

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – Thanksgiving for Connor Readers**

September 25, 2025

## Image of the day



## Thanksgiving for Connor Readers







A service celebrating the ministry of Parish and Diocesan Readers in Connor was held in Belfast Cathedral on Sunday. On this joyful occasion, readers from across the Diocese came to the cathedral to be encouraged in their vocations, and recognised for the ways in which they support and enrich worship in their parishes and beyond.

## News

### Harvest focus - Donagh group's gratitude

**“Thank you to Everyone who helped prepare and decorate St Sillian’s for our Harvest Festival” -“Our thanks to Archdeacon Leslie Stevenson for his wise and**





**challenging  
Sermon; to his  
chauffeur and better  
half, Ruth;**  
to our good friend Fr  
Leo Creelman for  
joining us;  
to Ethne McCord and  
The Donagh  
Community Choir for  
the music;  
to our sandwich  
makers and traybake  
bakers;  
to our friends at  
Tyholland GAA who  
set out the chairs and





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tables (and put them all away again) and had the hall lovely and toasty for our arrival;  
and to all our good friends and neighbours who joined us to celebrate Harvest Thanksgiving at St Sillian's.



## Frassati Fellowship at Queens

**The Queen's Chaplaincy Catholic men's group, Frassati Fellowship, got off to a great start last week.**

"We were delighted to welcome back familiar faces and to greet, for the first time, new friends joining our fraternity of faith, friendship and service. A strong start to what promises to be a great year ahead".



## Centenary of the Malines Conversations

**The centenary of the Malines Conversations, a milestone in Anglican–Roman Catholic dialogue, was marked in Mechelen, Belgium, with a 4-day conference, an academic session, and a concluding Evensong service on Sunday 21 September, at Saint Rumbold's Cathedral.**

The final service of evening prayer was presided over by the Archbishop Terlinden and the Archbishop of York, with Cardinal Koch reading one of the lessons. A plaque was unveiled commemorating Cardinal Mercier, who was the leading Catholic in the 1921-25 conversations.





Speaking of the importance of dialogue and the Malines Conversations, the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said:

'I am often struck by how our disunity weakens our witness to the world. We have grown too used to a broken body of Christ. Yet, I have also seen how, when we walk, work, and pray together, people glimpse the heart of the gospel and turn to Christ. The ecumenical journey that was begun in the Malines conversation continues today and it is a privilege to celebrate the progress that has been made. But there's more to do. God is inviting us to live more deeply into the unity we already share. For the sake of the world.'

The Malines Conversations were a series of five informal ecumenical conversations held from 1921 to 1927, which explored possibilities for greater unity between the Roman



Catholic Church and the Church of England, forming one stage of Anglican–Roman Catholic dialogue.

Read more: <http://bit.ly/46z5yJ9>

## **Celebrating 250 years of families and youth ministry in C of I**

**Leaders across the Church of Ireland were encouraged to prioritise children, families and youth ministry, leading from a loving heart, knowing their purpose, and reaching individuals, as at the celebration for the 250th anniversary of these ministries in the Church on Saturday (20th September).**

St Mary's Church, Newry, hosted the special service organised by the Board for Ministry with Children and



Families (BMCF) and the Church of Ireland Youth Department (CIYD), with the Revd Dr Mark Griffiths as guest speaker. Dr Griffiths is Director of Mission Resources with Scripture Union in England and Wales.



Welcoming guests to the service, Bishop David McClay introduced Bishop Moses Zungo from the Diocese of Maridi, in South Sudan – children in Maridi have recently benefitted from the Pancakes and Prayer fundraising initiative from CIYD, Fields of Life, and Bishops' Appeal for World Aid and Development. Bishop McClay thanked the Rector of Newry, Revd Captain Scott McDonald, and his parishioners for their hospitality.

“This service is about the future,” Bishop Pat Storey, as President of CIYD, remarked in her invitation to worship. “It’s a service of potential and we are going to come before



God to surrender ourselves to what God’s future might look like.”

Extracts from the Sunday School Society of Ireland’s early books of reports were read, sharing stories of changed lives and the care shown by local churches for families in their communities around Ireland.

Bishop George Davison, who chairs the Board for Ministry with Children and Families, led the congregation in prayers that acknowledged where the Church had fallen short in how it had ministered to children, and seeking that Jesus would revive it in its calling.

In the course of his sermon, Dr Griffiths commented that “all ministry ultimately becomes a matter of the heart, what we are truly like” and God is looking for people with the right heart for ministry. A motivation of “I love God” leads to



incredible things “when that motivation flows through us,” he noted, and this is especially important when presenting our faith to the “highly empathic” generations of young people and children today.

“You have got to keep yourself spiritually sweet and you have got to keep your heart free of baggage,” he continued, also noting the value of perseverance in Paul’s message in Philippians about pressing onwards in faith: “If you bring these things into your lives, you communicate that to children and young people.”

Secondly, Dr Griffiths emphasised the importance of knowing what we are trying to do. Amy Carmichael, a missionary to India who was born in County Down, once dreamed that she was trying to keep people from falling off a cliff while others were making daisy chains – the Church of her time was “wrapped up in complacency, apathy and indifference” whereas today “our enemy is activity”. There was a role for “rescue services at the bottom of the cliff” but it’s far better to invest in helping children and young people “to become everything that God wants them to be.” This includes teaching them how to deal with hurt and harm, and introducing them to life in all its fulness in Jesus before the fall takes place.

Dr Griffiths concluded with a focus on the value of the individual young person, recalling that a clergyman in a Scottish fishing village was once criticised for his perceived lack of success – only one boy had come to faith through the Sunday School in the previous year.



This boy, Robert Moffat, grew up to become the father of modern missions, who in turn encouraged David Livingstone to go and plant the seeds of church growth in Southern Africa. Similarly, when Peter and John made one person the focus in the healing at the Beautiful Gate (in Acts chapter 3), the miracle attracted the attention of thousands of people.

Representatives of the 11 dioceses in the Church of Ireland received the gift of a plaque to commemorate this celebration, during prayers led by Bishop Storey and Bishop Davison. The plaques will be displayed in a location in each diocese and lit up on the next Day of Prayer for Young People and Youth Ministry, which will take place on the Sunday before Advent (23rd November).





## Down High Oxbridge applicants

**In the Old Quad with past pupil Ellen Taylor.**

Year 14 Oxbridge applicants visiting Oxford on a residential, hosted by Brasenose College.

## Abbey Community College student explores nursing

**Tia attended summer school at John Moores University from the 2nd - 4th of July.**

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During this time she explored various courses with a focus on Nursing and got a flavour of university life in Liverpool. This opportunity highlighted her commitment to broadening her horizons and helped her confirm that Nursing is the course she wants to pursue.



## New Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Bursary Scheme

**Education Minister Paul Givan MLA has announced a new Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Bursary Scheme, aimed at tackling teacher shortages in critical post-primary subjects across Northern Ireland.**

The Department of Education will work closely with the local Higher Education Institutions and the Department for the



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Economy to develop the scheme, which is backed by a projected investment of £8.2 million over five financial years.

For more information, visit: [www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/givan-announces-bursaries-tackle-teacher-shortages-post-primary](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/givan-announces-bursaries-tackle-teacher-shortages-post-primary)

## Cathedral Calls



## Westminster Abbey's Secret Services

Wander through the Abbey cloisters and you can find this memorial dedicated to those who have served in the UK's Intelligence Services.





The memorial is made of granites from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and honours members past and present of MI5, the Secret Intelligence Service and GCHQ, as well as those who worked in the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park during the Second World War.

The memorial was dedicated in 2009 at a service attended by Queen Elizabeth II who said, 'To celebrate the gallantry, sacrifice, and heroism of the men and women of the Intelligence Services, I place this plaque in the custody of the Dean and Chapter.'





## Celebrating the 1,400th anniversary of St Eunan's birth

**The congregation at St Eunan's Cathedral Raphoe were treated the other evening to a fascinating insight into the life and impact of the man after whom their church is named, during a special evening celebrating the 1,400th anniversary of the saint's birth.**

The event – which featured talks by local historian Mary Harte and archaeologist and Eunan biographer, Dr Brian Lacey – included an Iona Abbey Evening Liturgy, sourced by the Dean, Very Rev'd Liz Fitzgerald, from the abbey on Iona where St Eunan, or Admonán, served as abbot in the late 7th century.



Welcoming the congregation on the Feast Day of St Eunan, Dean Fitzgerald described the evening as a special occasion on which to celebrate someone whom she said was "a little bit forgotten but a very significant person". Bishop Andrew Forster agreed that St Eunan had been "lost in the mists of time". St Columba was well known largely, the Bishop said, because of what Eunan had written about him. "What we want to do is in some way recover some of the story of Eunan, to be inspired by him. I hope, tonight, as we think about St Eunan, we will discover an example in him that will help us to bring a positive and good example to the world around us".

Ms Harte updated those present about the 'Hunt for Eunan's Monastery Programme'. She said for centuries Raphoe had been a very important place for religion and revealed that during their quest for traces of the saint's ministry, they had





discovered a trough in the town which may have been used centuries ago by pilgrims to bathe their feet in.

Dr Lacey, the author of 'Adomnán, Adhamhnán, Eunan - Life and afterlife of a Donegal saint', said there was a strong possibility that Eunan – a distant relative of Columba – was born near Raphoe, in the territory of his mother's people, the Cenél nÉannai.

"In my opinion— I have to say this in this building – Adomnán was at least the equal of Columba," Dr Lacey said, "if not actually in some ways more important, certainly historically more important, although he's not nearly as well known."

Eunan, who became the ninth abbot of the monastery in Iona and head of the federation of monasteries founded by Columba in Britain and Ireland, was, Dr Lacey said, "an all-



round achiever". He was an activist and an intellectual. He was an abbot, an historian, a hagiographer, a theologian, a lawmaker, a diplomat, a sailor, a builder, "and even what we now call a town planner". He spoke and wrote in Irish and Latin, and had at least some ability in Pictish, Anglo-Saxon and Greek. He was also a relative and friend of very important kings in Ireland and Britain."

St Eunan's book, 'Vita Columbae', about his predecessor as Abbot on Iona, "in effect [made] Colmcille into a saint" and was, Dr Lacey said, one of the most important works of 7th century European literature. Eunan's 'De Locis Sanctis', an account of the sacred sites of Palestine, was the oldest book from Western Europe on that subject, and prompted medieval commentators on the continent to confer on Eunan the title 'the Illustrious'. "Adomnán also wrote the earliest humanitarian law, as far as we know, anywhere on the





planet for the protection of non-combatants in time of war...and Adomnán secured support for this law from effectively every lay and ecclesiastical potentate in Ireland and Scotland. Several authors have pointed out that Adomnán's law was a very early precursor - by about 1,300 years - of the Geneva Conventions and the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights".

Dr Lacey said Adomnán's connection with the cause of human rights, in times of war in particular, was especially cultivated in the church in Raphoe in the late Middle Ages.

Bishop Andrew thanked Dr Lacey for his "fascinating" and inspirational talk. Eunan listened to the cries of the vulnerable, the Bishop said, helping to secure the passing of 'the law of the innocents', "a law that offered protection to non-combatants in times of war and also imposed sterner penalties for those who assaulted women." Bishop Andrew said in this day we could not forget those in our own community who still suffered violence behind closed doors -

especially women who endured abuse in their homes. "The cry of the vulnerable has not been silenced and the call of God still comes to us, to the Church, to listen and to act...to protect the innocent and to stand with the wounded until healing and justice come."

Music for the evening was provided by the Royal School House Choir, under the direction of organist Clark Brydon. After the service, those present enjoyed refreshments and conversation at the back of the cathedral.

## Events

### Derry First Wednesday Lunchtime Recital



**Christ Church, Derry/Londonderry is delighted to welcome Eamonn Karran one of Ireland's most distinctive pianists and composers.**

Based in Derry, Eamonn has spent over 35 years performing and recording — from touring with Chris Rea in the 90s to releasing 6 acclaimed albums blending Celtic traditions with modern soundscapes. His music, often compared to Phil Coulter and Clannad, interweaves piano, pipes, whistles and orchestration to create atmospheric and moving sound worlds.

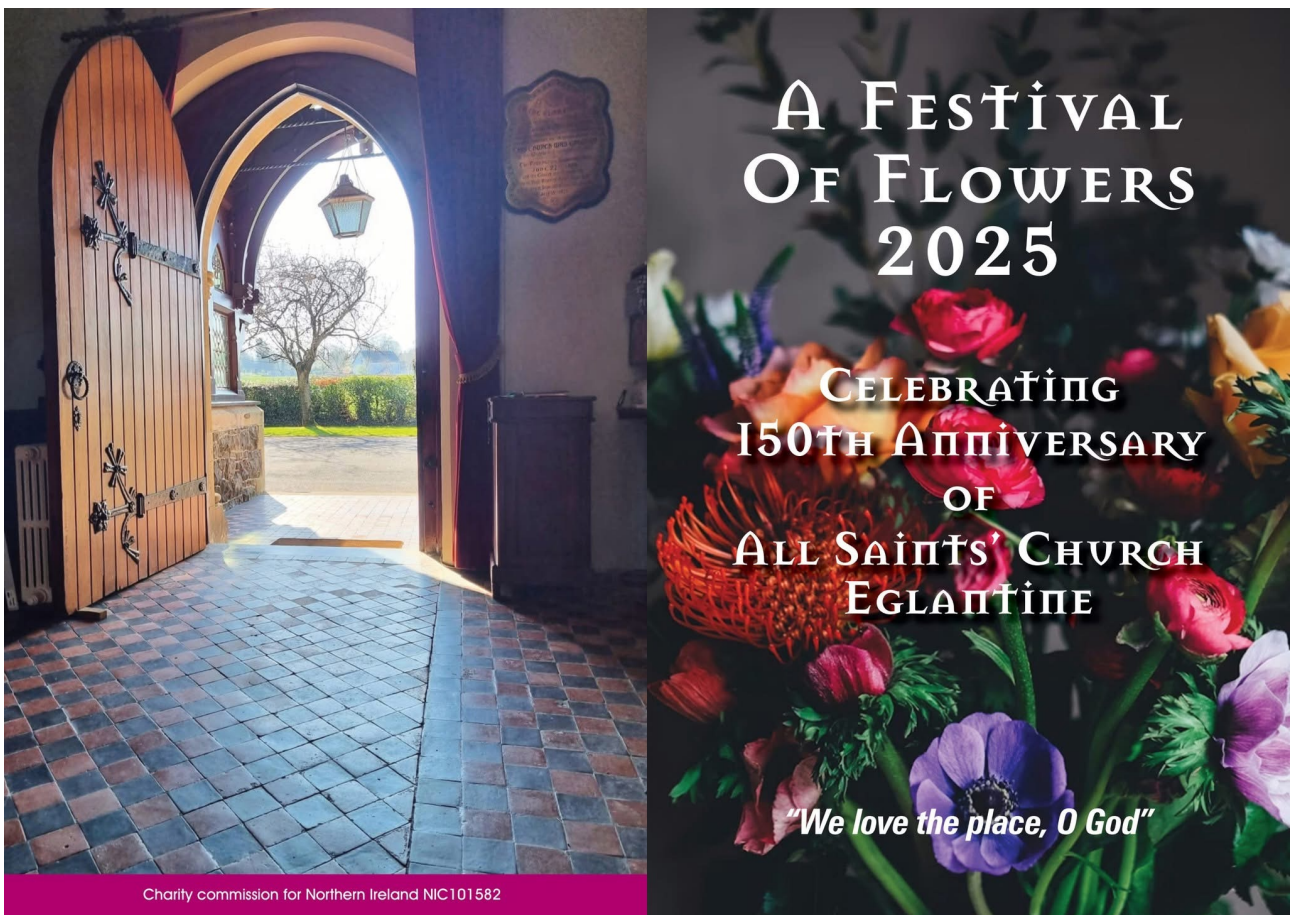
With over 1 million streams, international airplay (on 30+ airlines!) and glowing reviews, Eamonn is recognised as a leading voice in Celtic and New Age music:



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“Eamonn Karran has grown into one of the foremost Celtic composers of his day... flowing with an untouchable



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confidence.” – oneworldmusic.co.uk

“His music propels him into the same league as George Winston and Kevin Kern... its beauty will stay with the listener for many years.” – piano-heaven.co.uk

Come along, take a break at lunchtime, and enjoy an uplifting recital from this exceptional local artist.

Wednesday 1st October 2025. 1.10pm – 1.50pm  
Admission free | Retiring collection

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## 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](mailto:houstonmckelvey@mac.com)

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

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