

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Cecil Frances Alexander celebrated in Strabane

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Cecil Frances Alexander celebrated in Strabane

On Thursday evening, Christ Church, Strabane was the venue for the second Cecil Frances Alexander Celebrated, lantern making workshop facilitated by Artist, Sinead Smyth from The Churches Trust.

Attended by parishioners and members of the local community, the intergenerational and inter





faith, creative activity had participants aged from 4yrs to 80yrs.

Further workshops will be available on Saturday 18th October in the morning at Grass Roots and again in the afternoon at the Methodist Church, Railway Road. Booking available online through Eventbrite.



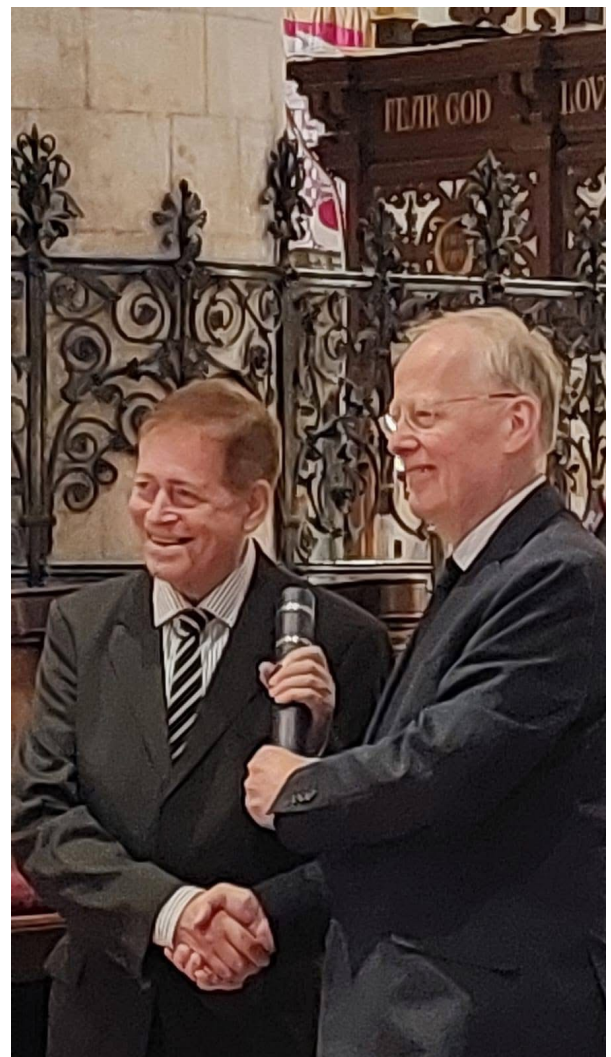
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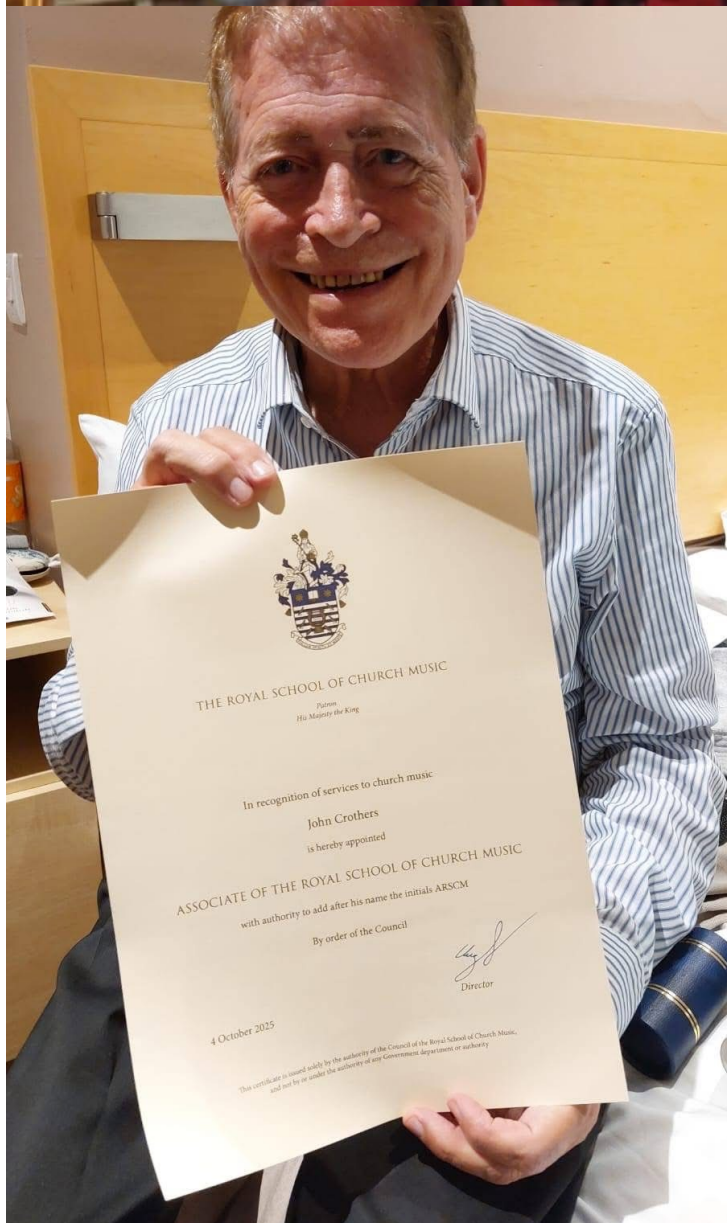


Belfast man made an Associate of the Royal School of Church Music

John Crothers (centre above) describes “an amazing, memorable weekend in Oxford, when I was very honoured, along with a number of others, to be made an Associate of the Royal School of Church Music”.

Photo above - In Christ Church





Cathedral Hugh Morris,
Director of the RSCM,
reads the citation.

Photo above right -The
presentation, from the
RSCM Council member,
John Halsey.

With legendary names
and honorands - Hugh
Morris(RSCM Director),
Revd Canon Gordon
Giles, Andrew Padmore,
Joanna Forbes
Lestrangle, Thomas
Hewitt Jones and John
Halsey.



Eco-Congregation Ireland Award for Sandford and St Philip's

The Grouped Parishes of Sandford and St Philip's have been awarded an Eco-Congregation Ireland Award.

Maureen Rowan and Fran Brady, representatives of Eco-Congregation Ireland, attended their united service on 15th June 2025. Helen Prendiville and Rachel Richardson accepted the awards on behalf of Sandford and St Philip's respectively. In her address, Maureen congratulated the parishes and explained that one of the key things that they demonstrated was how "wide ranging our environmental work is and how many people are involved in keeping our activities going."

Read their report of the ceremony in full here

<https://tinyurl.com/2u8378rf>.

Jurassic Ark Encounters NI a hit with Bannside GB company



The entire Bannside GB company had a visit from the fabulous Jurassic Ark Encounters NI.

A massive thank you to Jonny and Robert for an informative and enjoyable evening- think it's safe to say that the girls had a great time!

Girl Guiding Ulster survey

The Girl Guide Association in NI says - We spoke to girls in Northern Ireland aged 7–21 as part of the Girls' Attitudes Survey 2025 and their voices couldn't be clearer:

78% of 17–21 year olds don't think politicians are showing enough commitment to their promise to tackle misogyny.

88% of 17–21 year olds say there needs to be more discussion in schools with boys about the impact of sexism and misogyny on girls.

50% of 11–21 year olds said social media has contributed to an increased experience of mental health issues.

60% of 11–21 year olds feel safer when they are just with girls.

51% of 7–21 year olds say role models make them feel like they can achieve their goals.

And 52% say they have a female role model.

These findings shine a light on the urgent need to listen to and act on what girls are telling us.

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👉 You may sign up to their mailing list to receive the Girls Attitude Survey 2025 from Girl Guiding Ulster on Facebook.



Picasso's studios exhibition at National Gallery in Dublin



The National Gallery in Dublin just opened a wonderful exhibition of Picasso's studios and their impact



Paris, Rue des Grands-Augustins | 1937-1948

In 1937 Picasso set up studio at 7 rue des Grands-Augustins on the Left Bank. His friend Brassai said that Picasso wanted to rent 'these odd rooms' because they 'reminded him of the Bateau-Lavoir, for which he was secretly nostalgic all his life, but they were even more spacious. He could feel he was inside a ship with its bridge, its stores, its hold.'

Picasso stayed in Paris during the Occupation and from 1942 he lived in the studio. As the Nazis categorised him a 'degenerate' artist, he was forbidden to exhibit or sell his art. Picasso said of this time, 'There was nothing else to do but work seriously and devotedly, struggle for food, see friends quietly, and look forward to freedom.'

on his work.

“His comment about working in Paris during the Nazi occupation seems appropriate for our age about looking forward to freedom,” Canon Albert Ogle notes.

The Duncairn in Belfast cited in National Church & Community Volunteer Awards

The National Churches’ Trust Church & Community Volunteer Awards celebrate the incredible work volunteers do to keep churches open and thriving at the heart of their communities.

The winners of the awards, run in partnership with the Marsh Charitable Trust, will be announced later this month. Today we’re highlighting three award nominees who are supporting their local communities to explore the arts and learn skills for the future.

Volunteers are the heart of The Duncairn in Belfast, a former church transformed into a thriving cultural and arts centre by the 174 Trust. They run workshops, music events, art classes, reading groups and community programs, turning a once “at-risk” building into a hub of creativity, connection and inclusion. By making the arts accessible to all, fostering social cohesion, and preserving heritage, the team has created a safe, welcoming space for everyone.

Sixty volunteers, aged from 15 to 97, have transformed Newport Minster on the Isle of Wight from years of closure into a thriving hub at the heart of Newport. They welcome

visitors daily, run a café, host concerts and exhibitions, and even lead a Singing for Fun group spanning generations. Their work goes far beyond the building - supporting local schools, offering placements, and creating opportunities for those with additional needs.

St Elvan's, a cornerstone of Aberdare for over 170 years, has been transformed into a thriving hub of worship, culture, and community. Their volunteers support events, the coffee shop, heritage activities, and training over 50 local people in skills like barista work and first aid, many progressing into employment. Since a £2m renovation, the church hosts concerts, workshops, wellbeing sessions, and festivals, welcoming all ages and interests.

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

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

Tearful farewell Patricia Routledge

The world stood still as Britain bid a tearful farewell to Dame Patricia Routledge, the incomparable star of Keeping Up Appearances, whose passing at age 96 has left an unfillable void in the heart of British comedy.

Her funeral, held in her beloved Chichester, was a moment of profound beauty and grace — a quiet yet powerful reflection of the woman who made millions laugh, think, and feel.

Under the soft glow of autumn sunlight, mourners gathered at St. Mary's Church, where white lilies and lavender lined



the aisle — flowers symbolizing purity and devotion, much like the life Patricia led. Friends, family, and fellow actors filled the pews in a silence so complete it was almost sacred. There was no red carpet, no spectacle — just heartfelt remembrance. A string quartet softly played Abide With Me, followed by a moving rendition of Morning Has Broken, one of Patricia's favourite hymns.

Then came the moment that moved everyone to tears — a... Full details <https://ms.allplaynews.com/4aWeCuU>

Education



Old-fashioned Irish mammy leads all-boys St Malachy's College

"In some ways I see myself as the old-fashioned Irish mammy – they do what I tell them."

Deirdre McCusker - the first woman to lead all-boys St Malachy's College in almost two centuries - discusses history, her love of education, and what it was like stepping into the role of principal at the prestigious north Belfast college earlier this year.

Read more from the Irish News at -
<https://tinyurl.com/48dkc9at>



Ballyclare German 35 year link

Last month we celebrated the incredible milestone of 35 years of partnership between Ballyclare High School and Petrinum Gymnasium, Dorsten, one of the longest-running school exchanges between the

UK and Germany.

We were delighted to welcome pupils and staff from Petrinum for an unforgettable visit. They experienced life at Ballyclare High, learned to surf on our stunning coastline , marvelled at the Giant's Causeway , completed a North Coast treasure hunt , The celebrations concluded with a special anniversary dinner at The Rabbit Hotel, where both schools reflected on



35 years of
shared memories,
culture and
friendship.

A heartfelt thank
you to our
wonderful host
families and
pupils for giving
our German guests such a warm Ballyclare welcome.



Here's to the next 35 years of connection and collaboration!

Cathedral Calls

St Oliver Plunkett Canonisation celebrated in Armagh

The Mass in Armagh cathedral at 11am yesterday was a celebration of St Oliver Plunkett to mark 50 years since his Canonisation.

A special moment in the life of the Church here in Ireland





Salisbury notes for USOC at St Peter's

The Ulster Society of Organists and Conductors was delighted to present former Director of Music at Salisbury Cathedral, Simon Lole.



Simon gave an organ recital on Saturday 11 October in St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast. Admission was free for this event.

In the media

Máiría Cahill on the state of Belfast and the row over Irish language

Poc fada politics: The real problem isn't Irish – it's the state of Belfast and our politicians. Máiría Cahill writes in the Irish News - 9 Oct 2025



Another week, and yet another row over the Irish language. Like a never-ending political poc fada, it's a constant game of cultural one-upmanship hurled into the long grass.

This week, the row's nucleus is Belfast City Council's decision to adopt an Irish Language Policy. Sinn Féin described it as a "historic moment". The Alliance party welcomed it. The DUP and TUV have threatened legal action, the latter claiming subjugation of unionists.

So far, so predictable. Where is all the money coming from? Belfast City Council raised its rates to almost 6% in

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February 2025. At the time, Sinn Féin councillor Ryan Murphy stated: “The council has also been impacted by ongoing external pressures, including inflationary and pay pressures.” Good to know they’ve had a good old rummage down the back of the civic sofa, since. The policy will cost over £2 million to implement. Were taxpayers told the cost before the council agreed?



Is breá liom an Gaeilge. Is cuid thábhachtach dár n-oidhreacht í, do ndaoine náisiúnaithe agus d’aontachtaithe. Like many people, though, I’d rather our councillors, most of whom wouldn’t survive in a school debating society, focused on ensuring that litter is cleaned, and that all the holes that people keep tripping over are finally filled in, instead of the high wire stuff. Look around Belfast city centre. Is nobody ashamed of the state it is in, compared to other cities? Will people be more inclined to save crumbling buildings or empty overflowing boscaí bruscair when they are bilingual?

Belfast City Council's own website states: The Statement of Accounts for 2024 – 2025 has not been concluded and published by the date of 30 September, as required by The Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, Part 4, Regulation 10." Why are councillors not shouting all over the media about this instead? Don't ratepayers deserve the same level of headline-grabbing activity when scrutinising where their money is going?



Meanwhile, up on the hill, Stormont's politicians (most of whom wouldn't survive in a school debating society, either), are under pressure from nurses, who are seeking pay parity with their counterparts in England, Scotland and Wales. The health service, to which I have recently been a regular

visitor, is in a deplorable state. Last month, Department of Education data showed levels of inequality that Stormont should be ashamed of. Twenty-six per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The Department of Communities' figures illustrate that in 2023/2024, 20% of children live in absolute poverty. The gap in educational achievement at GCSE level for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is understandably wide.

Simultaneously, The Executive Office has failed to implement an anti-poverty strategy or deliver redress for those affected by the Mother and Baby Home scandal. There are almost 50,000 people on the NIHE waiting list. Lough Neagh's green sludge is one of the greatest scandals of our time. Where is the strategy on race?

Stormont is heavy on power, light on plans, and brilliantly effective at parliamentary prestidigitation when it comes to delivery. The best trick? How to make your money disappear into black holes without ever coming up with action to stave it. So, we see numerous strategies from politicians, but little to show for it.

Just watch when they're under pressure. Behold, taxpayers, here's another cultural rabbit to pull out of the hat. The United Ireland illusion: where politicians on both sides can hide behind the magician's cloak. As quick as one can say Abra Kadabra — or should that be Abra Cabra — an image is conjured and crafted for whichever tribe it suits. So, soundbites of an idyllic life south of the border, or a dystopian unionist nightmare, are uttered. Then, off the media go, dutifully reporting on something far off in the distance, while there are many more pressing issues at

hand to tackle, and little accountability for each failure. How's that for executive over-sleight?

When did we all develop a Northern Irish version of Stockholm syndrome, doffing our caps to dysfunction and captive to politicians who don't deliver? Why, to add insult to injury, do we reward them with a vote come election time and put them in again to inflict the same nonsense on us?

By far, our biggest societal failure is the inability to grapple with sectarianism properly. Belfast Council has a Good Relations Strategy, part of which states it will have shared and connected spaces that encourage cross-community interaction, and shared services designed through co-design and social innovation.

Putting an Irish language sign on Shankill Leisure Centre, or the uniforms of people working in it isn't going to do it, folks. Anyone who thinks this type of action will foster or persuade people to have a grá for Gaeilge, is deluded.

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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