royal and saintly Cashel! I would gaze
Upon the wreck of thy departed powers
Not in the dewy light of matin hours,
Nor the meridian pomp of summer's blaze,
But at the close of dim autumnal days,
When the sun's parting glance, through slanting showers,
Sheds o'er thy rock-throned battlements and towers
Such awful gleams as brighten o'er Decay's
Prophetic cheek. At such a time, methinks,
There breathes from thy lone courts and voiceless aisles

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A melancholy moral; such as sinks
On the lone traveller's heart amid the piles
Of vast Persepolis on her mountain stand,
Or Thebes half buried in the desert sand.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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

Church News Ireland

www.churchnewsireland.org

Link in Monday through Saturday from
early morning

Please recommend to your friends

