

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Porvoo Communion meets

Image of the day



Porvoo Communion

The Porvoo Communion is a fellowship of Anglican and Evangelical Lutheran churches in Europe, established in 1992 to promote unity and shared mission among its members.

This month their conference was held in Cardiff, and they were lucky enough to be able to host the Church of the Faroe Islands formally joining the communion.

The Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Reverend Michael Jackson is the Anglican co-chairman. Also representing the

Church of Ireland were the Revd Canon Stephen Fielding and Dr Andrew Pierce.

You can find out more about the communion here:

<https://porvoocommunion.org/> and about the special service here:

<https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/.../special-service-in.../>

Anglican–Orthodox dialogue began in 1973, when the Anglican–Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Discussions (A/OJDD) held its first meeting in Oxford.

The first phase of the dialogue was concluded by the publication of **The Moscow Agreed Statement in 1976**.

The publication of **The Dublin Agreed Statement in 1984** brought its **second phase** to a conclusion.

Both statements record a measure of agreement on a range of specific topics, while acknowledging continuing divergence on others. Orthodox members are from the Churches in Communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The third phase of the dialogue began in 1989, when the commission was re-constituted as The International Commission for Anglican–Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOTD) under the chairmanship of Metropolitan John of Pergamon and Bishop Henry Hill (succeeded in 1990 by Bishop Mark Dyer) and drawing together senior clergy and theologians from across the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Anglican Communion. Its task has been to consider the doctrine of the Church in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity, and to examine the doctrine of the ordained ministry

of the Church. Particular attention has been given to the question of who may be ordained to the presbyterate and episcopate. This third phase of the dialogue has given further consideration to ecclesiological issues discussed in earlier phases, and to aspects of Trinitarian doctrine.

The fourth phase began in Crete in 2009, and has met in 2010 in Oxford, 2011 in Albania, 2012 in Chester, 2013 in Serbia, 2014 in Jerusalem, 2015 in Buffalo, where it published its report *In the Image and Likeness of God: A Hope-Filled Anthropology*. This work of theological anthropology formed the foundation for further areas of work. In 2016 the meeting was in Armagh, 2017 in Malta, 2018 in Cyprus and 2019 in Canterbury, where the Commission completed the text *Stewards of Creation: A Hope-Filled Ecology*, which was published in October 2020.

News

Bishop Denis Nulty: Marriage poverty is multi-faceted: material, social, moral & cultural

Accord Catholic Marriage Care Service graduation Mass

Thirteen new graduates have been conferred to work in Accord Catholic Marriage Care centres, across the island of Ireland, to deliver marriage preparation programmes, along with six new counsellor graduates specialising in couple therapy.



On 11 October, Graduation Mass was celebrated by Bishop Denis Nulty, President of Accord, in the historic College Chapel of Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth.

Bishop Nulty said - Marriage poverty is multi-faceted: material, social, moral & cultural Please see homily below:

To read about the Accord Catholic Marriage Care Service graduation Mass click -

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2025/10/13/bishop-nulty-marriage-poverty-is-multi-faceted-material-social-moral-cultural/>

Andy Burnham has “great hope” for the next Archbishop of Canterbury

Andy Burnham has said he has “great hope” for the next Archbishop of Canterbury, Dame Sarah Mullally.

The Mayor of Greater Manchester was delivering the religion thinktank **Theos’ annual lecture**.

He echoed phrasing from the late Pope Francis, saying that he wanted to see governing British institutions move from “a crisis of trust to a culture of encounter”.

“The world has become more complex, but the way we run things has not,” said Burnham. “In many ways, it is the same as it was in the last century, and this creates a disconnect between people and politics. People have lost trust in the ability of politics to fix things”.

He outlined a vision for national governance, including a community fund. He also praised the work of the Greater Manchester LiveWell programme, a health and wellbeing partnership between community organisations, faith groups, and public services. Burnham said the collaboration “demonstrates the power of working together at a grassroots level”.

Dame Sarah Mullally has been involved in similar projects through the multi-faith Health Inequalities Action Group.

Burnham's talk at Theos comes hot off the heels of an alleged desire for Labour party leadership. This month’s



Labour conference was dominated by an undercutting of Starmer's leadership, with a not-so-subtle challenge by Burnham, when he claimed the country needed a new national vision. The Mayor attempted to maintain an air of coyness, telling reporters that a change in leadership was "up to party members".

In the same week, a YouGov survey revealed that 62% of Labour members would support Burnham over Starmer.

Speaking after the lecture, Theos' Director, Chine McDonald, said: "Andy Burnham set out a bold challenge for community organisations, including faith groups. If society can be rebuilt from the bottom up, then communities of faith have a key role to play.

"We will need to learn to collaborate with local and regional government. We will need to be strategic, seek opportunities

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to serve, offer our resources, and find courage to live out our beliefs beyond the walls of the church".

Education



Generous donation by Coleraine Olympic gold medal rower

Coleraine's Olympic gold medal rower Hannah Scott has donated £20,000 through the Olympic Medallist Fund to Bann Rowing Club as a fitting tribute to the support it gives to the community.

Hannah – who was presented with the MBE earlier this year – was given the award following her success at the Paris Olympic Games in 2024 and it has been put to good purpose by the club to buy two single scull boats and a safety boat.

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To make the donation even more memorable, Communities Minister Gordon Lyons joined Hannah at the launch of the boat named after her which was funded by his Department.

"It is a privilege to join Hannah as she launches a boat, proudly bearing her own name, here at her local club," said the Minister.

Young Kelvin Prize Awards 2025

The Ulster-Scots Agency, in partnership with the Institute of Physics, are delighted to have presented the prize winners of the Young Kelvin Prize 2025 with their trophies in a special ceremony at Parliament Buildings.

The three winners – Shane (Best Overall), Joshua (Best Science Communication) and Patryk (Best Physics Knowledge) – all demonstrated exceptional insight relating to the work of Lord Kelvin (William Thomson), an Ulster-Scot born in Belfast in 1824, who earned many accolades during his scientific career.

Read more about the event and Lord Kelvin's innovations here <https://ow.ly/gEP150X947w>

Institute of Physics | Wallace High School | St. Columba's College | Grosvenor Grammar School

MCB - Methodist College Biology



As part of their A-Level Biology curriculum, Upper Sixth pupils undertook fieldwork at both Murlough Beach and Tollymore Forest.

They employed systematic and random sampling techniques to investigate biodiversity across woodland and coastal habitats. Through hands-on data collection, students deepened their understanding of how scientists study nature and will apply statistical analysis to interpret and analyse their findings.

Cathedral Calls

Second recital in Armagh by Ven Dr Peter Thompson

The 2025/2026 organ recital series will continue in St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh, when the Ven Dr Peter Thompson gives the second recital in the new series on Sunday 19 October 2025 at 4.15pm.

Peter is the Assistant Organist at the Cathedral. His programme will include Max Reger's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor and Major, Thalben-Ball's Elegy, JS Bach's Prelude and Fugue in G Major and his Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele, and finally Stanford's Six Short Preludes and Postludes.

Speaking ahead of his organ recital, Peter said, "It is a delight and a pleasure to be involved in resurrecting the Armagh Cathedral recital series after a post-covid hiatus. The Cathedral organ is one of the finest on the island, a delight both to play and to listen to. Since taking up my role in 2010, I've performed a wide range of repertoire, showcasing the versatility of the instrument, but for this recital I've chosen a series of pieces simply because I enjoy them!"

Peter continued, "The arresting Toccata and Fugue by the late romantic German composer, Max Reger, grips the listener from the opening flourish through to the triumphant climax. Thalben-Ball's evocative Elegy is a favourite of many organists. Bach is represented by two works, his sparkling G major Prelude and Fugue, and the sublime and impassioned chorale prelude, Schmücke dich, and the programme will conclude with a series of pieces by the Dublin born composer, Charles Villiers Stanford, the centenary of whose death was commemorated last year.

The Dean of Armagh, the **Very Revd Shane Forster**, added, “Dr Thompson is a man of many talents – Archdeacon of Armagh, Rector of three Parishes and Assistant Organist in the Cathedral! He is a skilled accompanist and imaginative recitalist who will introduce a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar music to the listening audience through his emotive and sensitive playing of the great Cathedral organ,”

The recital will last forty minutes and all are welcome to attend. Admission is free, with donations to the Choir Fund greatly appreciated. The next recital will be given by **Canon Martin White** on Sunday 30 November 2025 at 4.15pm.

One People Oration at Westminster Abbey Institute

Westminster Abbey Institute will be welcoming Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, to the Abbey on Monday 17 November when he'll be giving this year's One People Oration.

In one of his final public addresses before leaving office, he'll be reflecting on a decade of leadership, global displacement, and moral responsibility in his lecture, The courage to welcome: solidarity in a divided world.

Rivers of life at St Canice's

On Sunday 5th October a large congregation gathered in Saint Canice's Cathedral for 'A Celebration of the Shared Life and Witness of our Diocese'.

The service was led by the Bishop, and the preacher was the Very Reverend Dr David Monteith, Dean of Canterbury Cathedral. The Dean began his sermon by bringing to the Diocese the warm greetings of the Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral and of the Archbishop-Designate of Canterbury, Dame Sarah Mullaly who, the Dean said, knows the Kilkenny area well from family holidays. Speaking on the healing of the man born blind in John 9 the Dean challenged the Diocese to use wisely the gift of spiritual sight we have been given through Jesus.

In the service the rivers which flow through the six ancient sees in the Diocese were linked to the prayer and faith which flows through our shared life. After the sermon children from across the Diocese brought water from some of the rivers which flow through the Diocese – the Suir, Blackwater, Nore, Slaney, Barrow and Bann – and carrying it in the ewers used to fill the fonts for baptism in each of the six cathedrals in the Diocese, the water was poured into the font in Saint Canice's. After the water was blessed by the bishop the congregation renewed their baptismal promises as a sign of our shared faith and renewed commitment to God's Kingdom in this See.

Earlier in the day the Dean had also preached in Saint Canice's at the Choral Eucharist when he spoke of his time as Dean of Leicester when he had been responsible for the burial of King Richard III, noting that the King was now buried under a sizeable piece of Kilkenny Limestone.

The Dean was in the Diocese at the invitation of the Bishop and was the keynote speaker at the Clergy Conference held in Dungarvan.

Origins of Saint Mary's Cathedral, Limerick

Saint Mary's Cathedral in Limerick, founded in 1168, stands on the site of a former Viking palace.

It was established by King Donal Mór O'Brien, who reputedly donated his royal palace for the building of the cathedral. This makes Saint Mary's not only one of the oldest buildings in Limerick still in use, but also a unique blend of sacred architecture and ancient royal heritage.

Clergy and ministry

Communities Minister visits PCI Gray's Court

Communities Minister, Gordon Lyons MLA, saw first-hand earlier this month the benefit that supported accommodation provides for homeless people recovering from substance abuse, when he visited Gray's Court in north Belfast.

Opened in the year 2000, Gray's Court is one of the services provided by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's (PCI) Council for Social Witness, the PCI's social care arm, and is managed by Carlisle House, PCI's Substance Use Treatment Centre.



Welcoming the Minister to **Gray's Court, Project Worker, Frances Craig** said,

In the 1990s, our colleagues in Carlisle House identified a need for supported accommodation for people in early recovery from substance miss use and were homeless, or living in circumstances detrimental to their recovery. As a result, the service at Gray's Court began 25 years ago and has provided help and support to over 300 men and women since then.

We have seven fully furnished apartments and as a regional service we accept referrals from across Northern Ireland, providing accommodation for people over the age of 18 who are registered homeless and have previously engaged in treatment for substance use. An important

proviso is that they wish to continue their recovery and remain substance free.

Funded by the **Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Supporting People programme, and run in partnership with Woven Housing Association**, Mrs Craig said that residents stay for up to two years and are assisted in developing their own personal support plan, which includes attending weekly support groups at Gray's Court, or with their initial treatment unit.

Mrs Craig continued,

Comprehensive support services, and individualised care, helps to empower residents to develop the skills, confidence, and resources needed to live independently and thrive in recovery. Access to education, voluntary work and employment are also important, are key elements of the Support Plan.

Speaking after his visit, Minister Lyons said,

Through the Department for Communities' Supporting People programme, administered by the NIHE, we are able to fund a number of supported housing services across Northern Ireland, including Gray's Court. These services demonstrate how individuals in need can be supported to live independent and empowered lives, given the right support, guidance and care within a safe environment.

Frances Craig concluded by saying, "The overall goal is that people have this two-year space in a safe and therapeutic environment to reconnect with their family, community, and

faith, while maintaining a substance free life. Our work is undertaken within a Christian ethos, which underpins our service, compassion, respect and acceptance of the men and women we support, which, I hope, is a powerful social witness of the gospel.

"That said, it is a place that has seen many lives changed and turned around, and I hope that the minister found his visit today informative and useful. A cornerstone of that recovery, however, is access to housing when they leave us. We see this as not just shelter, but a home that can provide the stability that is necessary for recovery, growth, and reintegration into the community where they can flourish."

Caroline Yeomans, Council for Social Witness Deputy Director, also met the Minister at Gray's Court.

We very much welcomed Mr Lyon's visit today, and his interest in our work. As a social care provider, we look after over 300 people across our many sites.

Whether they are homes for the elderly, residential care for those with physical and intellectual learning disability, or temporary accommodation for offenders, all our homes and community-based programmes like Gray's Court, are about meeting people's needs as we put our faith into practical action. It is an important service and I want to pay tribute to Frances, Julia and the whole team for the work that they do.

Resources

Book Launch: Christopher White on Pope Leo XIV

The election of Pope Leo XIV signals a defining moment for the Catholic Church.

As he steps onto the world stage, the first pontiff ever to hail from the United States inherits the throne of St Peter, the legacy of Pope Francis, and the challenges of a rapidly changing Church.

In “Pope Leo XIV”, veteran Vatican National Catholic Reporter correspondent Christopher White delivers an authoritative account of the conclave that shaped this momentous transition, the forces that propelled Pope Leo XIV to the papacy, and the vision he brings to the Church's future. How will Pope Leo pursue the Synodal journey?

There's an opportunity to join in a conversation with Christopher White, at the launch of his book, at the London Jesuit Centre, 114 Mount Street, London W1K 3AH on Saturday 18 October from 3-5pm.

In the media

Church of Ireland sets up 'task force' to allow weddings in secular sites - Belfast Telegraph

Meetings to be held towards permitting ceremonies in settings like hotels - Noel McAdam writes

The Church of Ireland has set up a 'task force' to examine the prospect of allowing official weddings in secular settings.

It is the first of the four main denominations — the others Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist — to take steps towards allowing church marriages in hotels, homes and even the open air.

The 12-strong working group is to hold its first meeting early next month when it will appoint a chair and set out how it intends to go about its mission.

A number of Northern Ireland church figures, including Canon Jen McWhirter, the Rector of Cleenish in the Diocese of Clogher, the Rev Carlton Baxter, the Rector of Kilmore in the Diocese of Armagh and Ken Gibson, the lay honorary secretary of the General Synod — are among the membership.

It also includes Canon Lesley Robinson of Dublin and Glendalough who brought the issue to this year's Synod.

Current Church marriage regulations firmly state: “Marriages are ordinarily solemnised in a church or chapel of the Church of Ireland, duly consecrated for public worship.

“Marriages shall not be solemnised at any place other than a church or chapel of the Col [Church of Ireland], unless the

circumstances are exceptional and the prior approval of the relevant bishop has been obtained.”

And opponents of the decision to set up the group have warned the move could undermine the historic position of Col churches north and south, which are on sacred ground.

But the agreement to press ahead earlier this year came against the backdrop of the level of church weddings falling drastically.

Research collated by the church's central statistics office in the Republic revealed the number of Church of Ireland marriages solemnised in the last 10 years has decreased by more than 50%.

And former school principal and Col member Nuala Dudley said the trend in Northern Ireland is similar, while civil ceremonies are growing in popularity - in the south now accounting for around a third of all marriages.

Canon Robinson argued: “Couples choose secular wedding venues for many reasons — perhaps for the convenience of having everything in one place, or perhaps because of the lack of accessibility, comfort, parking or toilet facilities in many of our churches.

“While it is true that some couples may have no wish to have a religious ceremony, undoubtedly, there are others who would opt for a religious ceremony if it were an option in their chosen venue.

“To be able to provide such an option could be a wonderful missional opportunity for clergy to bring God's Word and Spirit into ceremonies and places and congregations currently off limits, as if somehow God's presence is confined to our beautiful church buildings.”

And she added that in an increasingly secular society, pastoral services such as baptisms and funerals, as well as weddings, are attended by people who are not regular church attenders.

But the Revd George Okikiolu, of the diocese of Dromore, said he felt the move threatened the solemnity of Christian marriage, which is a covenant before God and should take place on sacred ground.

He suggested that marriage in civic venues would subtly reduce a sacred audience to a personal celebration, when the Church was called to uphold the standards of God.

He added that to have weddings outside the Church was argued to risk severing the historic connection and moving beyond the walls of the church was “a shift in theology and a compromise”.

Archdeacon Mark Harvey, also of Dromore, said his congregation have been without their historic church, Shankill in Lurgan, for structural reasons and he had found it difficult not to be able to conduct funerals and baptisms.

He claimed it had reminded him that the consecrated church building was holy ground and the establishment of the

working group was “lowering the bar to which the Church should aspire”.

“The solemnising of marriages in places like hotels does not feel right to me,” he added.

Responding, however, Canon Robinson agreed the church is sacred ground but added “all the world is sacred ground” and it was a core part of Christian belief “that God is everywhere”.

Another member of the group, Andrew Brannigan, diocesan development officer of Down and Dromore, said there was a necessity for a working group since church regulations already made clear that in exceptional circumstances, couples could go to their Bishops to ask for permission.

The group also includes Dean Niall Sloane, the Dean of Limerick, Dr Ruth Gardiner and Judy Peters, both lay members of General Synod from the Diocese of Connor, Cork, Cloyne and Ross, respectively.

Membership of the working group will also include two members to be appointed by the House of Bishops, representing the Province of Armagh and the Province of Dublin respectively.

The first meeting of the committee is to be on November 3 where the dates of meetings up until June of next year will also be set.

The Royal Irish Regiment Conspicuous Gallantry Cross

On the 6th October 2006, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II awarded The Royal Irish Regiment the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross in recognition of the bravery, sacrifice and service of the Home Service battalions of The Royal Irish Regiment and their forebears, The Ulster Defence Regiment.

The Conspicuous Gallantry Cross is an operational gallantry medal awarded to all ranks of the services in recognition of an act (or acts) of conspicuous gallantry during active operations against the enemy.

It is the first time the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross has been collectively awarded to any military unit, and only the third occasion, since the start of the Second World War, that such a collective award has been bestowed. The first was the 1942 George Cross awarded to Malta, and the second was in 1999 when the George Cross was awarded to the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

The award of the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross to The Royal Irish Regiment was promulgated in Supplement No 1 to The London Gazette dated Monday 18 December 2006 (Page 17495) and stated:

The Queen has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross to the Royal Irish Regiment (27th (Inniskilling) 83rd, 87th and the Ulster Defence Regiment).

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More than 60,000 men and women served in the R IRISH or UDR since 1970. 274 soldiers were killed by the IRA and other republican paramilitaries.

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

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