

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Thelma Hopkins thanksgiving

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Thelma Hopkins thanksgiving

On Sunday evening members of Victoria College Belfast Junior Chamber Choir were honoured to perform at a special Service of Thanksgiving in Ballylesson Parish Church, celebrating the life and achievements of their esteemed past pupil, Ms Thelma Hopkins.

Thelma Hopkins holds an exceptional record as an athlete, having won a Silver Medal in the Long Jump at the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games, and setting a world record in the High Jump that same year. As a school community, we take immense pride in all that she accomplished throughout her remarkable life.

The choir performed a beautiful rendition of The Londonderry Air, conducted by Mrs Murray, and greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet members of Ms Hopkins' family and learn more about her inspiring story.

News

CMS visits St Donard's

Rev Roger preached at St Donard's, Bloomfield, harvest recently meeting up with new Rector Jan Stevenson.



He shared stories of people from **Shyogwe Diocese** whose lives have planted a seed of inspiration in many hearts. A video greeting from Bishop Louis Kabayiza was shown.

CMS Ireland is also delighted at how a partnership between the two dioceses of **Kondoa and Derry and Raphoe** is beginning to flourish and will be further strengthened with the reciprocal visit of Bishop Andrew and Heather.

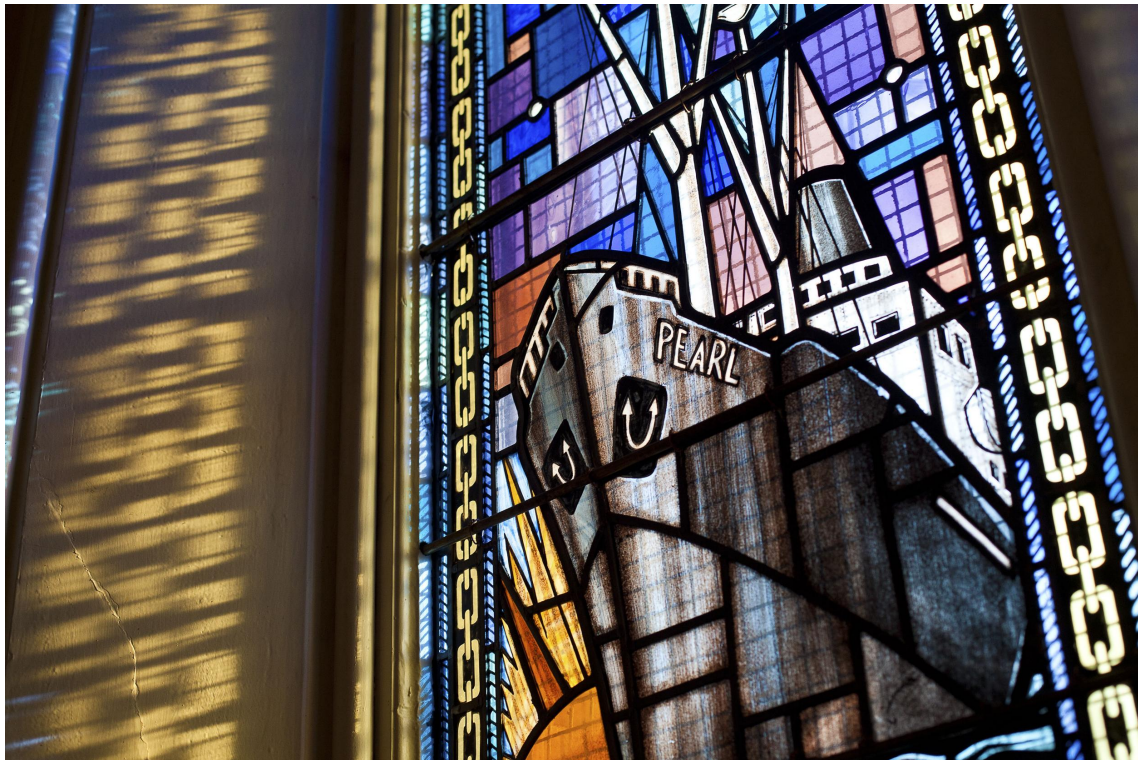
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Parishioners from the parish of Athy in Dublin and Glendalough are also planning a visit with their rector Rev Connor O'Reilly in 2026.

Nominees for National Churches Trust Church & Community Volunteer Awards

Volunteer teams play a crucial role in connecting church and community. The Church & Community Volunteer Awards celebrate the incredible work they do to keep churches open and thriving.

The winners of the awards, run in partnership with the Marsh Charitable Trust, will be announced later this month. Today we're highlighting four incredible nominees:



At Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church in Belfast Docklands (above), everyone volunteers



- from the youngest members to those in their nineties. The whole congregation pulls together: polishing brass, cleaning floors, arranging flowers, maintaining historic buildings, cooking student lunches, serving tea, welcoming visitors, and keeping their unique seafaring church alive and shining.

At Gloucester Ukrainian Church of the Good Shepherd, for over 50 years the community has poured heart and soul into their church, founded by second-generation Ukrainians and still powered by dedicated volunteers today. From maintaining the building to running events, sending regular aid to Ukraine, and welcoming displaced families with open arms, their generosity knows no bounds.

From bell tower repairs to scarecrow festivals, concerts, walking trails & pudding clubs, the **Friends of Longhope Church** have reimagined All Saints as a vibrant hub for the whole community. Their proudest moment? Raising an

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incredible £62,000 in just 18 months to restore the silent bells, bringing their joyful sound back to the village after three long years.

With a team of around 25 dedicated volunteers, **Old Bolingbroke St Peter & St Paul** has brought its historic church back to life - making it watertight, restored, and full of energy. From mowing and maintenance to c oncerts, pop-up pubs, heritage tours, weddings, exhibitions, and even a Pets Service, this diverse group puts the church at the heart of village life.



Find out more about these three fantastic volunteer teams, as well as all our other nominees:

<https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/finalists2025>



Scottish Episcopal Church General Synod 2026 to be held in Stirling

The annual General Synod meeting of the Scottish Episcopal Church is to be held outside Edinburgh for the first time in over 20 years.

From 11-13 June 2026, General Synod will be held in the main conference facility at the Stirling Court Hotel, on the University of Stirling campus.

The move away from Edinburgh takes place after difficulties emerged in recent years over securing accommodation in Edinburgh during June, with availability becoming increasingly limited and room rate costs soaring.

The Provincial Standing Committee assessed the options for 2026, listening to concerns about the costs and practical challenges that are brought by meeting in Edinburgh in June. After then considering key factors such as access, capacity and accommodation, the committee opted to host next year's Synod at the Stirling Court Hotel.

As well as offering excellent facilities and affordable room rates, the campus is centrally located, allowing easier travel access for many General Synod members. The campus also offers attractive surroundings where Synod members could spend time together away from the business of the meeting.

St George's College Jerusalem warmly welcomes appointment of Archbishop of Canterbury

The College says - We know Bishop Sarah from two visits she made to Jerusalem in the past five years.

Firstly, representing the Archbishop of Canterbury for the College's centenary celebrations when she preached in St George's Cathedral. Secondly, Bishop Sarah visited in 2023 and joined one of our study pilgrimages visiting the holy places and Living Stones of the Holy Land.

We know that Dame Sarah holds the Christians of this land closely in her heart and we are touched that she mentioned



The photo shows Bishop Sarah in the Chapel of St Michael and All Angels in St George's Cathedral, Jerusalem on the occasion of St George's College Centenary in 2020. Picture l-r: Dean (now Archbishop) Hosam Naoum, Bishop Sarah, Archbishop Suheil Dawani (now ret), Dean Richard Sewell.

her Palestinian Christian sisters and brothers in her public statement on her appointment.

We pray for our sister Sarah as she takes up her appointment as the first female Archbishop of Canterbury.

We call upon Anglicans around the world to put aside differences of theology and ecclesial polity to unite under her archiepiscopacy so that together we can serve our Lord Jesus Christ to share hope for a wounded and divided world.

Message from Pope Leo for World Mission Sunday

In a special video message Pope Leo XIV, invites you to take part in World Mission Sunday on 19 October.

Pope Leo is urging every Catholic and every parish across the globe to unite in prayer and practical support for missionaries who work alongside communities in need in the most remote and troubled parts of our world.

In recalling his missionary experience in Peru, Pope Leo says: 'When I served as a missionary priest and then bishop in Peru, I saw first-hand how the faith, the prayer and the generosity shown on World Mission Sunday can transform entire communities'.

The Pope explains how your prayers and support on World Mission Sunday are vital in spreading the Gospel and in supporting the Church's outreach and mission in very practical ways. Your support, coordinated by Missio, helps build churches, chapels and schools and supports missionaries as they enable people to experience God's compassion and love through their care and the witness of their lives.

You can watch the video here:

<https://youtu.be/ZYRe8oG-iUw>

World Mission Sunday 2025:

<https://missio.org.uk/world-mission-sunday-2025/>

Education



Growing a greener future

Belfast City Airport - Through our Community Fund, we're proud to support The Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland's biodiversity initiative – helping young people across Greater Belfast and North Down connect with nature and protect their environment.

Through hands-on workshops:

- 🌿 Over 265 pupils took part
- 🌿 1,750 native tree seeds were sown

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🌿 1,450 new trees expected to grow

Together with The Conservation Volunteers, we're creating greener schools, boosting biodiversity, and inspiring the next generation of environmental leaders.

Read the full story here: <https://bit.ly/Community-Fund-TCV>



Mock Interview Event 2025

St Malachi's College, Belfast : We proudly hosted our annual Mock Interview Event, where over 120 Year 14 students embraced the chance to sharpen their

interview skills and showcase their passion for their chosen fields.

A huge thank you to our volunteer interviewers from a wide range of industries who generously gave their time and expertise.

We were thrilled to hear so many positive comments from our guests about the impressive attitude, confidence, and professionalism shown by our boys! Gloria ab Intus!

Parallel Histories event for M6 pupils

Belfast Royal Academy -[Some of our M6 pupils recently attended a debate day at Stormont, organised by Parallel Histories.

The event involved around 20 schools from across Northern Ireland coming together to debate controversial topics - for the BRA delegation, this involved debating both sides of the argument around who was to blame for the slow progress of the Good Friday Agreement peace process. Thank you to Mr Campbell for supporting our pupils with this interesting event.

Cathedral Calls

Northern Ireland International Organ Competition winner recital in Westminster Abbey

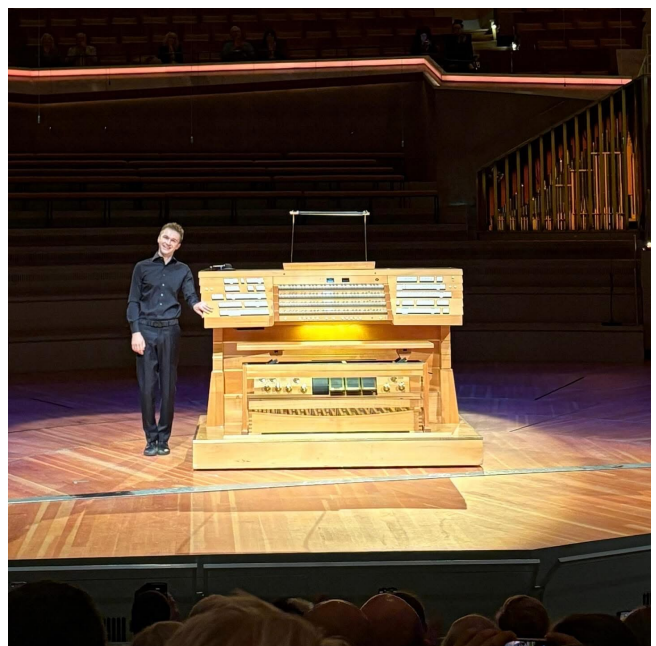
Everyone's welcome in the Abbey at 5pm on Sunday for a free recital by Jan Liebermann, winner of the 2024 Northern Ireland International Organ Competition.

“He'll be playing music by Wagner, Dupré, Bach and Duruflé as our Young Artists' Platform series continues.”



**Jan Liebermann
giving a recital
recently in Berlin.**

The organisers of the NI
International Organ
Competition should forget
the modesti stop and feel
legitimately all chuffed...





Canterbury Cathedral curator responds to ‘hurtful’ backlash over graffiti art

The curator of a Canterbury Cathedral art exhibition, which has drawn backlash for being “sacrilegious”, has said that people have levied “hurtful” personal insults against her.

The ‘Hear Us’ project - which sees existential questions pasted around the Cathedral walls - even drew backlash from US Vice President JD Vance, who wrote on X that it had “made a beautiful building ugly”.

Curator Jacqueline Creswell told Premier Christian News that the art is intended to be a “conversation between the past and the present”. It features phrases such as: "God, what happens when we die?" and "Does everything have a soul?"

The graffiti font style was inspired by historical "graffiti" already in the Cathedral – such as masons' marks left on stones, and casual etchings from congregants over its 1400-year history.

The questions were inspired by conversations which poet Alex Vellis had with marginalised groups living in Canterbury.

“These people believe in God,” Creswell said. “But they don’t feel welcome in the Cathedral. I think this project helped them to feel that they belong inside the Cathedral, which is in Canterbury – their home.”

Jacquiline Creswell told Premier News that some of the backlash has resulted in personal criticisms against her and Vellis:

“The amount of personal abuse Alex and I have received on social media, from people who are ‘Christian’... that has been hurtful. In no way did we want to desecrate the building. I don’t think asking God a question is anything other than a beautiful reflection, and even a form of prayer.”

The exhibition opens to the public on 17th October, so all criticism thus far has been made without visiting the project.

"We've also had lots of positive responses to the exhibition," Creswell said. "The questions posed are very vulnerable and profound. I hope visitors feel moved to ask God a question themselves."

Clergy and ministry

Lecture at Queen's considers care at the end of life

A clear and sensitive approach to the value of human life and care in situations of suffering was shared by Professor John Wyatt on Monday evening (13th October) as he delivered the 67th Annual Church of Ireland Theological Lecture at Queen's University Belfast.

Professor Wyatt worked as a paediatrician specialising in the care of newborn children in neonatal intensive care for more than 25 years, and as an academic researcher. He is Emeritus Professor of Neonatal Paediatrics, Ethics and Perinatology at University College London, and a senior researcher at the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, Cambridge.

The annual lecture is sponsored by the Church of Ireland Board of Education (Northern Ireland) and organised by The Hub – the Church of Ireland and Methodist chaplaincy serving Belfast's universities and colleges. The lecture was event by the Bishop of Connor, Bishop George Davison, and



the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Queen's, Professor Richard Miles.

Professor Wyatt noted that the proposed legislation for assisted suicide in England and Wales would – if enacted – result in the lives of a large and increasing number of people being intentionally ended within the law. In Canada, for example, the number of people receiving medical assistance in dying increased year-on-year from 1,018 in 2016, when it was legalised, to 15,343 in 2023.

While advocacy for a change in the law has mentioned cases of extreme pain, there is a “very large mismatch” between this assertion and how people whose lives have been ended in Canada describe their suffering – most frequently as a loss of ability to engage in meaningful activities, or to perform the activities of daily living, or a loss



From left to right: Dr Peter Hamill, Secretary to the Church of Ireland Board of Education (Northern Ireland); Professor Richard Miles, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University Belfast; the Revd Alan Wardlow, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland; Professor John Wyatt; the Revd Danielle McCullagh, Church of Ireland and Methodist Chaplain at Queen's; and Bishop George Davison.

of dignity. The experience of depending on the care of others is, though, “part of the narrative of human life” and especially at the beginning or the end of our lives.

He continued by exploring two interpretations of dignity.



The chaplains at Queen's University with Professor Wyatt – the Revd Nigel Craig (Presbyterian, at left), Fr Dominic McGrattan (Catholic), and the Revd Danielle McCullagh (Church of Ireland and Methodist).

Intrinsic dignity is a value that every human life carries and can never be taken away. This is “radically egalitarian” as everyone has the same dignity, from a pre-term infant to an elderly person living with dementia. In this understanding, there are no differing degrees of dignity as “every human being is a full member of the human community.”

Attributed dignity is “a value that we confer on others or on our own lives” which can vary, and therefore rise or fall, depending on how others treat us or how we view ourselves. The Christian ethical tradition holds that we cannot alter or diminish our intrinsic dignity; this leads to an

attitude of compassion, gentleness and respect and seeks to enhance the attributed dignity of people who are dying.

Professor Wyatt addressed several grounds on which advocacy for assisted suicide is often based.

In terms of autonomy, patient choice is “at the heart of modern medicine” but patients do not have “unfettered” autonomy about medical treatment. Medical professionals need to discern whether the treatment is in the best interests of the patient, including whether it is evidence-based and approved for use.

Assisted suicide legislation sets out rational grounds – in the view of its advocates – to describe circumstances in which a life may be ended e.g. a terminal illness, a diagnosis that a person has six months to live, intact mental or legal capacity, and a well-founded and settled will to make that decision. Each of these criteria, Professor Wyatt suggested, was “contestable” – why should a limit be set at six months, for example? – and there was always the potential for coercion or manipulation.

Compassion is also cited in favour of assisted suicide, as a ‘moral duty’ to respond to a cry for help to end a life. However, if this interpretation of compassion were to be applied in relation to terminal illness, it could be applied in situations where dementia or a similar condition was present. A false understanding of compassion could lead to professionals deciding that some lives are “not worth living.”

Professor Wyatt quoted the Elizabethan poet and clergyman John Donne, writing that “any man’s death diminishes me,

because I am involved in mankind”, and highlighted how Dame Cicely Saunders founded the hospice movement on the principle of helping people to live before they died. The Catholic philosopher Joseph Pieper wrote that love is a way of saying to another person: “It’s good that you exist. It’s good that you are in the world.”

Concluding the question and response time which followed the lecture, he described modelling dignity as being on the same level as a person in need, sitting in silence with them, listening, and showing them that they are as important as the person giving that care. “There’s always more to learn,” he remarked, “but it’s the greatest gift you can give anyone.”

Events

Handel Messiah concerts with The Ulster Consort & Players

I’m looking forward to our HIP (historically informed performance) Handel Messiah concerts with The Ulster Consort & Players (on period instruments) this year, on 28 & 29 November.

Four fabulous soloists (who are either Northern Irish and/or based in Northern Ireland) join us: Charlotte O’Hare, Laura Lamph, Michael Bell, and Ben McAteer.

We are in two lovely, warm churches: Ballymena Parish and Holywood Parish Church; details on the flyer.

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Tickets are available here for Ballymena: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/messiah-ballymena-tickets-1280514135249>

and here for Holywood: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/messiah-belfast-tickets-777756609957>

Do join us for the drama, the mystery, and the joy of this iconic work.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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

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