

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – St. George-in-the-Pines, Banff

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St. George-in-the-Pines, Banff

St. George-in-the-Pines, Banff, Alberta's Anglican church, exudes Gothic Revival charm in its Rocky Mountain setting. Designed by F.P. Oakley, construction stretched from 1889 to 1926, when the tower and spire were completed.

The pace was driven by the availability of funding. The church has played host to British royalty on a number of occasions, including King George VI (1939) and Princess Elizabeth (1951).



Internally, there are 50 beautiful stained glass windows but I was only able to photograph the one in the vestibule due to a meeting in progress in the church itself. The peal of 11 bells in the tower was cast by John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough, England and shipped via the Panama Canal. They are played using a chime system.

I have added a picture

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of Banff
Presbyterian Church
to provide a bit more
context on the
mountain setting. —
at St. George in the
Pines.

Photos by Andy
Witting

News

Celebrating and promoting unity across different communities in Scotland



Christian, Muslim, and Jewish leaders joined together to symbolically light candles at St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh on Friday celebrating and promoting unity across different communities in Scotland.

Organised by Chief Imam Dr Sayed Razawi of the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society, the event was attended by church leaders including the Most Rev Mark Strange, Bishop of Moray, Ross & Caithness and Primus of the Scottish



Episcopal Church, while the Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP, the Secretary of State for Scotland, also took part.

Candles were lit by:

- The Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Scotland
- Reverend Fiona Smith, Principal Clerk of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland
- Chief Imam Dr Sayed Razawi of the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society
- Archbishop Leo Cushley, Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh
- The Most Revd Mark Strange, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church
- Edward Green DL, Leader of the Edinburgh Jewish Community

- Rev Dr Scott Rennie, minister of St Giles'
- His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch
- His Grace the Duke of Hamilton

Christian Aid wants UK trade ban on illegal Israeli settlements

“Long overdue” UK recognition of Palestine requires a trade ban on illegal Israeli settlements says Christian Aid

The international development agency Christian Aid says a future Palestinian state won't be viable without a UK trade ban on illegal Israeli settlements.

Jennifer Larbie, Head of UK Advocacy and Campaigns at Christian Aid, said: “The Government has finally today recognised a state of Palestine, a step long overdue. But recognition requires concrete plans that deliver a sovereign state and a pathway towards a just and lasting peace. The UK must take further action now.

“A government policy that allows engagement with settlements is effectively supporting them – and therefore destroying the viability of the very state that they have just recognised, let alone making life for Palestinians in the West Bank intolerable.

“Action now must be taken to ban all trade between the UK and illegal settlements.”

It comes as a new report by 80 civil society groups, including Christian Aid, lays bare how Israeli illegal settlements have fragmented the West Bank and destroyed the Palestinian economy.

The “Stop Trade With Settlements” report highlights how trade by foreign corporations and states is directly enabling the humanitarian crisis driven by Israel's prolonged occupation. The UK is one of Israel's largest European trading partners, worth just under £6 billion a year.

Seminar programme at Anglican Centre in Rome begins

Last Thursday evening, the 2025 seminar programme began with its first seminar: 'St John Henry Newman and the sensus fidelium: lessons for synodality?' given by The Rt Revd Jonathan Baker (Bishop of Fulham and Chair of the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity) with a response from The Revd Dr James Hanvey, SJ (Secretary for the Service of Faith of the Society of Jesus).

It was a great success, with interesting presentations and discussions and a large turnout both in-person and online. Check out their full line-up of exciting seminars offered over the rest of 2025! <https://www.anglicancentreinrome.org/news/autumn-seminar-programme-announced>

A rural welcome for the Moderator

On his recent tour of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's (PCI) Presbytery of Derry and Donegal, Presbyterian Moderator, Right Reverend Dr Trevor Gribben, spent some of his time with a group of people he described as 'the backbone of Irish Presbyterianism' - farmers and their families.

Every Moderator undertakes four tours of PCI's 19 regional presbyteries during their year in office. "Each tour is different and organised by the Presbytery, but begins and ends with services of worship. There are also mid-week meetings and meetings with ministers. Having just finished my first one, I want to thank my colleagues in the Presbytery of Derry and Donegal for organising a thoughtful, busy and productive week, which gave me a real insight in to our church in the northwest," Dr Gribben said.

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland with the manager of Raphoe Livestock Mart, Ann Harkin.

"It really was an opportunity to encourage and to say 'thank you' to those who pastor, lead and serve in our Presbyterian congregations in



this part of the island. At the same time, I wanted to thank



those in the wider community who keep us safe, teach and encourage our children and young people, treat us when we are unwell, and provide food for our tables.”

During his visit, Dr Gribben was able to preach on his theme for the year ‘Hope and a future in Jesus’, in different congregations in Donegal and south of the border, with one of the days dedicated to meeting local farmers.

“One particularly rainy day had a very strong farming theme, which began at Raphoe Livestock Mart, looking at the stock and talking to farmers from across the northwest and further afield before the sale started. I also visited a sheep farm and two dairy farms,” Dr Gribben said.

“At every visit it was great to meet Presbyterians who were involved in farming, their local communities and our The **Moderator on Gareth Porter’s farm at Damense,**

Castlefinn where he was joined by 40 farmers from neighbouring farms

The Moderator with Malcolm Cooper who presented the shepherd's crook to Dr Gribben on behalf of the farmers of Donegal.

congregations in east Donegal. While I wouldn't be the first Moderator to say it, our rural congregations, largely made up of farmers and their families, are the backbone of Irish Presbyterianism.



Dr Gribben continued, "At a time when farmers are often criticised, I think that we need to remember that across this island they not only put food on our tables, but look after our beautiful land."

One farm Dr Gribben visited used had a rotary milking parlour which can milk 40 cows at a time. Another had a breeding flock of some 600 ewes and had been farmed by

the same family for five generations. “Sitting round the kitchen table and chatting was a special time and a highlight for me. At another farm, we were joined by some 40 farmers from neighbouring farms.”

“It was good to talk, listen, encourage and pray for those who work the land to put food on our tables and provide The **Moderator with Robert Lowry outside his rotary milking parlour on his Churchminster farm, Lifford.**

jobs. It was a cold day too, but as we met in a shed on the farm the ladies from our local congregations warmed us, not only with tea and traybakes, but with their own warm hospitality.”

Dr Gribben also talked with some farmers about areas of concern. “Over lunch with farmers from both sides of the border, I heard their concerns around inheritance tax, which is coming to the UK. Farmers in Donegal were also concerned that the Irish government might do the same. A move that could severely affect the futures and viability of many farms.”

The Moderator concluded by saying, “My visit to Derry and Donegal will stay in the memory for a long time. One reason for making it so memorable was a unique gift I was given - a shepherd’s crook, handmade in hazel. On it a small plate says, ‘Donegal Farmers 2025’. A very special gift that will find a home in the Moderator’s Room in Assembly Buildings in Belfast,” Dr Gribben said.

During his visit to the Presbytery, he also visited Aurivo Killygordon. “This was a fascinating tour where we had a

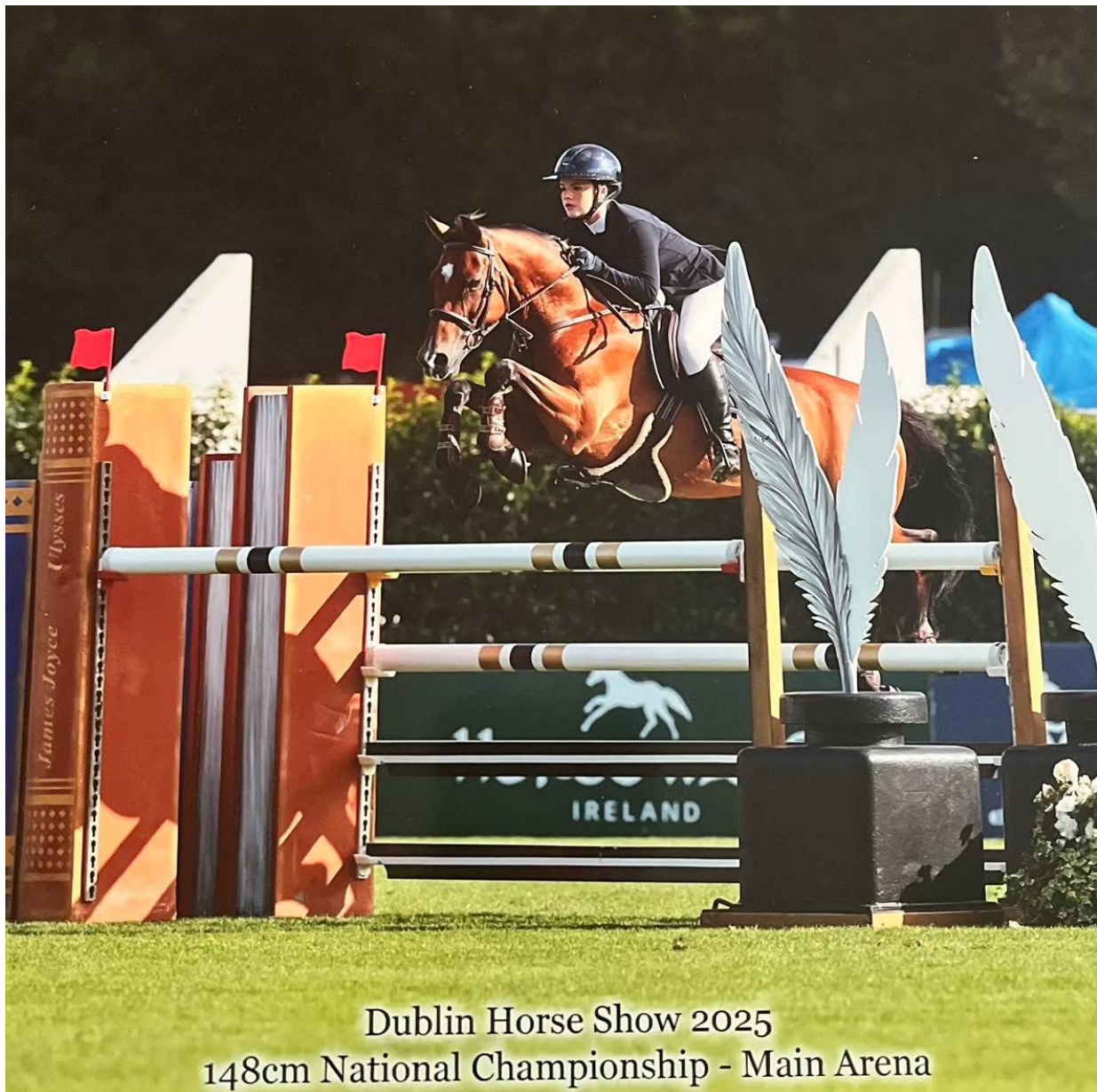
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look round and heard of Aurivo's commitment to providing local jobs and supporting dairy farmers from the Donegal area and further afield," Dr Gribben said.

Education

Dalriada in Dublin





Well done to Year 12 pupil Zoe and her pony Victory Day who had a successful Dublin Horse Show over the Summer holidays.

They were placed 5th in Simmonscourt which qualified them to jump in the main arena in the 148 A class.

Lagan College Students selected for European Youth Parliament

Two Year 14 public speaking students have been selected by the European Youth Parliament for the United Kingdom National Committee to represent the UK at EYP sessions abroad.

Having recently represented Northern Ireland at the European Youth Parliament National-level selection process, the jury selected Toni Lovell and Seth Hines as top performing delegates to represent the UK's interests abroad.

Seth Hines has been invited to attend the 104th International Session of the European Youth Parliament, in Italy, as a UK delegate. Toni Lovell has been invited to attend Gothenburg 2026 - National Selection Conference of EYP Sweden as a UK delegate.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for Toni and Seth. Lagan College is so proud of their achievements!

Cathedral Calls

Three Choirs Festival Conductor retires after 24 years

The Board and Team of the festival acknowledge the incredible contribution made by Geraint Bowen as Hereford Artistic Director for the last 24 years, on the announcement of his retirement.

Geraint Said: "It has been a huge privilege to have been associated with the Three Choirs Festival for nearly twenty-

five years. My thanks go to the many hundreds of choral singers with whom I have worked over that time, as well as the incomparable Philharmonia Orchestra who have contributed to so many memorable concerts."

Read more 🖱️ <https://3choirs.org/news/geraint-bowen-artistic-director-of-the-hereford-three-choirs-festival-announces-his-retirement>

Inaugural Annual General Meeting of the Community of St Laurence

All parishioners have been warmly invited to the first Annual General Meeting of the Community of St Laurence on Thursday, 25 September 2025 at 6:30 p.m. in the Chapter Room of Christ Church Cathedral.

The Cathedral stated in a circular that - "the Community of St Laurence was founded to be a place of belonging, empowerment, and spiritual growth for all who are part of the Cathedral family — whether long-time members or those simply seeking truth in their lives. Rooted in the Cathedral's Augustinian charisms of Worship, Welcome, and Witness, the Community exists to nurture our shared life together, to encourage personal and collective growth, and to speak boldly to the needs of our time.

"At this inaugural meeting, we will introduce the Community's leadership, share our vision for the year ahead, and present our exciting anchor events — including the Annual St Laurence Dinner in November, the Cathedral Retreat Weekend in Lent, the Pride Service in June, and our

annual Charity Partnership in late summer. This will also be your opportunity to become a member and take part in shaping the life, witness, and ministry of the Community in the months and years ahead. Membership is free, and donations are welcome to support this ministry.

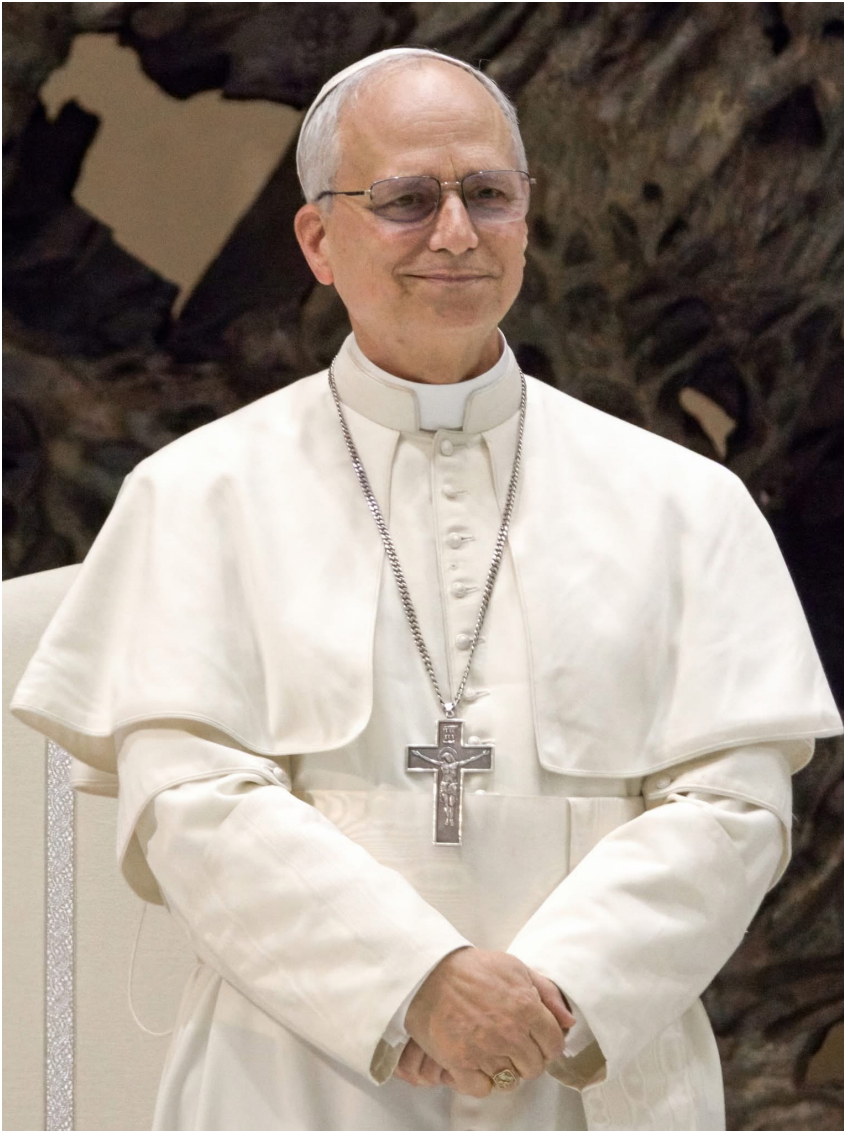
“We look forward to welcoming you as we take this exciting next step together in the life of Christ Church Cathedral. In order to attend the meeting, registration is required — register today at <https://bit.ly/CommunityOfStLaurence>. “

Precentors annual conference held at Anglican Centre in Rome

The Anglican Centre in Rome was delighted to welcome the Precentors of the Church of England to Rome on their annual conference.

Among a packed agenda, their visit to the Eternal City included attending an audience with Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican on Wednesday (pictured here), meetings with the Vatican's Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity, a visit to the British ambassador to the Holy See, Evensong and a forum discussion at St. Paul's Within the Walls (The Episcopal Church's parish in Rome) with the clergy and some parishioners of Rome's Anglican Communion parishes, and coming to the Anglican Centre both for a dinner and to celebrated the Eucharist. Every encouragement to them all as they return to UK!

Clergy and ministry



Pope Leo - it is urgent to establish a pastoral ministry that is...

Pope Leo XIV last week, speaking to the Diocese of Rome: "I believe it is urgent to establish a pastoral ministry that is supportive, empathetic, discreet, and non-judgmental,

welcoming to all, and that offers the most personalized paths possible, suited to the diverse life situations of those receiving it."

<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/it/speeches/2025/september/documents/20250919-apertura-annopastorale.html>

In the media

How John Betjeman failed in Divinity - Christopher Howse writes in The Daily Telegraph

I was surprised and saddened to hear that most young people are unfamiliar with the poetry of John Betjeman. It must always have depended on which young people one asks.

This week has seen a reappraisal of Betjeman (1906-1984) for a new generation at a Betjeman Society symposium at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he read English, with C S Lewis (who had not yet returned to Christianity) as his tutor. He hated Lewis, who had no patience with his dilettanteism.

In *Summoned by Bells*, his verse autobiography, Betjeman attributed the end of his Oxford days to having “failed in Divinity”, a paper compulsory for all. He did fail twice, but passed on the third attempt. He was then allowed to read for a pass-degree, instead of honours, but failed his exams. Oxford forgave all that and gave him an honorary doctorate in 1974.

Among those giving papers this week was Daisy Dunn, whose triple biography of Maurice Bowra, E R Dodds and Gilbert Murray illuminated the setting of Oxford between the wars.

Central to Betjeman’s poetry is “the sense of an undemonstrative but deep Christian belief of a kind able to contain the harsh, ugly, absurd realities of present-day existence”. The words are those of Kingsley Amis, who

wrote a well-turned entry on Betjeman in the Dictionary of National Biography.

Amis also quoted Philip Larkin, who shared an interest in churches but stood outside the shelter of faith: “He offers us something we cannot find in any other writer – a gaiety, a sense of the ridiculous, an affection for human beings and how and where they live, a vivid and vivacious portrait of mid-20th-century English social life.” In that way, perhaps, he resembled Chaucer, whose faith would be hard to put together from *The Canterbury Tales*.

The president of the Betjeman Society, the Venerable David Meara, Archdeacon Emeritus of London, finds an irreducible faith in Betjeman, who declared that “the one fundamental thing is that Christ was God... Really, I don’t think life would be worth living if it weren’t true.”

But Mr Meara notes that, confronting head-on his own fear of death, Betjeman became a hospital visitor at Barts, sitting with dying patients, holding their hands. This is reflected in his poem “Inevitable”, where a dying man in a final act of generosity “drags himself to earth again to say good-bye to me”.

I’ve heard it suggested that Betjeman should be remembered in a Church of England calendar, but an obstacle must be his marital problems. After 1951 it was complicated enough when his wife Penelope moved away from Wantage, where they lived, and Betjeman took up with Lady Elizabeth Cavendish, his “beloved other wife”.

In 2007 the world found it even more complicated when a circuit judge, Andrew Geddes, wrote in *The Spectator* about his mother Margie Geddes's long affair with Betjeman in the 1960s and 1970s. Once, when Penelope Betjeman was alone with Margie Geddes in the 1970s, she spoke of Lady Elizabeth: "It's the eternal triangle, Margie, but I don't think there is any sex in it, he is past that now." Andrew Geddes commented: "Mother, perhaps wisely, kept her counsel."

I'm not saying Betjeman should be vilified 40 years after his death for failing to make up his mind who he should live with. It did not make him a worse poet, nor, despite his doubts and fear of death, did it quite destroy his faith.

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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