

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Castlerock confirmation

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Image of the day

Castlerock confirmation

Bishop Andrew of Derry and Raphoe was at Castlerock Parish Church for a service of Confirmation on Sunday. The parish commented, "It was a joyous occasion celebrating with our young people from Christ Church and St Paul's."

News

RUC GC Day Memorial Service in Enniskillen

The RUC GC Foundation organised and held the 23rd RUC GC Day Memorial Service in Enniskillen on 1st June - exactly 103 years since the Royal Ulster Constabulary was founded.

Participants included HML Viscount Brookeborough, the Marquis of Salisbury, Lord Godson, the Justice Minister, political party leaders, the PSNI Deputy Chief Constable and an Assistant Commissioner from An Garda Síochána.

Church leaders from the main churches took part and the sermon was delivered by His Grace, the Archbishop of Armagh John McDowell. He highlighted the importance of marking the sacrifices of RUC officers and their families - but also stressed the need to also honour the Force's achievements. He talked about the rule of law and the RUC's immense task of enforcing the law and serving society at a time of crisis when lawlessness, terrorism and

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danger epitomised Northern Ireland's situation. He pointed out that beside dealing with wide-scale public disorder and terrorist activity, the RUC continued to provide the full spectrum of policing services and held society together.

Chairman Stephen White led the Act of Remembrance and period of reflection before pipers and a cornet player provided a solemn finale. The Police Male Voice Choir participated in the service which received positive feedback from the RUC family representatives who included the RUC GC Widows Association and RUC GC Bereaved Families Association.

The archbishop's sermon is printed in full below:
see Perspective page 18

Northern Ireland International Organ Competition

NIIOC is delighted that this year's Dame Gillian Weir Medal - presented for the standout performance of a single piece in the Senior Category - will once again be made by silversmith



USOC ORGAN COMPOSITION COMPETITION

PLAY THE
ORGAN
YEAR 2025



The Ulster Society of Organists & Choirmasters invites submissions from composers for its organ composition competition:

- The piece should be based upon a hymn tune or Gregorian chant
- The piece to be written should be of around ABRSM Grade 5–6 in difficulty, so as to make the works accessible for a wide number of players
- The required length is 3–5 minutes
- The work should be playable on a two manual and pedal organ
- There are two categories: aged 18 and under (prize of £500); aged 19 and over (prize of £1,000)
- The work must not have been submitted for any other competition/festival and must not have been performed in public
- The submission should include a PDF typeset score and mp3 mock-up with all identifying marks removed; please use an alias on the score, and state in your submission email the alias you have used
- The judges will look for evidence of musical confidence and imagination, an obvious sense of structure, and practicality of technical demands
- The shortlisted pieces will be performed in recital at St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh (Church of Ireland) on Saturday 8 November at 3pm; the winners will be announced after the recital
- The panel of judges will consist of Robert Gower (Chair of the panel; editor for Oxford University Press, composer, organist), Anselm McDonnell (composer), and Matthew Owens (President of USOC, composer, conductor, organist)
- The decision of the judges is final; no correspondence will be entered into
- A sound recording (strictly for private use) of shortlisted performances may be possible
- There is no fee for entering the competition
- Submissions may not be received from current members of the USOC Committee
- This competition is in association with the Royal College of Organists' *Play the Organ Year*, supported by USOC

All submissions must be emailed to secretary.usoc@gmail.com by 12 noon on Monday 1 September

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and jeweller Joel Smyth, a First Class Honours graduate of Ulster University.

The medal also comes with a monetary prize of £300.

For full information on the competition, check out www.niioc.com or email info@niioc.com. Entries close Friday 11 July.



EBM first Church in NI to receive church of Sanctuary status

At a recent service EBM - the East Belfast Mission - became the first Church in NI to receive church of Sanctuary status.



This is a movement of cities, universities, schools and now churches in NI who have the vision of being a welcoming place of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution.

St Peter's Parish Belfast support for Northern Ireland Children's Hospice

Over the course of the academic year, the loose plate collection at the monthly family services has been set aside for a children's charity.

On Sunday morning, the parish was delighted to welcome Jacci from the Northern Ireland Children's Hospice to receive a cheque for £1,000. Thank you to all who contributed.

Kings Badge for Castlecaufield and Donaghmore BB members

Congratulations to Adam and Josh who were awarded the Kings Badge, the highest award in the BB, a phenomenal achievement for their families, for the BB company, and for the church.



New chair of Northern Ireland Hospice Board of Trustees

The appointment of Ian Sheppard FCA, FloD as the new Chair of the Board of Trustees has been announced.

A Chartered Accountant and former Managing Director for Northern Ireland at Bank of Ireland, Ian brings a wealth of leadership and financial expertise to the role. He has served on the Board for the past three years, most recently as Vice Chair. Board member Paul Terrington has been appointed as Vice-Chair.

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Heartfelt thanks go to Dr Gerry Millar MBE, who has completed his term as Chair. “We’re deeply grateful for his compassionate leadership and continued support”.

Hand over day at Buckna Presbyterian church

It's handover day!

“We received the keys to our new building and we're looking forward to moving in very soon!”



Love Your Burial Ground Week counts and celebrates biodiversity

During Churches Count on Nature, part of Love Your Burial Ground Week, hundreds of church communities across Great Britain take part in a week-long nature

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count to monitor and celebrate the biodiversity in churchyards.

Love Your Burial Ground Week is Saturday 7 June to Sunday 15 June. Registered groups received a resources pack in time to help them run their event.

GB leaders can you help answer

GB leaders, can you help answer one or more questions about what it means to be a GB volunteer?

Simply click the link below and complete this short form
<https://forms.office.com/e/smmRNkYeiH>

Alternatively, if you would like to do a very short video in landscape view (wearing your GB polo-shirt/hoodie) and complete this sentence 'I enjoy volunteering in Girls' Brigade because...'. Please send video recordings to socialmedia@gbni.co.uk

*Please note that by submitting a form or video to GBNI, we will presume consent is given for it to be used for an upcoming promotion across GBNI Social Media, the GBNI Website and at a Leaders' event.

Thank you for your help!

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Education



**Former
Dalriada
student
records his
compositions
with Prague
Philharmonic
Orchestra**



The Music Department could not be more proud of Samuel who, as part of the completion of his Masters in

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Film Music, got the opportunity to record his own compositions with the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra.

Wow! What an outstanding achievement!

He also got the opportunity to do a conducting masterclass.
How cool was that?

Four decades of transforming lives : Irish Sister's education developments in Kenya

When Sr. Mary Killeen, then a young member of the Religious Sisters of Mercy (RSM) from Dublin, Ireland, and Fr.

Manuel Gordejuala from Spain started Mukuru Informal Primary School on the fringes of Kenya's capital Nairobi, they thought that they were addressing a short-term need.

They came together to educate the hundreds of children, who wandered aimlessly in the expansive Mukuru slums that had no school. Learn more: <https://hubs.la/Q03phPnP0>



Clergy and ministry

New President of the Methodist Church in Ireland

Rev Alan Wardlow, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland 2025-26.

At its 2024 annual Conference, the Rev Alan Wardlow was designated as President of the Methodist Church in Ireland for 2025-26. He will be installed as President during the opening service of the two hundred and fifty-sixth Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland taking place this year at Thomas Street Methodist Church from Thursday 5th June until Saturday 7th June 2025.

Alan grew up in Knockbreda in Belfast in the 1970s and although his parents were not church-goers they did send him along to Sunday School at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Through his involvement there, he remembers making a commitment to Christ as a child. He was educated at Cregagh Primary School and Knockbreda High School, and when he left school he joined the Civil Service briefly before studying English and Politics at the University of Ulster.

It was during a service at Thomas Street Methodist that Alan heard an audible voice saying, 'I want you to become a Methodist minister'.

Following a number of years of Bible teaching, reflection and training in evangelism at Cliff College in Sheffield, he completed his studies and then went on to become a local preacher in training.

Alan served in a number of evangelism and pastoral roles within in the Church, both in Ireland and in London; and in 1989 he was welcomed as a candidate for the ordained ministry in Ireland. He completed three years training at Edgehill College in Belfast and was ordained at Conference in 1994 in Portadown.

Currently Superintendent of the Portadown Circuit, through the years Alan has served on the Londonderry Mission, Newtownards, Dublin South, Cregagh and Glenburn and South East Leinster Circuits. Alan currently serves on the Board of Education, the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee and as Wesley College Governor.

Alan has described being appointed as President Designate ‘a truly humbling experience’, and one he did not expect.

The Connexional theme for the twelve month’s Alan is in office is, ‘Compelled’, which stems from the passage in 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, where it says, ‘Christ’s love compels us’.

Speaking ahead of his installation, the Rev Wardlow said:

“What I will be saying is, people need Jesus. We need to share Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. We need to be

unflinching in offering Christ, and the Holy Spirit will help us find ways of doing this.”

As the Methodist Church in Ireland continues to focus on evangelism and growth in the year ahead; upon approval of Conference, the Church plans to appoint the Rev Dr Stephen Skuce (currently District Superintendent of the North Western District) in a new stationed post as Growing Churches Officer (Ireland) beginning this September.

In his inaugural address on the evening of Thursday 5th June, the Rev Alan Wardlow will encourage the Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to continue to proclaim Christ with boldness.

He will ask the Church:

“Would it not be a different Church if all who profess faith and have a living relationship with Jesus Christ witnessed to it, shared it and preached it?”

He will affirm that true and lasting spiritual growth begins within the individual, and his prayer is that each of us would feel a ‘deep, compelling urgency’ to take intentional steps to share the message of Jesus to see many come to faith or experience a renewed commitment in the year ahead.

He will conclude by saying:

“All of us can do something. Growth begins with us all who are Christians, engaging in a personal relationship with Jesus, witnessing ourselves and joining with others to share the good news with urgency and love.”

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The Service of Installation of Rev Alan Wardlow as President will take place on Thursday 5th June, 7.30pm at Thomas Street Methodist Church, Portadown and will also be live streamed on YouTube.

At Conference in 2024, Mrs Elaine M Barnett was installed as Lay Leader of the Conference for 2024-2026 and will therefore continue in her role throughout the 2025-2026 Connexional year.

Live stream - Conference 2025 will be live streamed, beginning with the Installation Service for the Rev Alan Wardlow on Thursday. The Ordination Service will take place on the Friday evening at 7.30pm and Co

Miss Sheila Greenlee

We are saddened to note the recent death of Miss Sheila Greenlee.

Sheila was an outstanding and long term member of staff at the Connor, Down and Dromore Church Office in Belfast.

Her funeral will be in St Molua's Church where she was a long-time parishioner, at 10.00am on Thursday 5 June 2025.

Events

The Reluctant Drag focus of annual Children's Summer School



Children's Summer Music School

THE RELUCTANT DRAGON

by John Rutter

Ages 5–8 Songbirds Course | Ages 9–15 Junior Course

Monday 11 – Friday 15 August, 9am – 4pm daily

Stranmillis College, Belfast, BT9 5DY

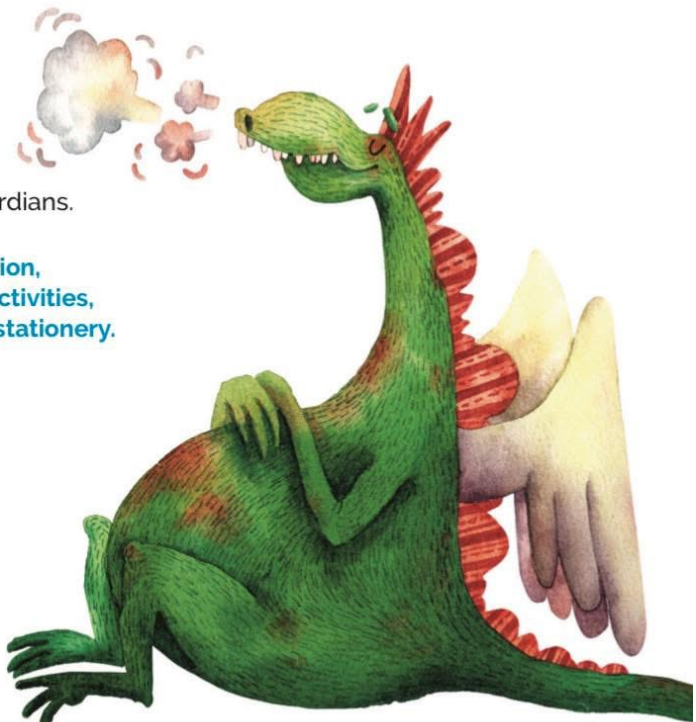
The Ulster Consort Foundation is very excited to present Stranmillis College as the venue for the Children's Summer Music School 2025! Children, ages 5–15, will receive expert daily tuition provided by some of Northern Ireland's leading musicians whilst having great fun preparing music for a grand concert on the final evening. Our featured work this year is Sir John Rutter's charming and heart-warming musical fable, *The Reluctant Dragon*.

Stranmillis College provides the perfect location for a week of music-making, great outdoor spaces for break times, and a fantastic theatre for the end of week concert. It also allows for super easy drop off and pick up by parents/guardians.

Cost: £200, which includes all musical tuition, a cooked lunch each day, snacks, group activities, a branded top, music, music folders, and stationery.
To book now, visit [eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk)

Further information is available by emailing hello@ulsterconsort.org

Audience Grand Finale tickets (£10, free admission for children) are available in advance via [eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk), and on the evening at the door.



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The Ulster Consort Foundation's much loved annual Children's Summer School isn't far away! I'm really looking forward to running the Junior Course and to working once again with India Chapman Webb, who will be looking after our Songbirds!

This year, the Summer School takes place in the beautiful surroundings of Stranmillis University College, Belfast, with superb facilities, lots of outdoor space, and easy parking for parents!

The focus for the children this year is Sir John Rutter's delightful setting of 'The Reluctant Dragon', which is a lot of fun! All details are on the leaflet reproduced in this issue of CNI.

Places are already going quickly, so early booking is advised: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/summer-music-school-tickets-1280490193639>

Perspective

The miracle of grace that the RUC prevented Northern Ireland from a deeper level of conflict - Archbishop John McDowell

Archbishop John McDowell, the Church of Ireland's Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, preached at the annual service for the Royal Ulster

Constabulary George Cross Foundation in Darling Street Methodist Church, Enniskillen, on Sunday afternoon (1st June).

In the course of his remarks, Archbishop McDowell reflected on the miracle of grace that the RUC prevented Northern Ireland from a deeper level of conflict in the years of the Troubles, and also that the RUC officers were able to create and maintain normality in their own homes at this time. He assured those who were bereaved by the murder of police officers that they continued to be upheld in prayer and in the available presence of the peace of God.

The archbishop's sermon is in full below -

May all the words that I say to you be in the Name of Jesus Christ our Risen Lord.

I have a confession to make. Not a very juicy or newsworthy confession I should add. For very good reasons, Sandra had asked for the readings to be used in this service much earlier in the year than usual. After a bit of thought, I chose the two readings which have been so well read for us today. Usually when I have to choose readings (which isn't that often as they are almost always provided in the Common Lectionary) I make a note to myself about what they have suggested to me, as a kind of starter for when I sit down to write the sermon.

For some reason or other I didn't do that for these readings. I can see very clearly why I chose the reading from Philippians but I have no idea what I was thinking about

when I chose the Old Testament reading! Nevertheless that is where I want to begin.

As you will know, the Foundation's principal aim is to mark the sacrifice and honour the achievements of the RUC. For all sorts of reasons, the emphasis often falls on the first of these aims – to mark the sacrifice – but the achievements are also important. First and foremost, the RUC was a law enforcement body. And it had to fulfill that task at a time when there was a kind of licensed lawlessness in large parts of society. Rather like Israel at the time of the Judges, every man did what he thought was right in his own eyes, rather than what the law required.

In many older churches, you will find what are known as the Tablets of the Law – the Ten Commandments – inscribed on wooden boards on either side of the Lord's Table. They are laid out in a couple of places in the Hebrew Bible but most of us learned them from that twentieth chapter of Exodus which we read from today. And, of course, the first commandment is: "You shall have no other gods but me". And it is the first commandment because it is when we create other gods that we justify ourselves when we break any of the other commandments.

God is the person who weighs heaviest in the scales of our affections and if we replace the one true God as he is made known to us in his Son, Jesus Christ, then we have created and will worship another God. Often in this country some idea of "the nation", whichever nation that may have been, weighed heaviest in the affections of many people. The most horrendous violence was perpetrated in the name of Ireland or in the name of Ulster. Indeed at times God was

co-opted to justify that violence – for God and Ulster. But God is not our co-worker or our patron; he is our Judge and our Redeemer in that order.

“Every man did what they thought was right in his own eyes” so to prevent Israel from becoming a rabble, God gave them the Law (sometimes called “the work of His left hand”). Until quite recently in history most societies were self-policing. In many remote places they are still. But here in West it became necessary to introduce professional guardians of the law. First in cities but eventually in rural areas too. Yet even then society depended on a certain internalised respect for the law to hold itself together.

The RUC operated in a climate where none of these normalising factors existed for large numbers of people. The RUC had to operate within a society which was the result of the entangled complexity of Irish history and in the face of extraordinarily devious and sophisticated terrorist groups. It was not only an achievement of law enforcement and courage, but also, when we look back, a miracle of grace, that Northern Ireland was not completely reduced to ashes.

In that reading from Exodus, just after the Tablets of the Law have been given, the people cannot bear to receive the Law themselves. They are afraid of God and they ask Moses to receive the Law in their stead. During many of the years when the RUC operated in Northern Ireland, I think that many of us were afraid of everything but God and we expected the RUC to make up the difference and to carry an unbearable weight of our fears and anxieties.

Yet, it would be wrong to think of the RUC as simply a counter-terrorism force. That is not how the majority of ordinary people experienced police officers and the police force during those years. They were the people you called if your son or daughter hadn't come home when you had expected or when your house had been burgled or when your cat got stuck up a tree. The presence of a police constable in any place is a source of reassurance vastly out of proportion to his or her actual physical presence and that was especially so during those very difficult times.

Now, it is probably worth saying at this point that those of us who had members of our families serving as members of the RUC are very well aware that they weren't perfected saints. The sheer emotional stress of the vocation made sure of that, as did the normal frailties of human nature. There were grumpy, unpleasant and disobliging police officers just as there are grumpy, unpleasant and disobliging clergymen. But thinking back over that time, it is also something of a miracle of grace: the level of simple normality which RUC officers were able to create and to maintain in their own homes.

But for many of you here today there will be more desolate memories. Memories of the news which you had always feared but put out of your minds as much as you could. The anxiety when you heard a distant explosion or heard of a shooting on a news bulletin. The knowledge that never again would you experience that feeling of relief when you heard the key in the door and the sound of that familiar voice. That the person for who you were the most important person in the whole world was gone for good. Those who have kept yourselves busy over all these years when you

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would have been much happier simply sitting beside your husband or your wife or your father or your child, doing nothing.

So our prayers continue to be with all of those who have loved and prayed and wept and endured. And I hope that they can dwell on the words of St Paul to rejoice in the Lord always and to let your gentleness be known to all people. To remember in all circumstances – when you are poor in spirit and when you are in good spirits – that the Lord is near.

It will be difficult to follow Paul's advice not to worry about anything (I think most of us are worriers at heart) and if you find it difficult to let your prayers and requests and even thanksgivings be made known to God, others will be praying for you. And the peace of God will keep your hearts and your minds, for the peace of God is not a glassy calm. It is a mighty confidence.

And, of course, dwell on whatever has been true and just and pure and pleasing and commendable in your treasured memories ... and the God of peace will be with you.

And now unto Him, who by the power at work within us is able to do far more than we can ask or think, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus, unto all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Poem for today

Excerpt from 'A Morning Offering'

by John O'Donahue

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I place on the altar of dawn:
The quiet loyalty of breath,
The tent of thought where I shelter,
Waves of desire I am shore to
And all beauty drawn to the eye.

May my mind come alive today
To the invisible geography
That invites me to new frontiers,
To break the dead shell of yesterdays,
To risk being disturbed and changed.

May I have the courage today
To live the life that I would love,
To postpone my dream no longer
But do at last what I came here for
And waste my heart on fear no more.

Excerpt from 'A Morning Offering' found in his books,
To Bless the Space Between Us (US) / Benedictus (Europe)
Ordering Info: <https://johnodonohue.com/store>

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

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

Please recommend to your friends