

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Garrison churches Songs of Praise

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Garrison churches Songs of Praise

Aldershot Garrison is the focus of a very special Remembrance edition of Songs of Praise.

Aled Jones and the team



September 20, 2025

visited the three Garrison Churches, the Military Cemetery, and local Units to film this moving programme. It's been an exciting few days... Tune in on Sunday 9 November - it's well worth a watch.

News



Choral Evensong led by the Lowry Singers in St Mark's Lisburn

St Mark's are delighted that the Lowry singers are returning for a service of Choral evensong to celebrate and give thanks for 50 years of worship in their church building on Sunday 5th October 630pm

“You are very welcome to join us, whether you are a parishioner or have past or present connections to St Mark’s, or simply for the beautiful service of Choral Evensong. Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. (Psalm 127: 1)”

Saint Ninian Declaration between Scottish Episcopal and Roman Catholic Churches in Scotland

Ecumenical relations in Scotland are going from strength to strength following a historic statement of friendship between the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland.

The Saint Ninian Declaration was signed this week at St Mary's Catholic Cathedral and St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, both in Edinburgh.

It will support further friendship and cooperation between the two denominations.

Representatives from the Church of Scotland participated in the celebrations, which included a walk between the two cathedrals via the Church of Scotland's offices on George Street, followed by a service at the Episcopal Cathedral.

The statement, named after the eighth-century missionary to what is now Scotland, acknowledges that the relationship between the churches "has not always been a happy one, even including violence done in the name of religion; but we



also see that there has been friendship and cooperation in the past."

Most Reverend Leo Cushley (above right), Archbishop and Metropolitan of St Andrews and Edinburgh, said: "I'm delighted to be able to be part of a walk that represents not only the signing of a declaration of friendship between the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Catholic Church in Scotland but also to salute our friends of the Church of Scotland, as we walk between the two cathedrals and to be

able to pray with them later on and demonstrate to the rest of the country that Christians do stand together, and want to be friends and look forward to the future."

Rev Fiona Smith, Principal Clerk of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, said: "It was wonderful to welcome Archbishop Leo and Bishop Mark here at the church offices of the Church of Scotland as they celebrate the signing of the St Ninian Declaration with the same joy and commitment that we at the Church of Scotland signed the St Andrew Declaration in 2021 and the St Margaret Declaration in 2022."

Most Rev Mark Strange, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, said: "Coming down from the far north as I did from Caithness, I passed churches after churches and community after community served by us all over the centuries.

"If churches are divided why would anyone want to believe in us?

"It can only really work when we are prepared to sit down and speak to each other."

The Church of Scotland has entered into a series of Declarations with partner churches in recent years.

The Columba Declaration with the Church of England (2016)

The Saint Andrew Declaration with the Scottish Episcopal Church (2021)



The Saint Margaret Declaration with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland (2022)

At the General Assembly 2025, Rev Ross Blackman, convener of the Ecumenical Relations Committee, presented the committee's report, which laid out a vision of the Church of Scotland as an active and essential part of the Catholic and Universal Church.

Archbishop of Wales gives first public address as Primate of Wales

The Most Revd Cherry Vann, Archbishop of Wales and Bishop of Monmouth, gave her first public address as



Primate of Wales in Newport on September 18th to the members of the Governing Body of the Church in Wales.

In her address, Archbishop Vann highlighted the importance of transforming the Church of Wales into a thriving institution, capable of demonstrating through action and attitude the incomprehensible love of God to the world.

She shared that she intends to ‘dedicate the next three years to transforming the culture of the church in Wales. This, I believe, is the most important thing we have to do together... we will never flourish as an institution and we will never have the credibility to speak into the public square about God’s love or God’s creation unless we develop a culture, a way of behaving and being that reflects the nature of God as we see it in Jesus Christ.’

Archbishop Vann spoke about three specific avenues that she feels will support the overarching goal of transformation: 'the three areas that I want to talk about today are tending to our core purpose as God's church, tending to our relationships with one another and tending to ourselves and our own individual relationships with God.'

Speaking about how the body of Christ is called to work dynamically but also in unity for one purpose, Bishop Vann reflected on the words of Saint Paul, 'the image that encapsulates this...is the body of Christ. He talks about a body with many parts, each part having its own unique job to do, and each needing the others in order for the body to be whole. In order for the body to work well and at its best, the parts need to work in harmony with each other.'

She spoke about her experience as a chaplain to a deaf community and outlined how the experience taught her what it felt like 'not to fit in' and to be part of a 'minority'.

Archbishop Vann called for proactive challenging of assumptions of minority groups, saying, 'We must tend to our own biases...which so often get in the way of God's love being shared.'

'In a world where people, communities and nations are becoming more divided and polarised, we are to seek and to speak out for peace, reconciliation, community cohesion, recognising that all human beings are of equal worth and each deserve respect and dignity.'



Church leaders joint statement calling for an immediate end to the war in Gaza.

Church leaders from across Britain and Ireland, including the Most Revd Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York, and Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, have issued a joint statement calling for an immediate end to the war in Gaza.

The statement urges the release of hostages and prisoners, calls for humanitarian access, and warns that the latest assault on Gaza City is a “deadly escalation” that “must stop.” It also commends the faithful witness of churches in Gaza who continue to shelter civilians.

Read more on Anglican News Service: <https://bit.ly/4mnIkeT>

Education

BRA success in Schools' Cup Sailing Championships

Congratulations to Form 4 pupil Ben Halliday and Form 1 pupil Sara Halliday who participated in the National Junior Youth Sailing and Schools' Cup Championships at Ballyholme Yacht Club last weekend.

Sara came 4th in her category (girls 4.2 Topper) and Ben participated in his first Regatta (6th boy in his category).

Well done to both Ben and Sara on their achievements – a brilliant start to the sailing season!

YES to Young Environmentalists' Society at Ballymena Academy

Monday saw the first meeting of the year for the Young Environmentalists' Society (Y.E.S.).



September 20, 2025

Lots of work was carried out to harvest potatoes, kale, rhubarb and courgettes - one of which was 3.5kg! Y.E.S. meet in room 56 on a Week A Monday - everyone welcome!



Dromore High Success in The Schools Bible Project

The Schools Bible Project is a National Writing Competition where pupils were required to select and carefully study a Bible passage and write about the event in their own words, as if they had been present.

The following pupils received book prizes to acknowledge their excellent standard of work:

September 20, 2025

Jamie, Natalie and Talia- Yr 10

Well done to all the pupils for the excellent work produced for this competition.

St Malachians in USA exchange



15 talented students - 6 golfers and 9 basketball players—embarked on an exciting sporting and cultural exchange in the USA

Before heading to Dublin Airport for



their flight to Philadelphia, the group received a blessing from Deacon Dowd in the College Chapel, marking the beginning of what promises to be a memorable journey of sport, friendship, and unforgettable experiences. Safe travels and best wishes!

Cathedral Calls



The weeping cherub in Saint Mary's Cathedral, Limerick

Tucked away in a quiet corner of the Jebb Chapel is a small cherub, forever in tears, mourning the loss of Rev. William Dean Hoare.

Hoare served this city faithfully for 26 years as Vicar General, remembered as a kind, humble man who lived out the Gospel in word and

deed. His compassion left a lasting mark on Limerick—he helped found and sustain vital institutions such as:

The Lying-in Hospital

The Widows' Asylum

St. George's Day School

The Mendicity Association

A true “public blessing,” he was loved for his kindness, simplicity, and deep care for others.

Come and visit our weeping cherub, a moving reminder of one man's life of service and love.

Clergy and ministry

Fr John Murray

Fr John has now moved from the Downe Hospital for the next stage of his recovery.

He is hugely appreciative of all the prayers, cards, texts and emails. For now, Fr. respectfully asks that only Immediate Family and Clerical Colleagues visit for now. Please continue to keep Fr. In your prayers in the days and weeks ahead.

CMSI Mission Director Jenny Smyth to retire

Delegates at the annual Ignite Conference for Church Mission Society Ireland (CMSI) supporters, which took place in Dromantine Retreat and Conference centre

near Newry on Saturday 13th September, were among the first to hear the news that the Society's Mission Director Jenny Smyth plans to retire from the role in the coming months.



In her remarks, Jenny spoke of her history with the Society, having served for 11 years as Mission Director, two years as a Partnership coordinator and 20 years as a Mission Partner alongside her husband, Billy. Jenny said, “I now feel that someone with fresh energy, complementary skills and new vision would benefit the Society. We’re really blessed with a very supportive Board of Trustees and a strong, stable staff team...and I am sure that they are well able to ensure continuity for the Society and keep things on track during the change of leadership.”

Jenny concluded with words of gratitude: “I would like to thank you all and our global partners for the ongoing prayerful support that you’ve given and the practical ways in which you support the Society. Please do pray that God will direct and guide the process of recruitment and for the person that God has already appointed for this role.”

CMSI Chair of Trustees David Reynolds led the gathering of more than 120 CMSI members and friends in a time of prayer following the announcement, which resulted in an outpouring of affection for Jenny demonstrated by a standing ovation and through many valedictory words offered across the day.

It is hoped that a new Mission Director will be in post in time for the Society's Annual General Meeting in March 2026. In due course, there are plans for an event to celebrate Jenny's ministry in CMSI as well as online prayer meetings which will focus on the process of recruiting a new Mission Director.

The Chair of the Church of Ireland's Council for Mission, the Revd Tim Wright, said: "On behalf of the Council of Mission I want to thank Jenny for her outstanding service to the Church through the Church Mission Society Ireland. She has been a passionate advocate for a global engagement with a local church whether serving overseas or at home.

"She has successfully led a popular and well supported Society and interacted with other like-minded organisations on the Association of Mission Societies and the Council for Mission.

"We will miss her enthusiasm, leadership and godly wisdom. We wish Jenny and Billy God's blessing as they leave this sphere of ministry and seek to serve him in new pastures."

In the media

Queen's crack top 25 of UK universities

Landmark hailed as recognition of its world-leading research facilities, Mark Bain writes in the Belfast Telegraph.

Queen's University has moved into the top 25 universities in the UK, according to The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2026.

The annual bible of university life has placed the Belfast institution, which is celebrating 180 years this year, at number 21 in the list — rising five places from last year.

Queen's — part of the prestigious Russell Group of UK universities — has also been named as University of the Year in Northern Ireland in the guide which was published earlier this week.

Queen's President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Ian Greer said the acknowledgment was a testimony to the university's ongoing efforts to deliver “outstanding education” and “world-leading research”.

“We are delighted that Queen's has been ranked among the top 25 universities in the UK, rising to 21st place this year,” he said.

“And once again named the top university in Northern Ireland. This achievement reflects the tremendous talent

and commitment of our staff, whose priority is to deliver an outstanding education for our students alongside our world-leading research. As we celebrate our 180th year, Queen's will continue to make a positive impact — opening up educational opportunities, advancing our civic mission, supporting economic growth, and undertaking research that tackles the most pressing challenges facing society locally and globally.”

While Queen's University has risen in the table to sit just outside the top 20, Ulster University also remains in the top 50, having been listed at 49th, down four places on last year.

For the first time in the guide's 32-year history both the University of Oxford and University of Cambridge have dropped out of the top three in the national rankings and are joint fourth.

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) is the number one university for the second year in a row, while the University of St Andrews retained its spot in second place.

Durham University has climbed into third place from fifth, and as a result has been named The Times and The Sunday Times' University of the Year 2026.

Helen Davies, the editor of The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide, said: “In a very competitive top ten Durham has climbed two places in a year, which is a significant achievement.

“In doing so it has outdone both Oxford and Cambridge, helping to push them out of the top three in our league table for the first time in the Good University Guide's history.

“Its stellar academic performance was boosted this year by improvements in teaching quality, and student experience. Durham also won University of the Year in the North and Northeast 2026 and runner-up University of the Year for Graduate Prospects 2026.

“Competition to get a place at our top-ranked institutions continues to grow, leaving some lower-tariff universities with recruitment challenges.

“It is exciting to see universities across the UK working to deliver extraordinary medical and technical breakthroughs, lead economic regeneration and inspire.”

The full rankings list is available at
<https://www.thetimes.com/uk-university-rankings>

Poem for today

A September Day

by Francis Duggan

A thing of such great beauty to behold
The wattles resplendent in their blooms of gold
The first week of September and Spring is in the air
And in the green park daisies bloom everywhere,
On a day like this 'tis good to be alive



To start your car and go off on a drive
So great to live to see another Spring
To hear the nesting wild birds chirp and sing,
Were I a poet I would write a simple lay
For to celebrate this beautiful Spring day
To celebrate the beauty I can see
Where the Goddess of Spring has spread her greenery
And the wattles laden in their golden flowers
Look resplendent in these mild September hours.

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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