

# Church News Ireland

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**Image of the day – Schools music enhances**



December 25 2023

# Image of the day

## Schools music enhances

Throughout all of Ireland schools enhanced the worship of the season through their music. The photographs here are mainly of Kilkenny College which held its annual service as customary in St Canice's Cathedral.







Readers are encouraged to use Facebook and web sites to hear the quality of the students and their tutors.

Clounagh Junior High School in Portadown has an excellent video of its service and the northern littoral schools of Limavady Grammar and Coleraine Grammar.

<https://www.clounagh.com/>

## People and places

### Letterkenny Christmas Carol Trail in lashing rain





**Proximity to Atlantic storms reminded participants of the remark of Jesus that God – our Father in heaven – "sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous".**

The first part of that observation was borne out in Letterkenny last week as incessant rain fell on the couple of







hundred people who took part in the town's 10th Christmas Carol Trail.

This unique festive event is organised by Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce, Letterkenny Cathedral Quarter and

Letterkenny Community Development Project and the Carol Service is facilitated by Trinity Presbyterian Church, St Eunan's Cathedral and Conwal Parish Church.

The participants gathered first in Trinity Presbyterian Church on Main Street where they were welcomed by the minister, Rev Tommy Bruce. The congregation – including Bishop Alan McGuckian, Rev David Houlton and Rev Heather Houlton – listened to readings from the Bible and sang Christmas Carols together, before making their way in a candlelit procession along Main Street and up Church Lane for more hymns and readings outside the Gospel Hall.

Umbrellas were opened throughout the walk, and the rain seemed to fall almost horizontally, as the group wend their way to the former Methodist Church (Mount Southwell). From there it was on to St Eunan's Cathedral, and the last stop - with Carols and readings at each destination - was Conwal Parish Church, where the event concluded with a special rendition of 'O Holy Night' by singer Jean Curran.

Afterwards, the bedraggled participants walked the few short steps to Conwal Church Hall for some welcome refreshments, including mince pies and hot drinks.

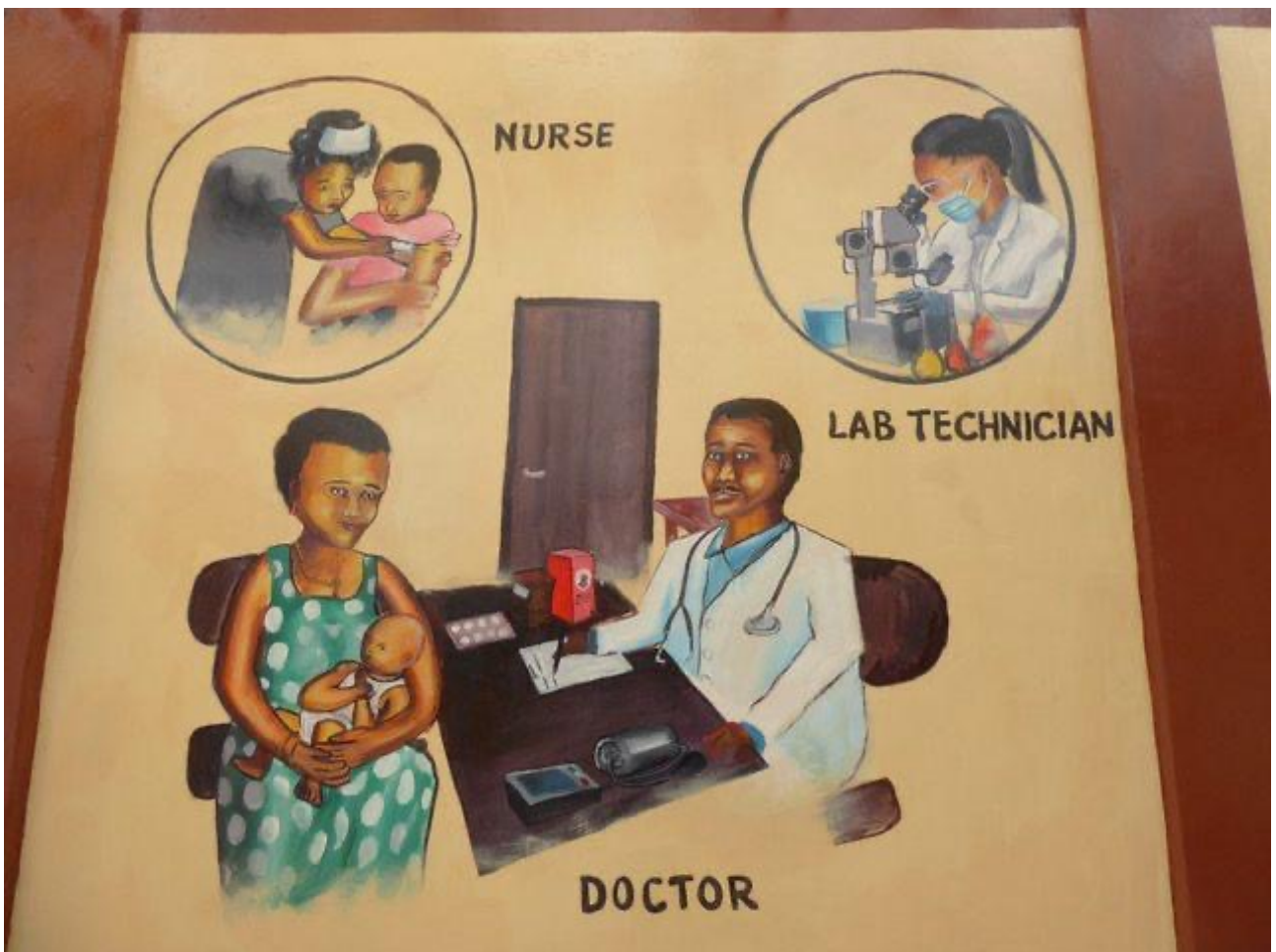
## **Art work for major project by CMS, St Marks Dundela and Bishops Appeal**

**“Our friends in at Tujisaidie Community Centre School commissioned local artist Mathaga to transform the walls of their new assembly and play area (built 2 years ago with co-funding from Bishops Appeal).**



December 25 2023

“They are now adorned with amazing murals depicting Kenyan wildlife and illustrations of careers the students could aspire to follow. The work was funded by CMSI



link parishes including a large donation in memory of St Mark's Dundela parishioner the late Mrs. Flada Smyth.”

## **Curate Assistant for St. Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen**

**The Revd Dr Edwin James Aiken, presently serving as Dean's Vicar at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, has been appointed Curate for St. Macartin's Cathedral Enniskillen from 1 February 2024.**

Revd Aiken has a PhD in geography from Queen's University, Belfast as well as postgraduate certificate in Theology, Mission and Ministry and a Master of Theology from Trinity College, Dublin, achieving many academic awards.

He is a former leader of Boys' Brigade and youth Club and has worked in many spheres of church life, leading various groups and initiatives.

His current brief as Dean's Vicar at Christ Church Cathedral has been working as part of a team organising the liturgical calendar of events and services.

## **News reports**

### **Welby to be knighted by King for service to the Crown**

**The Archbishop of Canterbury will be knighted by the King for his "personal service" to the Crown in the New Year Honours List.**



The Most Revd Justin Welby, 67, is to be admitted to the Royal Victorian Order. The honour could be seen as controversial by some politicians given Dr Welby's criticism of the Government's asylum policy.

In September, Suella Braverman, then the home secretary, refused to meet him to discuss the Government's policy after he branded plans to deport migrants to Rwanda as being "against the judgment of God".

In 2021, he said that a failure by world leaders to reach agreement on climate change would result in a worse "genocide" than that committed by the Nazis.

He subsequently said he should not have made a comparison with wartime German atrocities and apologised to the Jewish community.

The last serving Church leader to receive the honour in the recent past was post-war Archbishop of Canterbury Geoffrey Fisher, who crowned Elizabeth II in 1953.

The Daily Mail reported that Dr Welby's honour was understood to be related to his being the first Archbishop of Canterbury to conduct a coronation since then, as in May he crowned the King at Westminster Abbey.

In 2018, he also married the Duke and Duchess of Sussex and became close to the couple when he gave them pre-marriage counselling.

However, he was later forced to point out that he had not secretly married them three days before their official

ceremony, and that it would have been a “serious criminal offence” had he signed their marriage certificate knowing it to be false.

The King and Dr Welby are known to enjoy a warm relationship with one another. In a forthcoming BBC documentary about the King’s first year on the throne to be shown on Boxing Day, the King can be seen laughing when Dr Welby forgets the blessing during Coronation rehearsals.

The Royal Victorian Order was created by Queen Victoria in 1896 to recognise distinguished personal service to the monarch. It has five grades of membership including the top two grades of Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order (GCVO) and Knight Commander (KCVO). It is not yet known which grade Dr Welby will receive.

## **Archbishop of York warns against cycle of revenge**

**The Archbishop of York has cautioned against embarking on a “journey of revenge”, in an apparent warning to Israel.**

Writing in The Sunday Telegraph, the Most Rev Stephen Cottrell spoke of “endless cycles of reprisals” and the mistaken belief that “might is right”.

He referenced both the Chinese philosopher Confucius and Martin Luther King Jr in his Christmas message.





## **Remembering the Christmas Truce of 1914, National Arboretum Photography by Dave Harker**

Quoting the former, he said: “When you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves; one for your enemy and one for yourself.”

It came as the UN held votes on whether to call for a ceasefire in Gaza, where more than 20,000 people have

died in Israel's bombardment following the Oct 7 massacre by Hamas, which killed more than 1,200.

Quoting Martin Luther King, the Archbishop also said: "Violence begets violence; hate begets hate; and toughness begets a greater toughness ... Along the way of life, someone must have enough sense and morality to cut off the chain of hate."

His intervention – which did not explicitly mention the Israel-Gaza war – comes a week after the House of Bishops issued a statement criticising the loss of civilian life and humanitarian situation in Gaza as unjustified. The Archbishop of Canterbury has also spoken of the "trauma" in Israel following Oct 7, as well as warning that, in Gaza, "the more heavy the casualties, the less chance there is of a renewed peace".

In his Telegraph message yesterday, the Archbishop of York said the Christmas story offered "clues" as to the real God.

He also spoke of the need for Christians to persevere in their belief in God. "Faith comes naturally to a very few. For some it just flickers and needs to be rekindled. But for most people these days, faith-talk sounds completely alien and they won't have a clue where to start."

# Church News Ireland



## **Guide us by thy mobile light after candles set off alarm - St Albans Cathedral evacuated**

### **A candlelit carol service is the very essence of**

Christmas celebrations but so many were burning bright at St Albans Cathedral that they set off the fire alarm, leading to a mass evacuation.

The 1,400-strong congregation had reached the third verse of Silent Night on Thursday evening when the heat of more than 2,000 candles triggered the cathedral's fire alarm system.

“It was rather ironic,” said The Very Rev Jo Kelly-Moore, the cathedral's dean. “There we were singing ‘All is calm, all is bright’, when the alarm started ringing very loudly.”

### **Candlelit service**

The church was swiftly evacuated before two engines from Hertfordshire Fire Service arrived and the crews were able to give the all-clear.

Half an hour later the congregation were back in their seats ready to begin the service again. It was at this point that the dean hit on a bright idea.

“Of course we couldn't light the candles again so I asked everyone if they minded using a bit of 21st century technology and get their cell phone torches out. The effect in lighting up the congregation was rather wonderful.”

She added: “We are grateful to everyone for their understanding and to the fire service for their fantastic response.”

## Phone lit service

Among those evacuated was Daisy Cooper, the Liberal Democrat MP for St Albans who had joined her constituents for the evening carol concert. She wrote on Twitter: “Beautiful Lessons and Carols at St Albans Cathedral tonight. Choristers were heavenly.

“Well done to all the stewards and local fire brigade who had to rush us all out and back in again, after an overly sensitive fire alarm went off.”

This is the first time the cathedral’s carol service, which has long been held by candlelight, has had to evacuate.

Engineers are studying the fire alarm system to work out why it was set off by the candles. One possibility is that its sensors were wrongly calibrated when a new system was installed, making the smoke detectors too sensitive.

“The important thing is that our system is safe and our evacuation procedures worked very well. People can rest assured the cathedral is safe,” said Ms Kelly-Moore. “What our engineers are trying to work out is how to stop it reacting so sensitively to our beautiful candles.”



## Perspective

### At Christmas, we come to the light through the darkness - Vincent Nichols

**The greatest gift of coming to the light is that it illuminates the most needed path of all**

Some time ago I stayed for a week in Herefordshire. I was astonished at the night sky, the brilliance of the stars and their apparent closeness. It was spectacular.

Then I began to find out a little about the Dark Sky movement and efforts to reduce light pollution for the benefit of our well-being and that of nocturnal animals and birds. Here, six of our national parks have been declared Dark Sky Reserves.

This helps us to appreciate the benefits of darkness as the context in which to appreciate most clearly the qualities of light, especially of the distant, primeval light of the created world.

The interplay of light and darkness is central not only to our natural world but also to our spiritual selves and to this time of Christmas. The birth of Jesus, celebrated at this time, is so often described as “a light in our darkness”, with the absence of light carrying all the connotations of our broken and distressed world. He is designated as “the light of the world”.

The example of his life and the impact of his teaching has indeed cast a penetrating light into our lives and is a constant challenge to our motives and actions. There may be times when we think that the light of Christ is now dimming or lost, yet it continues to shine and can be glimpsed in so many different ways.

The insight of the Dark Sky Movement teaches us that too many lights are a hindrance to seeing the deeper, more distant light. In order to appreciate that light, we need to dim some of the others. They can obstruct the essential light and constantly draw us away from a more life-giving contemplation of the light before which we find ourselves simply gazing in contemplation. The star of Bethlehem shines most brightly in our darkened souls.

This is our challenge. To appreciate the light, we have to enter the darkness. This is our spiritual journey: to learn not to constantly turn away from the distress that so often assails our souls and our world, but to stay with it a while and slowly sense the distant light within, a light which restores the direction and rhythm of our lives.

Moments of silence before the crib serve this purpose. Here we sense that troubles may be laid down, that the horrors of the night, whether of warfare or despondency, can be touched by a gentle, healing light that comes to us from afar.

Only this light can truly and profoundly touch our inner being, for the light of this unique child is the light of God, our creator, coming to us with an immediacy of the incarnation and without any manifestation of power or domination. This



is the gentlest of gifts, given with great humility by the God who wishes for us only the best, who is pure love.

Once this is grasped, then the brilliance of our party lights and the joyousness of spirit that we can share find their rightful place. They cease being a temporary avoidance of reality but rather a strengthening of the gift that is life itself and of the love which so enriches our days.

But the greatest gift of coming to this light in the darkness is that it illuminates the most needed path of all. Only when this distant yet intimate light has become our lodestar does the pathway of forgiveness and reconciliation open up before us.

Only in this light can we find the reason and strength with which to go beyond the offences inflicted upon us, individually and as a people. Only then, in the vision of a longer horizon, can the call for forgiveness find the first faint echo in our hearts.

Then, step by step, as we move into the light of God's mercy, can we begin to extend to others the mercy we ourselves receive.

Herein lies our hope this Christmas.

*Cardinal Vincent Nichols is the Archbishop of Westminster*



## Poem for today

### **The Innkeeper's Wife** by Clive Sansom

I love this byre. Shadows are kindly here.  
The light is flecked with travelling stars of dust,  
So quiet it seems after the inn-clamour,  
Scraping of fiddles and the stamping feet.  
Only the cows, each in her patient box,  
Turn their slow eyes, as we and the sunlight enter,  
Their slowly rhythmic mouths.  
'That is the stall,  
Carpenter. You see it's too far gone  
For patching or repatching. My husband made it,  
And he's been gone these dozen years and more...'

Strange how this lifeless thing, degraded wood

Split from the tree and nailed and crucified  
To make a wall, outlives the mastering hand  
That struck it down, the warm firm hand  
That touched my body with its wandering love.  
'No, let the fire take them. Strip every board  
And make a new beginning. Too many memories lurk  
Like worms in this old wood. That piece you're holding –  
That patch of grain with the giant's thumbprint –  
I stared at it a full hour when he died:  
Its grooves are down my mind. And that board there  
Baring its knot-hole like a missing jig-saw –  
I remember another hand along its rim.  
No, not my husband's and why I should remember  
I cannot say. It was a night in winter.  
Our house was full, tight-packed as salted herrings –  
So full, they said, we had to hold our breaths  
To close the door and shut the night-air out!

And then two travellers came. They stood outside  
Across the threshold, half in the ring of light  
And half beyond it. I would have let them in  
Despite the crowding – the woman was past her time –  
But I'd no mind to argue with my husband,  
The flagon in my hand and half the inn  
Still clamouring for wine. But when trade slackened,  
And all out guests had sung themselves to bed  
Or told the floor their troubles, I came out here  
Where he had lodged them. The man was standing  
As you are now, his hand smoothing that board –  
He was a carpenter, I heard them say.  
She rested on the straw, and on her arm  
A child was lying. None of your crease-faced brats  
Squalling their lungs out. Just lying there



December 25 2023

As calm as a new-dropped calf – his eyes wide open,  
And gazing round as if the world he saw  
In the chaff-strewn light of the stable lantern  
Was something beautiful and new and strange.  
Ah well, he'll have learnt different now, I reckon,  
Wherever he is. And why I should recall  
A scene like that, when times I would remember  
Have passed beyond reliving, I cannot think.  
It's a trick you're served by old possessions:  
They have their memories too – too many memories.

Well, I must go in. There are meals to serve.  
Join us there, Carpenter, when you've had enough  
Of cattle-company. The world is a sad place,  
But wine and music blunt the truth of it.

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

**Next issue of CNI will be on Saturday, Dec 30.  
Speaking to the Soul will be published daily at -**

[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)

# Church News Ireland

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