

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Christchurch Priory

October 3, 2025

Image of the day

Christchurch Priory

An organist preparing for a recital kindly shared some photographs of Christchurch Priory which is a place frequented by CNI

Much enjoyed preparing tomorrow's recital (2 October at 12.30pm) in the beauty of Christchurch Priory.





A really charming building and town, and a very comprehensive organ by Nicholson (IV/P 73).

Check out the beer glasses by the pedalboard – a nice welcome! Must be a message there, somewhere... See you tomorrow!

News

Pope Leo criticizes 'inhuman' treatment of immigrants in US

Pope Leo on Tuesday appeared to offer his strongest criticism yet of U.S. President Donald Trump's hard-line immigration policies, questioning whether they were in line with the Catholic Church's pro-life teachings.

"Someone who says I am against abortion but I am in agreement with the inhuman treatment of immigrants in the United States, I don't know if that's pro-life," the pontiff told journalists outside his residence in Castel Gandolfo.

The Catholic Church's position that life is sacred from conception until natural death is one of the 1.4-billion-member denomination's strongest teachings.

Leo, the first U.S. pope, was responding to a question from a U.S. journalist who asked about the country's politics.

The White House said Trump was elected based on his many promises, including to deport criminal illegal aliens. "He is keeping his promise to the American people," spokesperson Abigail Jackson responded in a statement.

October 3, 2025

Elected in May to replace the late Pope Francis, Leo has shown a much more reserved style than his predecessor, who frequently criticized the Trump administration.

Leo was asked about a decision by the archdiocese of Chicago to give an award to Illinois Senator Dick Durbin, a Democrat who supports abortion rights. The move has attracted vocal criticism from conservative Catholics, including several U.S. bishops.

"It is very important to look at the overall work that the Senator has done," said the pope.

"I understand the difficulty and the tensions but I think, as I myself have spoken in the past, it's important to look at many issues that are related to what is the teaching of the Church," he said.

"Someone who says I am against abortion but says I am in favour of the death penalty is not really pro-life," said the Pope.

Gray's Court welcomes Communities Minister

Communities Minister, Gordon Lyons MLA, saw first-hand on Wednesday (1 October) the benefit that supported accommodation provides for homeless people recovering from substance abuse, when he visited Gray's Court in north Belfast.

October 3, 2025

**Gordon Lyons
MLA, Minister for
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Council for Social
Witness.**



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.



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Pictured with the
Minister after the
north Belfast
visit are (left to**

**right) Caroline Yeomans, Council for Social Witness
Deputy Director, Frances Craig, Gray's Court, Project
Worker and Julia Neal, Senior Practitioner at Carlisle
House, PCI's substance misuse treatment centre, which
is also in Belfast**

“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,” she said.

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. “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," Mrs Yeoman said.

Calls for Northern Ireland to strengthen marriage, not make divorce easier

The Christian Institute has called on the Northern Ireland Executive to refrain from further liberalising divorce laws.

The Department of Finance is currently running a consultation on reforming divorce law in such a way that



would end fault-based grounds and reduce separation periods.

Such reforms have already taken place in England and Wales, where prior to 2022 divorces could only be granted in cases of adultery or unreasonable behaviour, or if the couple had been separated for two years with consent or five years with consent.

Pro-marriage campaigners were divided on the issue, with the Marriage Foundation supporting the change as a way of removing blame and acrimony from the system. The group pointed to ONS figures that showed little change in divorce rates following the change, albeit more of the divorces did take advantage of the liberalised rules.

The Coalition for Marriage disagreed, however, arguing that the normalisation of fast track, no-fault divorces was likely to lead to higher divorce rates in future years.

James Kennedy, Northern Ireland Policy Officer at The Christian Institute, warned against following the example of England and Wales.

Education

Ballymena Academy annual Macmillan Coffee Morning

On Friday, we hosted our annual Macmillan Coffee Morning in the staffroom at break time. A huge thank



you to Bob & Berts for kindly donating some incredible treats - they were very much enjoyed.

We are delighted to share that we raised £618 for Macmillan. Thank you to everyone who donated and joined us on the day.

BRA Form 2 pupil Diabetes UK Northern Ireland fundraiser

Congratulations to Form 2 pupil Georgia Morris who raised an incredible £2,130 for Diabetes UK Northern Ireland through her fundraising efforts.

Georgia's commitment, creativity, and hard work have made a real difference in supporting those affected by diabetes.



Her passion and determination are truly inspiring – a shining example of what young people can achieve when they put their hearts into a cause.

Welcome to Wallace High Language Assistants

We extend a big Wallace welcome to our new German Language Assistant, Annemarie Schneider.



Annemarie was born in Berlin, grew up in Weimar and now studies and lives in Osnabrück.

We are also delighted to welcome back Sandra McFaul and Emmanuelle Boudant who have been our Spanish and French Language Assistants for the last few years.

Herzlich Willkommen! ¡Bienvenida de nuevo! Bienvenue de nouveau!

Wesley Music Lessons

Wesley students take music lessons throughout the day, in everything from piano to singing.

Isla Smyth Graham is one such student, studying with Ms Chadwick. She received a 'Spotlight' award from RIAM as a

result of her performance in her Grade 8 singing exam this summer.

Church of Scotland warns against undermining parental rights on religious education

The Church of Scotland has spoken out against plans to allow children to overrule their parents if they withdraw them from religious education.

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 permits parents to take their children out of religious education and acts of religious observance at school.

This arrangement went on undisturbed until last year when Scotland passed a law that incorporates parts of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law. One such provision is the right for children to be heard.

This has left Scotland with a legal contradiction. The 1980 Act gives parents the right to decide on behalf of their child whether they will be withdrawn from religious education, but currently gives no weight to the opinion of the child on the matter.

To resolve this, the Children (Withdrawal from Religious Education and Amendment of UNCRC Compatibility Duty) (Scotland) Bill 2025 was proposed in April of this year.

Currently at Stage 1 of the legislative process, various experts and interested parties have been invited to give evidence on the matter.

Speaking on behalf of the Church of Scotland, the Reverend Stephen Miller said that opting out of religious education left children at risk of having no knowledge of the beliefs and practices which have shaped the society around them.

Despite this, he said that the Church supported the right of parents to withdraw their children from religious education and observance.

"The bill's aim of ensuring that a child's voice is heard in discussions about withdrawal is welcome, and we fully support this. However, the proposals go further: they would allow a child's view about potential withdrawal ... to override that of a legally responsible parent/carer," he said.

Rev Miller noted that the plans are unclear as to the level of maturity a child would need in order for their views to be taken into account and added that the bill could lead to the exacerbation of tensions between schools, students and parents.

"We also fear that legislating as suggested could effectively tie the hands of schools, learners and parents/carers to be able to have constructive conversations on this matter and could exacerbate potential disagreements between parents/carers and children – and even, possibly, between parents or carers," he said.

"To introduce two conflicting priority rights does not seem sensible or desirable in obtaining a harmonious solution."

Sandra Blair, Youth for Christ Scotland Lead and Christian Values in Education Scotland Management Committee member, said it was to be welcomed that children's views could be heard and that the bill "is not pushing for automatic removal of all religious observance/education".

However, she voiced concerns about the implications for schools having to "follow the child's wishes" and striking a balance, noting that a lot of teaching to pupils about their rights "has missed the messaging about how 'with rights come responsibilities'".

"Sometimes parents are trying to do what is best for their child when the child doesn't see it that way so I don't think it should be an automatic default to whatever the child wants," she said.

She added that having to facilitate conversations between parents and pupils could lead to extra administrative burdens for school staff, adding to "an already heavily loaded amount of school paperwork".

Cathedral Calls

Director of Music at Dunblane Cathedral

Many congratulations to Steven McIntyre, who has been appointed Director of Music at Dunblane Cathedral.

October 3, 2025

Glasgow Cathedral posted -
nFor the last 12 years he has thrilled and uplifted us all with his incredible playing at St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow, first as



Assistant, then as Cathedral Organist!

He has also been an exemplary colleague, always imaginative and supportive, and on various occasions holding the fort at times of my absence, not least during my recent sabbatical.

Dunblane are very lucky to have appointed a musician of Steven's calibre and we wish him well in this new chapter of his career.

Armagh C of I winter hours

1st October 2025 has passed and so we move to Autumn / Winter opening hours at the Cathedral.

The Cathedral will be closed on Mondays and open Tuesday – Saturday from 9.30am – 1.30pm. Sunday service schedule remains unchanged: 10am, 11am and 3.15pm.

Night prayer at Saint Mary's Limerick - A moment of stillness

As evening falls and the world quiets, we invite you to pause with us in prayer.

The Church offers Compline — the ancient office of Night Prayer — as a way to entrust ourselves to God's care and find peace in His presence. One of the most beloved prayers from the Book of Common Prayer captures this beautifully:

“Be present, O merciful God, and protect us through the silent hours of this night, so that we, who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world, may repose upon thy eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

In a world full of uncertainty and unrest, these words remind us that God's love is constant — a sure refuge as day turns to night.

You are always welcome to join us at Saint Mary's Cathedral for moments of stillness, prayer, and reflection. May God's peace be with you tonight, and always.

Clergy and ministry

New Diocesan Communications Officer for Meath and Kildare

Bishop Pat Storey has announced the appointment of a new Diocesan Communications Officer (DCO), for Meath and Kildare.



Jenny Horner took over the role on 1 October 2025. This follows the retirement of Earl Storey.

More at: <https://meathandkildare.org/news/new-diocesan-communications-officer/>

Events

Blended Families free webinar

Rev Canon Judi McGaffin will lead a free webinar on the sometimes complex subject of 'Blended Families' on Tuesday 21st October.



**‘DO YOU KNOW YOUR CONGREGATION?’
CHURCH OF IRELAND
MARRIAGE COUNCIL WEBINAR
TUES 21 OCTOBER , 7PM
TO REGISTER, EMAIL
AISLING.SHERIDAN@RCBCOI.ORG .**

In our 21st century world families come in all shapes - one size does definitely not fit all! These ‘blended families’ face their own challenges and experience their own highs and lows. Join us online where Rev Canon Judi McGaffin will help us pastorally navigate the world of blended families with her invaluable personal insight. Judi was born and raised in Co Armagh and worked in clinical, managerial and leadership roles in the Health Service for 36 years. She felt a calling to ordained ministry and was ordained in 2009 - she has been a curate and rector in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and in her retirement has qualified as a Spiritual Director. Judi was married in 1980 and has two children from that marriage. She was divorced in 1989 and remarried in 2005, and she has four stepchildren.



Organised by the Church of Ireland Marriage Council, the webinar will be 'live' from 7.00pm to 8pm and is open to all.

Please contact Aisling Sheridan at aisling.sheridan@rcbcoi.org to register for the event.



Sir Denis Henry was a Roman Catholic but not a nationalist, and held the unique position of being a Roman Catholic Ulster Unionist MP before he was appointed as Northern Ireland's first Lord Chief Justice

First Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland

Sir Denis Henry, first Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, died on the 1st October, 1925,, aged 62. Sir Dennis was the son of James Henry, a Merchant and Ellen, neé Kelly. He was born in Draperstown on the 7th March, 1864.

The Irish News reported on October 2 1925 -

The death took place yesterday of the Right Hon Sir Denis Henry, Bart, Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland. To his colleagues in the judiciary, as well as to the members of the legal profession generally, the news of the death of the Chief Justice came as a shock, as it had not been anticipated that the illness from which he had been suffering during the past few weeks would prove fatal. He had just returned to his residence, "Lisvarna", Windsor Avenue, Belfast, from Harrogate, where he had been spending his vacation on the advice of his doctor. In the beginning of the present week his malady became more serious and Dr MB Smyth and Dr MacIlwaine were in constant attendance, but despite every effort the Lord Chief Justice died at about 9 o'clock yesterday morning.

During his brief last illness Sir Denis was ministered to by the Very Rev Father Richard, Rector, Ardoyne, and Very Rev Canon McDonnell, PP, St Brigid's.

Chief Justice Henry was one of the most prominent figures in the legal and political history of this country in the past couple of decades. As a lawyer he was widely known as a man of ripe knowledge and well-balance erudition. Both in the courts and on the platform he was an accomplished orator, and in the British House of Commons displayed much ability as a debater. As Solicitor-General and later as Attorney-General he took part in most of the debates between the years 1918 and 1921, when the Irish question loomed large in the political world. His powers as an advocate were never in doubt.

October 3, 2025

The work of setting the machinery of the Northern High Courts going in 1921, naturally devolved upon the late Chief Justice, whose wide legal experience first as a junior and later as a bencher and representative of the profession in Parliament, was brought to bear on all matters of the kind. In a comparatively few months the new conditions brought about by the establishment of a separate State in Ireland were rendered workable. The new Chief Justice was sworn in at Portrush before the Lord Chancellor, Sir John Ross, in June of that year. In the same year he was created a baronet.

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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October 3, 2025

www.churchnewsireland.org

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

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