

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – C of I service at the Reek

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News -

Belfast Repair Cafe is not on holiday!

Master Iconographers five-day workshop in Derry

Church organist organises the elite SuperCupNI

Constable Robert McPherson 50th Anniversary

Aaron House celebrates: '30 not out!'

Education -

Coleraine Grammar fundraising update

Cathedral Calls -

Derry lunchtime organ concert

Events -

St Ann's Lunchtime Recital Series

Speaking to the soul -

Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

July 29, 2025

Image of the day

C of I service at the Reek

The Revd Canon Alex Morahan led the Croagh Patrick, Church of Ireland experience on this special day when for the first time a C of I service was held on Reek Sunday.



At the heart of the endeavour were Aughaval Parishes - Westport & Dugort, Castlebar, Turlough Killala Group of Churches.

Canon Alex Morahan said, "Thanks to all for a wonderful experience. Great singing, great guitar playing and two women who supported me every step of the way." "Thanks to Fr John Kenny, Admin in Westport.

"Thanks also to Claire Jackson and Ro Hallam who were such great fun and so supportive.

Let's do it again."

News



Belfast Repair Cafe is not on holiday!

It may be summer time - but the Belfast Repair Cafe is not on holiday! Join them for their next Repair Cafe Belfast on Saturday 2nd August at St John's Orangefield on the Castlereagh Road, from 10-12.30ish. They currently have repair slots available for all kinds of items: bikes, sewing, electricals - usually booked out in hours, general items. They don't expect to have their tool sharpening and sewing machine fixers present this time.

Book a repair in [here](#) to help them plan:

<https://ti.to/repair-cafe-belfast/2-august-2025>

They also usually have a few drop in spaces available on the day, first come, first served, and they would love to see you!

Master Iconographers five-day workshop in Derry

On Sunday 27 July 2025, Sharon Dunne, Pastoral Worker in the Archdiocese of Armagh, was honoured to represent Archbishop Eamon Martin and the diocese at a welcome gathering in St Columba's Church, Longtower, Derry.

The event marked the beginning of a five-day workshop led by Master Iconographers Panagiotis and Demetrios Christodoulou from Thessaloniki, Greece. Organised by the Honora School of Iconography, in partnership with the Association of Iconographers in Ireland and St Columba's Parish, the gathering was a beautiful blend of prayer, hospitality, and the rich tradition of sacred art.

“Thanks to all for the warm welcome and we wish all those participating in the workshop every blessing as they continue to reflect the beauty of the divine through iconography”.



Church organist organises the elite SuperCupNI

Each summer, the quiet towns of Northern Ireland transform into a global stage for elite youth football. The SuperCupNI — formerly known as the Milk Cup — has grown over 43 years from humble beginnings into one of the most prestigious youth tournaments in the world.

But behind the scenes, few names are as vital, or as understated, as Jim Sandford who is also a parish church organist in the diocese of Down & Dromore.

Now in his 39th year with the tournament, Jim Sandford leads the tournament management team — the engine room of an event that spans continents, age groups, and communities. While the spotlight shines on future stars and world-renowned clubs, Sandford's role is largely invisible to the public — and yet absolutely indispensable.

Back in 1983, the inaugural tournament fielded just 16 teams — a feat that took immense determination and negotiation. Today, 62 teams descend on Northern Ireland, a testament to the event's credibility and elite standards.

“We've always fought hard for quality,” says Sandford. “It's not just about filling slots. We want the best — and that shows in who applies to come.”

That commitment has been matched by consistent, long-term support. The tournament's official main partner, Budget Energy, has signed a multi-year agreement, ensuring the tournament's continued success and its ability to attract top talent from around the globe. Local firm Creagh Concrete also continues to play a vital supporting role.

Premier League support — both financial and symbolic — has helped elevate the competition further, with more top-tier English clubs taking part in 2025 than ever before. The use of Premier League branding, coupled with growing club involvement, adds a level of prestige few youth tournaments can rival.

Despite international acclaim, SuperCupNI remains deeply embedded in the local community. Around 300 volunteers — including dedicated team liaisons — ensure each visiting side experiences Northern Ireland's trademark warmth and

hospitality. From the iconic opening parade through Coleraine to ongoing partnerships with schools and grassroots clubs, the event continues to uplift and inspire at every level.

“It’s a massive operation,” Sandford explains. “Planning starts as soon as the last one ends. It takes almost a full year of work to deliver.”

Looking ahead, the tournament’s biggest challenge is infrastructure — especially accommodation. As participation grows, Sandford and his team are working closely with universities and monitoring hotel development to meet rising demand.

Digital presence is another area of strength, with a polished website, an active media team, and vibrant social media accounts engaging fans locally and internationally. Support from regional media outlets helps ensure the event remains at the heart of public conversation throughout the week.

But behind all of this — the growth, the global reach, the seamless execution — stands Jim Sandford. Quiet, determined, and tirelessly committed to the tournament he’s helped shape for nearly four decades.

He may not seek the headlines. But it’s clear he’s earned every one.

Constable Robert McPherson 50th Anniversary

On Sunday afternoon in Bovevagh Parish Church a special service of remembrance and thanksgiving marked the 50th Anniversary since the murder of Constable Robert McPherson.

The Church was paved with additional seating required - circa 250 people were in attendance.

Sunday's service was attended by HM Lord Lieutenant for County Londonderry, Mrs Alison Millar, Gregory Campbell MP and a number of MLA's and Cllr's from across a range of political parties as well as independents.

Many former colleagues of Robert's were also present, neighbours and others.

SEFF state they were privileged to help organise the service in conjunction with Rev Loney and the Parish Vestry, Robert's widow Rosemary and the full McPherson family plus the Limavady Police Welfare Group and The RUC GC Association.

SEFF thanked -

Rev Loney and his Parish Vestry for all the preparatory work, care and support given.

Rev Dr Isaac Thompson who offered a very fitting and poignant tribute to his cousin Robert

All those who read, particularly William Elliott (Robert's colleague who survived the murderous attack, but with significant physical and psychological injuries and scars)

July 29, 2025

Gwen Beattie, Sandra Cole, Graham Semple, Kenneth Nevin and Heather Lyons.

SEFF also commended the organist, Adam Roxborough and piper, Robert Cupples.

And the ladies who prepared the wonderful sit down tea afterwards, enjoyed thoroughly by all.

This special service of recognition also brought healing. People gathered in large numbers to remember one of their own, a special man who stepped forward and offered himself in the service of others.

Robert's widow Rosemary appropriately sat in the pew seat at the back of Church that she and Robert shared and for which they only had two years in doing so.

Aaron House celebrates: '30 not out!'

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) Right Reverend Dr Trevor Gribben, has told a special event at PCI's Aaron House in Dundonald's Ballybeen Estate, on the outskirts of Belfast, that "Good things happen when good people decide to get things done."

Dr Gribben was speaking at fun day for residents, their families and friends, current and former staff, who had come together to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the opening of the residential care home for people with profound learning

disability. The ‘good people’ he referred to were the original members of the Currie Community who opened Aaron House in 1995 and managed it until 2009, when they handed over to PCI. Four members of the original Currie Community Committee attended the fun day.

Today, the church’s Council for Social Witness (CSW), PCI’s social care arm, manages Aaron House in partnership with Choice Housing, who maintains the building. CSW also manages the denomination’s residential, nursing, supported housing, respite and day care provision, alongside a number of community-based programmes.

Home to 15 residents, including several who moved there 30 years ago, Aaron House also supports around nine people in its day care centre, and has one room available for respite care. Speaking to around 100 people who had come to the special event, Dr Gribben said, “If it hadn’t been for the vision and dedication of a small group of parents, supporters in the Currie Community and the first committee that established this place, we wouldn’t be standing here today,” Dr Gribben said.

“Aaron House is a special place. It was badly needed then and it is still needed today, and I want to thank the original members of the Currie Community for pursuing Aaron Currie’s vision, and for having the confidence in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to pass the baton to us when the time came.”

The Moderator continued, “People matter to God, all people matter to God, and it is places like Aaron House that prove that, and as a result, they make a huge difference in the

lives of many. That wouldn't be possible without the care, dedication and professionalism of everyone who works here – and some have been here from day one – and the Social Witness team in Assembly Buildings. Thank you for what you're doing in making a difference in the lives of those who call Aaron House home. If this was cricket, it would be thirty not out, and the innings just beginning.”

As a social care provider, the Council for Social Witness looks after over 300-plus people across its many sites, including Lee-Ann, who has lived at Aaron House for about nine years and says that “it is the best.” Her mum Carol agrees, “For many years Lee-Ann fell under the radar, until we got a GP who was not only interested in her, but wanted to do something. That was when things began to change and she was able to come here,” Mrs Nesbitt said.

A single mum after her husband died, Carol said that it was difficult to cope as she had no support. “Aaron House was, and still is a ‘God Send’, and Lee-Ann loves it here. She goes to the day centre, loves to garden and comes home to me at weekends saying ‘I’m so happy I have two homes.’

“For that moment, it makes the decision to bring her to Aaron House easier, because it was such a hard decision, which I know all parents agonise over. It is a great place and really friendly, it gives you peace of mind – especially if you are not getting any younger, like me. When I am gone, I know Lee-Ann will have a good home, which is also a huge worry for many mums and dads,” she said.

Also attending the fun day was Dermot Parsons, the Secretary to the Council for Social Witness, who along with the Moderator, praised the staff who care for all the

residents who call Aaron House home. “We are blessed with an incredibly dedicated team of individuals, some of whom have been here since it opened, with many others working here for 10,15 and 20 years.

“At Aaron House, and all our homes and community-based programmes that we manage, we put our faith into practical action as an example of simple Christian caring. It has been said before, but it is a powerful social witness of the gospel as we seek to provide care within a specifically Christian ethos. It is about providing a safe, caring, and comfortable environment for those we look after, but you don’t need to be a Christian to work for us, or to live here. All we are doing is demonstrating the love of Jesus,” Mr Parsons said.

Speaking about the day, which included a petting zoo, cake and a BBQ, Kelly Wilson, who has been the manager of Aaron House since early 2025, said, “Today has really been a special moment in the life of Aaron House and everyone who makes this place special, namely our residents and the staff. For me, it is special, it is not like ‘coming to work’, it has become my second home.”

“I came here as a care assistant 25 years ago and out of the 40 or so colleagues who work with me, three have been here since Aaron House opened, and 10 or more are approaching 20 years’ service, which speaks volumes about the kind of place that it is. It was a lovely day.”

Education



Coleraine Grammar fundraising update

CGS Fundraising Committee are delighted to share that they have raised £9500 from their Community Fun Weekend in June, which is almost double what they raised last year!

“A massive thank you to everyone who pitched in or came along to the events. The 5k run, tractor run and colour run were all a great success and a lot of fun for everyone involved.

“This money goes towards our hockey pitch fund this year.

“Another huge thank you to all the local businesses and friends of the school that supported us this year. From sponsoring prizes to donating snacks and water to the

July 29, 2025

runners, we couldn't host these events without you! CGS Fundraising Committee

Cathedral Calls

Derry lunchtime organ concert

Our final lunchtime organ concert in the July series is given by David McGuckin, Organist of First Derry Presbyterian Church. A renowned pianist, organist and accompanist, David is a well-known and highly respected figure in the Derry music scene. He also previously served as Assistant Organist of St. Columb's Cathedral.

We're delighted to welcome him back to the cathedral for this concluding recital, and extend our thanks to all who have attended and supported this summer's lunchtime concert series.

Free entry | All welcome

Events

St Ann's Lunchtime Recital Series

Upcoming recital at St Ann's Church, Dawson Street, Dublin. Thursday, July 31st, 2025 | 1:20 PM. Kalle Peura - Piano Programme:

Chopin: Mazurkas Op. 6 No. 1 & 2 Albéniz: Suite Española Op. 47 (VI Aragón, VII Castilla) Madetoja: Pastoral Suite Op. 34 Chopin: Scherzo No. 2 His recital will feature a blend of classical favourites and lesser-known

July 29, 2025

gems. With a strong background in both jazz and classical music, Kalle brings a unique approach to his performances.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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early morning**

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