

Church News Ireland

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NEWSLETTER

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King and pope pray together in Vatican

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@News_Letter

The King and Pope Leo XIV made history when they prayed together in a symbolic moment of unity for Anglicans and Roman Catholics across the globe.

The pontiff led the prayer during the ecumenical service in the Vatican's famous Sistine Chapel, likely to be seen as another milestone in the journey of the two churches.

It was the first time a British monarch, the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, had prayed at a public service with the pope, head of the Catholic Church, since the Reformation.

Charles and Camilla, making a two-day state visit to the Vatican, sat together a few metres from Pope Leo at the front of the congregation which featured ranks of cardinals.

At the end of the short service Pope Leo led the symbolic moment with the words: "Let us pray."

He went on to say: "God our Father, you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image: teach us to see your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children."

"Through Christ our Lord," Charles and Camilla stood with the rest of the congregation who said "Amen" at the end of the prayer.

Immediately afterwards, in another moment of church unity, Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York, who was also officiating during the service, said with Pope Leo another prayer.

The two senior clerics said: "The grace of our Lord Jesus



King Charles III and Pope Leo XIV in St Peter's Square (above) and (below) Charles and Queen Camilla with Leo in the San Damaso Courtyard

Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all forever."

And again the congregation said: "Amen."

The intervening centuries since Henry VIII broke with Rome to establish the Church of England in the 16th century had been marked by mutual distrust between the English state and the papacy.

But the ecumenical movement, a drive towards worldwide Christian unity which began early in the 20th century, has seen Anglicans and

Roman Catholics working towards this goal of togetherness.

The foreign secretary normally travels with the monarch on state visits, and Yvette Cooper gave a reading from the Letter to the Romans. Like the Queen, Ms Cooper was dressed in black – traditional attire for women when meeting the Pope.

Earlier, Charles and Camilla sat down at a desk for talks with Pope Leo when they met privately with the pontiff in his official residence.



Dublin riots not fun and games: Garda

Irish police have appealed to people, in particular young males, not to engage in public disorder after two days of riots near a hotel housing asylum seekers.

An Garda Síochána said that public disorder is not "fun and games" and could adversely affect people's futures.

It made the appeal after significant damage was done

in Saggart in west Dublin after two nights of violent disorder.

The third night of demonstrations at Citywest Hotel took place on Wednesday, after an alleged sexual assault on a 10-year-old girl in the vicinity of the hotel in the early hours of Monday morning.

A 26-year-old man, who cannot be named because of legal restrictions that apply to all

sexual assault cases in Ireland, appeared in court on Tuesday charged over the alleged incident.

Reacting to the disorder, gardai appealed to the public to refrain from taking part in any riotous behaviour.

"An Garda Síochána is appealing to the public, in particular to young males; do not get involved in public disorder

incidents," it said.

"This is not fun and games and entertainment for social media. The choices and reckless decisions you may make, to get involved or caught up in these events may have serious consequences and adversely affect the course of your future."

"An Garda Síochána appeals to persons with the ability to influence younger people

(parents, family members, friends) or influence in the local community to engage with younger people and appeal for them not to get involved in this criminal activity."

In relation to the disorder, gardai said 31 people had been arrested, 23 of which, 21 males and two females, have appeared before the District Court.



Protestors throw fireworks at Gardaí officers on Wednesday

NEWS

Language strategy challenge go-ahead

A campaign group has obtained High Court permission to mount a further challenge against the Stormont administration's continued failure to deliver an Irish language strategy.

Conradh na Gaeilge was granted leave to judicially review both the executive and Communities Minister Gordon Lyons over alleged violations of a legal duty which came into force nearly 20 years ago.

Mr Justice McAlinden listed the case for a full hearing early next year.

Conradh na Gaeilge has been involved in a long-running legal battle over pledges to progress an initiative for the Irish language which dates back to the 2006 St Andrews Agreement.

The High Court has already ruled previously, in 2017 and again in 2022, that the power-sharing government is in breach of an obligation to adopt a blueprint.

The continued failure contravenes the 1998 Northern Ireland Act, successive judges held.

Lawyers representing the language campaigners are seeking an order of mandamus compelling implementation of a strategy.

In court yesterday, counsel for the Executive Committee, Philip McAteer, said he had no instructions to either resist or consent to the application for leave to seek a judicial review.

Heset out how power-sharing arrangements require the first minister and deputy first minister to reach a joint position.

Mr Justice McAlinden described it as an open goal for Conradh na Gaeilge to clear the first stage in its case against the executive.

Formally granting leave to seek a judicial review, he confirmed the challenge will be heard in January.

Image of the day – King's visit to Vatican

Image of the day

King's visit to Vatican



Christian unity and care for the planet themes of King's visit to Vatican

King Charles III and Queen Camilla made an official State visit to the Vatican on Thursday, October 23, where they were received by Pope Leo XIV. (Front page photo - the News Letter's report).

The visit, marked a historic moment in Anglican-Catholic relations and focussed on two key themes: Christian unity and care for the environment.



As part of the day's events, King Charles was also honoured with the title of Royal Confrater of Saint Paul at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, recognising the long-standing ties between the British Crown and the Benedictine abbey attached to the basilica.

At 12pm local time, Pope Leo XIV led an ecumenical prayer service for the care of creation in the Sistine Chapel. Afterwards, a meeting took place in the Sala Regia with individuals and organisations dedicated to environmental protection. Later in the afternoon, at 2.45pm, the King and Queen visited the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls,

where King Charles was formally granted the title Royal Confrater of Saint Paul.

Buckingham Palace has described the visit as "historic," aligning with the Jubilee Year theme Pilgrims of Hope, and recognising the shared ecumenical efforts between the Catholic Church and the Church of England.

The two central themes of the Royal visit were Christian unity and care for the planet. At a Vatican press briefing on 17 October, Archbishop Flavio Pace, Secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, outlined the ecumenical aspects, while Sister Alessandra Smerilli, Secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, spoke about the ecological dimension.

Originally scheduled for April, the visit also coincided with the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis's environmental encyclical 'Laudato Si'. King Charles - who, as Supreme Governor of the Church of England, has long been committed to interfaith engagement - specifically requested to take part in a liturgy focused on creation care. That service was led jointly by Pope Leo XIV and the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, in the Sistine Chapel.

The ecumenical tone of the visit was reflected in the liturgy, which included a hymn by Saint Ambrose of Milan - sung in an English translation by Saint John Henry Newman. Newman, a key figure in Anglican-Catholic relations, who was Anglican for much of his life before becoming Roman Catholic. He was canonised in 2019, an event King Charles attended personally. On 1 November, Pope Leo will declare Newman a Doctor of the Church during a major ceremony attended by a high-ranking Anglican delegation.



Music was provided by the Sistine Chapel Choir, alongside choristers from the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace and the Choir of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.

In the afternoon, the Royals travelled to the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, which maintains historical ties with the British Crown and its adjacent Benedictine Abbey. Notably, the Abbey's coat of arms includes the insignia of the Order of the Garter - one of Britain's most prestigious honours.

To mark the occasion, King Charles was formally named Royal Confrater of Saint Paul by Cardinal James Michael Harvey and Abbot Donato Ogliari, with the approval of Pope Leo XIV. "It is a sign of honour and spiritual communion," said Archbishop Pace.



A specially designed chair bearing King Charles's coat of arms and the Latin inscription *Ut unum sint* ("That they may be one" - John 17:21) was used during the ceremony. The chair will remain in the Basilica's apse and will be available for use by the King and his successors on future visits.

Following the ecumenical prayer service, Pope Leo and King Charles

participated in a private meeting in the Sala Regia with Church leaders, business figures, environmental advocates, and UN experts. Representatives from the *Laudato Si'* Movement were also in attendance.

"This meeting underscores the strong relationship between the Catholic and Anglican Churches on environmental issues," said Sister Smerilli. "Pope Francis often reminds us that everything is connected, and that environmental and

social crises must be addressed together. Pope Leo has continued this approach with further action."

She highlighted recent initiatives such as the July 9 celebration of the new Missa pro custodia creationis (Mass for the Protection of Creation) and the upcoming inauguration of the Borgo Laudato Si' on September 5, 2025. Sister Smerilli also praised the King's efforts to bring the private sector on board in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss.

Both Archbishop Pace and Sister Smerilli emphasised the long-term significance of this visit. "It marks a historic moment in the journey of reconciliation between our Churches," said Archbishop Pace. "It celebrates how far we've come-and offers hope for the future."

Sister Smerilli agreed, calling it a powerful symbol of unity and shared responsibility for the environment: "These are themes that matter more than ever-for the generations to come."

New York Times

King Charles III prayed with Pope Leo XIV in the Sistine Chapel on Thursday, marking the first time in modern history that the leaders of the Anglican and Catholic churches prayed together. Read more: <https://nyti.ms/4oupunJ>

Daily Telegraph

The King builds a bridge over a 500-year divide in Christian faith

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/royal-family/2025/10/23/king-charles-bridge-500-year-divide-in-christian-faith/>

Season of Creation celebrated at Westport Eco Congregation

Parishioners created a Season of Creation display at the rear of St Mary's Catholic Church Westport. They also invited the public to consider the theme Peace with Creation.

During the Season of Creation they held a Tuesday Climate Chat – the theme – Climate Justice. They watched two short films on the affects of climate change and what climate justice means for so many communities – a lively debate followed.

One of the members spoke to second level students on the issue of food security.

The season of creation was completed with a joyful gathering at the foot of Croagh Patrick to mark the feast of St Francis of Assisi.

Fr John Kenny administrator St Mary's and Rev Suzanne Cousins Rector of Holy Trinity Church Westport joined in an Ecumenical blessing of the animals.

Despite the inclement weather families gathered to have their beloved pets blessed. As part of their celebration of the Season of Creation Westport Eco Congregation invited the public to join them in a meditative walk in nature.

About 20 people gathered on a beautiful autumnal afternoon and walked through a forest stopping to reflect on the beauty of our outdoor world.



Compass Rose Society AGM in London

The Secretary General of the Anglican Communion was pleased to address members of the Compass Rose Society (CRS) at their Annual General Meeting in London this week. Members of the Anglican Communion Office staff also gave updates on their work.

Thanking them for their ministry and support to the life of the Anglican Communion, the Secretary General said: 'Let us

pray that together, the Anglican Communion can be a voice of hope as we share the Good News of the Gospel in the communities we serve.'

The Anglican Communion Office thanked the President of the Compass Rose Society, the Rt Revd Daniel Gutiérrez, the Board and all the members for their ongoing work and service to the Anglican Communion.

Read more about the meeting on Anglican News:
<http://bit.ly/43nrg1W>



Education

Helping 25 schools



Commenting on a recent evening event in Cashel, Ferns and Ossory, Bishop Adrian Wilkinson said -

“Full house this evening. Thanks to Dr Ken Fennelly and Susan Ellis who led our training event for school boards of management in Carlow. David Ruddy from CPSMA took us through legal issues in education.

“Then Paul Collins and Michael Fleming from Ecclesiastical Insurance Office presented on insurance matters. Thanks to Scott Hayes for being with us too.

“A very helpful event supporting those in the Diocese of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory who manage the 25 schools under my patronage.”

New Education Library system launched at Killicomaine Junior High School

We were delighted to launch the new Education Library Management Solution (ELMS) in Killicomaine Junior High School.

Delivered by our EdIS Programme in collaboration with project partner, Softlink, ELMS will reinvigorate how students access books and digital resources, promoting lifelong reading and learning.

To find out more about how this new system will transform libraries across Northern Ireland, please visit:

<https://ow.ly/gBmr50XeZ3A>

Cathedral Calls

Three bands, one unforgettable evening of music in Limerick

Saint Mary's Cathedral, Limerick, was delighted to welcome audiences for a truly special Charity Concert – “Three Bands, One Unforgettable Evening of Music.”

The evening brought together the incredible talents of the:
Thomond Wind Ensemble
Saint Mary's Fife and Drum Band
Saint John's Brass and Reed Band

The Dean of Limerick opened the concert with a warm word of welcome, setting the tone for a night filled with joy, community spirit, and beautiful music echoing through the Cathedral's historic walls.

The concert celebrated Saint John's Band and 160 years of music-making in Limerick City - a remarkable milestone in our city's cultural heritage.



All proceeds from the evening are being donated to the League of Friends – Saint Camillus' Hospital, Limerick, supporting vital local healthcare.

49th Annual Belfast Black Santa Sitout

The 49th Annual Belfast Black Santa Sitout will be held this year from Monday 15th to Wednesday 24th December, 2025, when Dean Forde will once again take to the steps of our cathedral to raise funds to support local and international charities.

Each year we raise thousands of pounds through the generosity of people across our country - and give it all away again to local charities. If your charity would like to apply for a grant from the 2025 Black Santa Appeal, please find the application form at the link below and return it by Friday 12th December, 2025.

<https://www.belfastcathedral.org/news/launch-of-black-santa-appeal-2025>



Priory Singers in Armagh

The Priory Singers - We're looking forward to singing Choral Evensong in beautiful Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, at 3.15pm on Sunday 23rd November.

It's always a pleasure to have the opportunity to sing wonderful music, and this service will feature plenty of it:

Responses: Shephard

Canticles: Howells – Gloucester Service

Anthem: Parry – My Soul, There is a Country



Archdeacon of Meath and Kildare installed

On Wednesday 15th October, Venerable Katharine Poulton was installed in the cathedral as the new Archdeacon of Meath and Kildare.

Archdeacon Poulton succeeds the former Archdeacon, Leslie Stevenson, who preached at the service.

Seeking a Canon Missioner to join Durham Cathedral

You will be involved with the day-to-day liturgy, as well as responsibilities of executive leadership, corporate governance and safeguarding

You will join a team of Residentiary Canons who share the spiritual oversight of the cathedral's life with the Dean, and seek to make a positive impact across the cathedral.

Apply before 9am on Friday 5 December

Apply and find out more here [https://](https://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/more/jobs/canon-missioner)

www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/more/jobs/canon-missioner

Clergy and ministry

Down and Dromore ordinand to preach in national radio service

Sunday Worship, on BBC Radio 4 this Sunday morning (26th October) at 8.10am, will feature members of different Christian denominations reflecting on and considering the importance of the clause in the Nicene Creed: “We believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church”.



The preacher at this service will be Mrs Esther Simpson, an ordinand in the Diocese of Down and Dromore, teaching from John 17:20-26. It was recorded at the Christian

Fellowship Church on Belfast's Belmont Road, and is one of many initiatives across the Church – as a whole – to mark the 1,700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed.

The service will be led by Pastor Andrew Gibson (Senior Pastor at CFC) with prayers by Fr Conor McGrath (parish priest at St Colmcille's, Ballyhackamore) and praise led by Leah Catterson.

Mrs Simpson remarked: "It was a privilege to be invited to be part of this inter-church service celebrating the creedal foundation common across denominations."

The service will also be broadcast on Radio Ulster and Radio Foyle at 9.03am, on the same morning, and can be played back in the UK after broadcast at www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007cphq

Listeners outside the UK can follow the service live through the BBC Sounds app.

Events

The light still shines

Four charities, among them the Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal, will benefit from proceeds of the Parish of Lislimnaghan's four-day Christmas Tree Festival, 'The Light Still Shines', which will take place at the end of November.

The Light Still Shines

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

OPENING CEREMONY
Thursday 27 November 2025,
at 7pm viewing until 9pm.

Festival Continues

Friday 28 Nov,
11am to 9pm.

Saturday 29 Nov,
11am to 9pm.

Sunday 30 Nov,
2.30pm to 6pm.

Advent Carol Service
Sun 30th Nov, 7.30pm

**Lislimnaghan
Parish Church**
Everyone Welcome

2 miles from Omagh on the Beltany road. Refreshments available throughout the festival in the hall. Proceeds in aid of:

- Care for Cancer, Omagh
- Cancer Focus, Newtown Stewart
- St Vincent de Paul, Omagh
- Bishops' Appeal, (which is the Church of Ireland's World Aid and Development Programme).

For further information please contact **Sharon McFarland** on sha.ron41@hotmail.co.uk.

The festive event will begin with an opening ceremony in Lislimnaghan Parish Church at 7pm on Thursday 27th November, after which viewing will continue until 9pm. The church will be open for viewing from 11am until 9pm on

Friday 28th and Saturday 29th November, and from 2.30pm to 6pm on Sunday 30th November.

The festival will end officially that same evening, Sunday 30th November, with an Advent Carol Service at 7.30pm.

Throughout the festival, refreshments will be available in the parish hall and everyone is welcome to come view the trees.

In the media

Legacy body dealing with more killings than Met Police - commissioner - BBC News NI

Sir Declan Morgan said the ICRIR is currently running 102 investigations involving 182 deaths - Enda McClafferty, Political editor, BBC News NI writes.

The legacy body investigating Troubles-related killings in Northern Ireland is dealing with more live murder cases than London's Metropolitan Police, according to its chief commissioner.

Sir Declan Morgan also revealed it receives about 11 new cases every month, but that he is unlikely to remain as head of the commission once planned changes are introduced.

The Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR) was set up to examine Troubles-related deaths.

Speaking on BBC News NI's The View, Sir Declan said the ICRIR is currently running 102 investigations involving 182 deaths.

About half the cases involve unionist or nationalist families, with a third coming from relatives of those killed in the Army and police.

"It is a substantial body of work and we have more live murder investigations in the ICRIR than the Met," he said.

Sir Declan also welcomed planned changes to the commission agreed between the British and Irish governments, which he said would help to bring oversight that was missing from the original legislation.

He also welcomed the Irish government's commitment to provide information to the commission.

"It is better having the Irish government inside the tent to make this commission work rather than sitting outside and having the option of being the hurler on the ditch" he said.

Skip X post by BBC The View

School principals told to stop spending money amid £300m shortfall - Belfast Telegraph

The Education Authority has written to all schools in Northern Ireland urging them to do what they can to restrict spending as the funding crisis in the sector deepens, Mark Bain writes.

Education is now facing a £300m shortfall, officials warned schools.

Details of the letter, seen by the Belfast Telegraph, include cost-cutting measures on spending for substitute cover and new appointments.

The National Association of Head Teachers' said it “demonstrates the impossible nature of running schools in the current financial climate and confirms the crisis that school leaders have been talking about for years”.

The letter, sent to all school principals, states that “unlike the position in previous years, we have been advised that no further significant funding allocations are likely to be made available” and that the sector is “currently on a trajectory towards a significant overspend at year end”.

As well as restricting substitute cover and minimising new appointments, schools are being asked to avoid discretionary spending and not use accumulated surpluses.

The letter acknowledges that the sector is “living with the consequences of years of increasingly unmanageable funding shortfalls” and that warnings about this year's budget “are sadly being borne out by events”.

Dr Graham Gault, NAHT NI national secretary, said: “This lays bare the dire financial reality facing our schools. A £300m funding gap with no prospect of additional funding represents an education emergency.

“It is the direct outworking of political choice - both at Westminster and in Stormont — and it is our children who are paying the price.

“School leaders have been warning for years that children in their schools are being failed as a result of political choices not to fund education adequately,” he added.

“The situation is now critical, and our children cannot afford this level of failure any longer.

“The Education Authority's own letter acknowledges 'years of increasingly unmanageable funding shortfalls' and admits that warnings about this year's budget are 'sadly being borne out by events'. In other words, this was entirely foreseeable and entirely preventable.

“We are now in a position where schools are being asked to restrict substitute cover when teachers are absent. It potentially means children losing out on their education, larger class sizes school leaders and teachers being stretched even thinner trying to cover gaps. It definitely means further damage to an already overstretched workforce.

“Schools are even being asked not to use their own accumulated surpluses — money they have carefully managed and set aside.”

Mr Gault said the contents of the letter are alarming and “demonstrate just how catastrophic the financial situation has become”.

“The warm words ring hollow when schools are being asked to operate in crisis management mode because there simply is not enough money to provide children with the education they deserve.

“This is not about schools being inefficient or wasteful.

“This is about a system that has been systematically starved of resources through deliberate political choices over many years.

“School leaders are being asked to make impossible decisions that will inevitably impact on the quality of education we can provide to our children.”

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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