

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Gettys Sing an Irish Christmas

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Gettys Sing an Irish Christmas

Getty's 'Sing! An Irish Christmas' leaves crowd 'stirred for Jesus'

Irish singer-songwriters Keith and Kristyn Getty returned to the campus of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for their Christ-centred concert "Sing! An Irish Christmas." The Gettys were joined by Matt Boswell and Southwestern A Cappella on the first stop of their 15-stop concert tour.

The couple included a newer song in their repertoire called "Scarlet Thread" which they said after the concert is a "new song" that they have "started in the last few months." Classic Christmas carols in the first half of the programme included "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen," "Silent Night," and "Joy to the World."

New songs introduced

Songs also included instrumental versions of "Sleigh Ride," "Come Ye Sinners/Sinnerman" and "Wexford Carol." Other favourites throughout the evening were "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus," "In the Bleak Midwinter," "O Come All Ye Faithful," "In Christ Alone" and "Go Tell It on the Mountain."

The couple pointed to several new songs introduced for this year's tour that were particularly meaningful to them, including "Scarlet Thread," "Wayfaring Stranger," and "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence."

Keith also referenced his opportunity to try new food like elk, antelope, and bison while visiting Fort Worth, Texas, so that he could be a "true Texan." Attendees also were entertained with Irish step dancing by one of the violinists as well as traditional Irish sounds of music that rang through the night.

After the intermission, Southwestern A Cappella, a 17-member vocal ensemble comprised of graduate students at Southwestern Seminary, performed three songs for the crowd.

Matt Boswell, singer-songwriter and lead pastor at The Trails Church in Prosper, Texas, performed a new Christmas hymn he co-wrote with Matt Papa, artist-in-residence at Marco Presbyterian Church in Marco Island, Florida. The hymn, "In the Fullness of Time," provides a comprehensive view of Christ's first coming, and looks toward His second coming. The song also incorporated a Christmas rendition of the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy."

'Lobby jam'

Following the concert, members of the Getty band hosted a "lobby jam" in the lobby of MacGorman Chapel where Keith told the audience that "Texans will become Irish for the night" by singing Irish folk songs together.

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Many churches and groups attended the concert together and some churches even used the event as a way to bless their worship team members. For Alan Yarbrough, worship pastor at First Baptist Church Justin, Texas, he used the time to give back to those who “sacrifice their own worship time with their families” on a weekly basis.

“This concert gave us the opportunity to sing and worship together,” Yarbrough said. “We were all blown away by the musicianship of the Getty’s and most importantly, our affections were stirred for Jesus as we enter into this Advent season.”

This report was written by James Dugger and originally published by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

People and places

Belfast teachers join young royals in song as mum Kate hosts third carol concert at Abbey

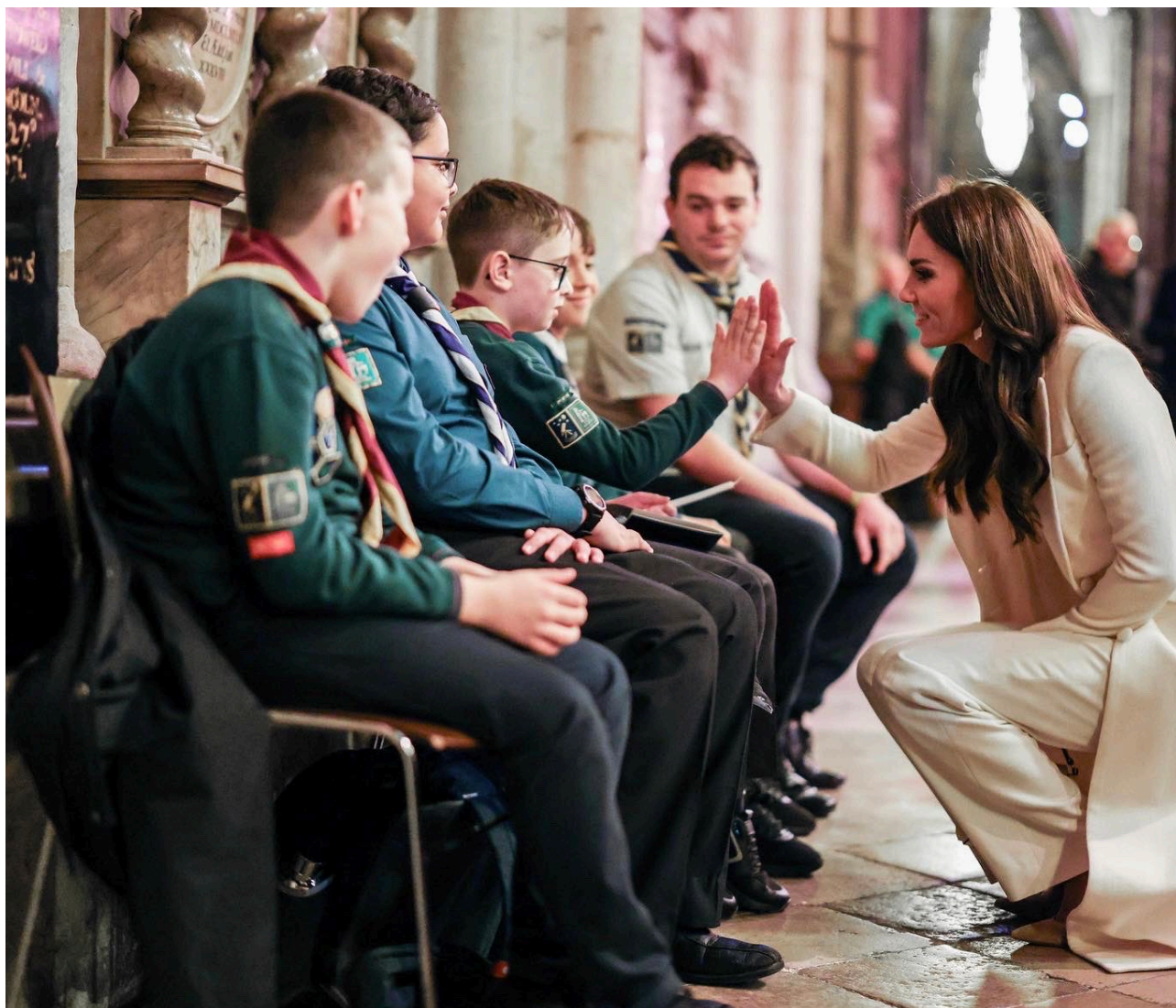
Thanks to His Majesty’s Lord Lieutenant for Belfast, Dame Fionnula J O’Boyle, teachers from three schools in the city were guests at the now-annual carol concert hosted by the Princess of Wales at Westminster Abbey. The Belfast guests included teachers from Fane Stree and Fleming-Fulton schools.



The Prince and Princess of Wales' children joined their parents at the carol service celebrating those supporting youngsters and families.

Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis made a rare public appearance for the annual Westminster Abbey event hosted by Kate which has quickly become a firm fixture in the festive royal calendar.

This year the service reflects the princess' early years Shaping Us campaign launched in January, which aims to highlight and promote the significance of the formative years of a child's life.



It was billed as a moment to thank all those who work to support babies, young children and families in communities across the UK and among the 1,500 guests were midwives and nursery teachers.

The royal children, George (10), Charlotte (8) and Louis (5), were introduced to the Dean of Westminster, Dr David Hoyle, outside the Abbey's great west door when they first arrived with their father William.

Kate had travelled ahead of her family to meet and thank the celebrities taking part and she stopped to chat to a number of the young people invited to the event.



Fane Street School supports some of Belfast's most challenged, disadvantaged children and their families. The care, nurturing, compassion of the staff team is inspirational. The Lord Lieutenant said It was a privilege to nominate Hilary, Gordon, David to be present at the Eary Childhood Carol Service



Fleming Fulton School is a very special place with very special staff supporting, caring for and educating some of our most fragile children. So lovely to see Karen and Alison at the Early Childhood Carol Service. Truly the very best of Belfast.

As they walked into the Abbey the royal children paused for a moment to post Christmas cards, in a special post box, containing messages for children who might be struggling this Christmas, something open to all of the youngsters attending.

Among the highlights of the service was songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Jacob Collier playing Last Christmas on John Lennon's piano, which was owned by the late Wham! lead singer and solo-star George Michael and loaned by his estate.

Broadcaster Roman Kemp, the son of Spandau Ballet bassist Martin Kemp and former Wham! backing singer Shirlie Kemp, introduced Collier and talked about the role George Michael played in his life.

Oscar-winning actor Jim Broadbent read an extract from Letters From Father Christmas by Lord of the Rings author JRR Tolkien while actor Michael Ward later recounted the moment the shepherds were told by an angel about the birth of the baby Jesus and their visit to see Mary and Joseph in the stables, in a reading from Luke's Gospel.

Guests were treated to carols and Christmas songs performed by the Action for Children Young Carers Aloud choir, made up of 12 young carers, including one aged just six.

The princess thanked the celebrities for giving up their time when she met them ahead of the concert.

Kate appeared to share a joke with multi-instrumentalist Collier, who has posted music tutorial videos on YouTube, about her daughter Charlotte learning to play the piano and he quipped “many a plink and a plonk”.

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Displaced but not forgotten

An update from Lebanon

The Advent and Christmas Appeal launched by the Church of Ireland's Bishops' Appeal for World Aid and Development, in the last days of November, focuses on the desperate situation in the Middle East.



A local Christian partner in Lebanon.

Photo credit: Tearfund.

No-one will be surprised by this – we only have to watch news updates on our TV screens, or news apps on our phones to see day by day stories of those whose lives have been destroyed since the October 7th massacre carried out by Hamas, and the reciprocating actions of Israel in Gaza where thousands have been killed and injured, and according to the UN over a million have been forced to leave their homes.



Among those working with displaced people in the region is a Tearfund project in Lebanon – through a local partner. In addition to the escalation of violence between Israel and Gaza there was an increase in tensions and violent incidents along the Israel-Lebanon border.

Irish troops are currently stationed in the area, running Camp Shamrock, a UN peacekeeping base close to the Lebanon-Israel border. They are there to try to keep the peace in the face of regular clashes and a deteriorating security situation between the Israeli Defence Forces, Hezbollah and other armed groups.

As fears grow of the conflict spreading into Lebanon, many thousands of people have already been displaced, and need emergency support and aid. From food to mattresses to

medicines – those fleeing their homes have nothing and need emergency help simply to survive.

One displaced person from a village on the border, now in Lebanon with his family, said: “It was a difficult decision to leave. My home and my work are there, and I don’t know if it will still be there when I get back – we have no idea. Our lives are in that village.

“Everything here – the cleaning supplies, the blankets – is helpful. But the best thing is the mattresses – they are the perfect thing to give to people who are displaced.”

Speaking in early November, one of the project volunteers at the emergency supplies centre explained: “What happened recently in Israel and Gaza and the consequences of it are making the situation even harder for the Lebanese. The people who live in villages near the border have been especially affected and had to flee to Beirut.

“In the first weeks of the conflict alone about 19,000 people were displaced and the ones who stayed lived in constant fear. Bombs were falling on them and they lost all their harvest, including the harvest of olives on which they heavily rely economically because the crops were contaminated with white phosphorus.”

Your generosity this Advent in response to this appeal for the crisis in the Middle East will make an incredible difference to people in great need, and make sure that they know they are not forgotten.

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Online donations to Bishops' Appeal can be made at <https://store.ireland.anglican.org/donations/the-bishops-appeal> and further details about how to give through parish collections, or by cheque or bank transfer, are available at <https://bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org/give>

News reports

Presiding bishop released from hospital and continuing recovery at home

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry fell while visiting Syracuse, New York, and suffered a subdural hematoma, or brain bleed, that required surgery, the Church's Office of Public Affairs said in a news release.

The Dec. 3 surgery was successful, and Bishop Curry was recovering in a hospital near his home in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Episcopal News Service Staff said that Bishop Curry's present hospitalization comes about 2 and a half months since he underwent surgery Sept. 20 to remove an adrenal gland and a non-cancerous attached mass following treatment earlier for episodes of internal bleeding.

Curry, at 70, is wrapping up the final year of his nine-year term as presiding bishop. He suffered a subdural hematoma at least once before, in the first month of his tenure. A subdural hematoma is usually caused by a head injury

strong enough to burst blood vessels, which can then cause pooled blood to push on the brain.

The previous brain bleed likely was caused when he tripped over a curb and hit his head on the morning of his installation, Nov. 1, 2015, although at the time he did not know he had injured himself that seriously. It became apparent a little over a month later when he experienced memory lapse while preaching.

The Dec. 4 news release did not indicate any connection between Curry's recent emergency and his previous diagnosis of internal bleeding.

"Please pray for Bishop Curry, his family and his medical team," the news release said.

In the media

Bishop apologises over alleged child abuse by late rector and vows to support victims

The Bishop of Down and Dromore has said he is "deeply sorry for the hurt and pain" inflicted in the 1970s by a late Church of Ireland minister, writes Garrett Horgan in Belfast Telegraph's Sunday life

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The Right Reverend David McClay was speaking following the conclusion of a civil case arising out of alleged historic child abuse by the clergyman.

A £100,000 settlement was reached in Eddie Gorman's action over the alleged abuse he suffered at the hands of minister and scout leader Bill Neely.

The ex-RUC constable (61) said he was groomed and repeatedly assaulted by Neely over a three-year period during the 1970s.

The attacks were carried out at the cleric's Mount Merrion parish in east Belfast and a campsite in Crawfordsburn, Co Down, it was contended.

Neely was transferred to Co Tipperary in 1976 and removed from his scouting role the following year. He died in 2009.

Mr Gorman sued the Church of Ireland's Diocese of Down and Dromore and the Scouts Association.

He alleged negligence in allowing Neely to carry out the abuse and failing to ensure his safety. No admission of liability was made by the defendants.

Bishop McClay, who did not name Neely or Mr Gorman, said: "I have been shocked and saddened to hear of the pain and hurt inflicted... by the late Church of Ireland rector.

"Any young person who suffered abuse should know that it was not their fault and that such evil acts can never be excused.

“I am deeply sorry for the hurt that was caused to the victim. Saying sorry is inadequate, but it's important that the victim hears our heartfelt, deep and sincere apology for the terrible pain he and his family endured.

“I am willing to meet with the victim to express this apology face-to-face, if the victim felt that would bring healing or add to a sense of closure.

“We pledge ourselves to listen to and care for victims and survivors of abuse in any and every way that we can. Our church has robust processes and procedures in place today to protect children from the risk of abuse.

“Trained safeguarding staff can offer professional, practical advice to help ensure children are protected from harm by any person in a position of trust in the church in as far as humanly possible.”

He added: “Abuse perpetrated on children, young people and adults at risk of harm is abhorrent and something that deeply pains us.

“In the mid-1990s, the church referred a complaint against the rector to the RUC.

“The police conducted an investigation, and a file was passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for final decision. In January 1996, the DPP wrote to the RUC recommending no prosecution.

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“I would encourage anyone who has been abused by an individual in a position of trust in the church to report what happened to the appropriate police authorities and to know they can come forward and be supported and heard by our safeguarding staff.”

Man awarded £100,000 in damages over claims of historic sex abuse by Church of Ireland minister - Belfast Telegraph

A man who claimed he was sexually molested as a child by a Church of Ireland minister is to receive £100,000 in damages.

The settlement was reached in Eddie Gorman’s action over the alleged historic abuse he suffered at the hands of clergyman and scout leader Bill Neely.

Mr Gorman, 61, claimed he was groomed and repeatedly assaulted by Neely over a three-year period during the 1970s.

The attacks were carried out at the cleric’s Mount Merrion parish in east Belfast and a campsite in Crawfordsburn, Co Down, it was contended.

Neely was transferred to Co Tipperary in 1976 and removed from his scouting role the following year. He died in 2009.

Mr Gorman sued the Church of Ireland’s Diocese of Down and Dromore, and the Scouts Association.

He alleged negligence in allowing Neely to carry out the abuse and failing to ensure his safety.

His solicitor, Gary Duffy of KRW Law, confirmed that the case was settled today at the High Court in Belfast, with £100,000 in damages to be paid out.

No admission of liability was made by the defendants.

Mr Duffy described it as one of the first resolutions of its kind in cases involving the Church of Ireland.

“Significantly it points to the widespread incidence of historic clerical abuse across all denominations over the decades,” he said.

“I commend Eddie on his tenacity and bravery in stepping forward to call out the horrific abuse perpetrated upon him when he was a child.”

Mr Gorman expressed his hope that the outcome will strengthen calls for a full inquiry into clerical abuse in Northern Ireland.

“I am but one of a number of victims of Neely. There may be many others out there who for obvious sensitive reasons will find it very difficult to come forward,” he said.

“Hopefully my case will give confidence to others to do just that.”

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Mr Gorman added: “It helps give me some closure but no amount of money will ever compensate for the loss and distress Neely put me through.”

Report by Alan Erwin 08/12/2023

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

New Year, New Direction - Epiphany Retreat

The Epiphany Retreat takes place on 7th January 2024 in John Sullivan Room, Gardiner Street, Dublin from 10am to 4pm. Cost is €50 (lunch included; please advise of any dietary requirements).

An epiphany is an experience of a sudden and striking realisation. It applies in any situation in which a moment of awareness allows a problem or situation to be understood more fully. In the realm of our Christian faith, the feast of the epiphany refers to the ways Christ made himself known to the world.

While we celebrate the Epiphany on January 6th, this retreat will focus on Jesus revealing himself to the Magi, and how Jesus might be revealing himself to us in our life journey.

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Facilitators: Christine Halloran and Fr. Brendan McManus SJ.

“And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.”
[Matthew 2:12]

Register with sfx@jesuit.ie.

<https://sfxchurch.churchsuite.com/events/0fxceavs>

Bach Choir Christmas podcast

The Shepherd’s Pipe Carol is one of the most popular modern carols out there. How did John Rutter compose it,

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and why does it still resonate? Find out in the Christmas special of our podcast featuring John Rutter, Lloyd Griffith & David Hill. Listen here -

<https://thebachchoir.org.uk/change-your-tune-episode-6/>

Textile story weaves into Inspiring angles podcast series

In the newest episode of the Church of Ireland's Inspiring angles podcast series, Wilma Kirkpatrick talks through the skills and patterns in textile art, created by her and Helen O'Hare, currently on display in Belfast Cathedral.

Wilma and Helen crafted the Titanic Pall and have created a new piece, entitled Revive & Renew, for the second Northern Ireland Linen Biennale – a celebration of the past, present and future of Europe's oldest textile.

The video interview is now available on the Church's Facebook, YouTube and Instagram channels. This display can be viewed in the Cathedral until the end of December, and is accompanied by an intricate book of test materials, pieces inspired by children's drawings, and a collection of colourful stoles making use of designs that are familiar to the Cathedral's visitors and worshippers.

Revive & Renew portrays the displacement of people around the world, and also how people can feel an element of loneliness and isolation in the company of friends and family. The piece conveys the outlines of people, shoulder

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by shoulder, strength to strength, with elements of clothing applied to create a sense of community.

For further information on the Linen Biennale, visit www.linenbiennale-northernireland.com

The exhibition can be viewed as part of a self-guided tour of Belfast Cathedral on weekdays, for a small admission fee (£2.50) and readers can find more about visiting the Cathedral at www.belfastcathedral.org/tourism

Poem for today

Advent

by Christina Rossetti

This Advent moon shines cold and clear,
These Advent nights are long;
Our lamps have burned year after year
And still their flame is strong.
'Watchman, what of the night?' we cry,
Heart-sick with hope deferred:
'No speaking signs are in the sky,'
Is still the watchman's word.
The Porter watches at the gate,
The servants watch within;
The watch is long betimes and late,
The prize is slow to win.
'Watchman, what of the night?' But still
His answer sounds the same:
'No daybreak tops the utmost hill,

Nor pale our lamps of flame.'

One to another hear them speak

The patient virgins wise:

'Surely He is not far to seek'—

'All night we watch and rise.'

'The days are evil looking back,

The coming days are dim;

Yet count we not His promise slack,

But watch and wait for Him.'

One with another, soul with soul,

They kindle fire from fire:

'Friends watch us who have touched the goal.'

'They urge us, come up higher.'

'With them shall rest our waysore feet,

With them is built our home,

With Christ.'— 'They sweet, but He most sweet,

Sweeter than honeycomb.'

There no more parting, no more pain,

The distant ones brought near,

The lost so long are found again,

Long lost but longer dear:

Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,

Nor heart conceived that rest,

With them our good things long deferred,

With Jesus Christ our Best.

We weep because the night is long,

We laugh for day shall rise,

We sing a slow contented song

And knock at Paradise.

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Weeping we hold Him fast, Who wept
For us, we hold Him fast;
And will not let Him go except
He bless us first or last.

Weeping we hold Him fast to-night;
We will not let Him go
Till daybreak smite our wearied sight
And summer smite the snow:
Then figs shall bud, and dove with dove
Shall coo the livelong day;
Then He shall say, 'Arise, My love,
My fair one, come away.'

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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