

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Advent Dublin

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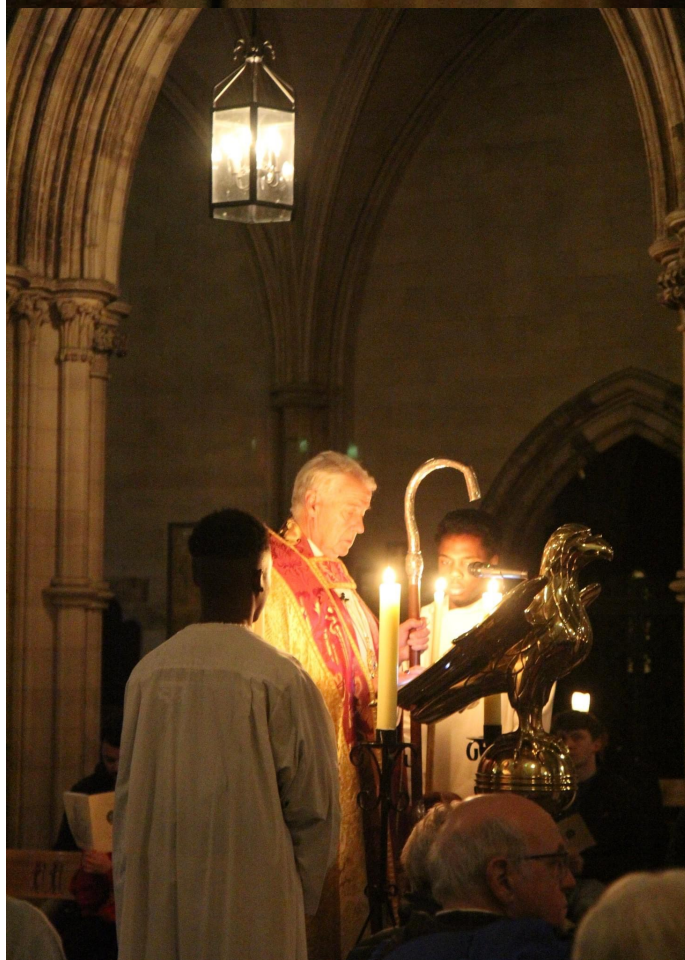
Three dangers and priorities for the C of E after the Welby crisis - Philip North, Bishop of Blackburn - C of E N'letter

Church of England spending 'excessively' on HR and diversity officers, report warns - Daily Telegraph

Speaking to the soul -

Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

Image of the day



Advent Dublin

The dramatic candle lit Advent Procession in Christ Church Cathedral Dublin marked the beginning of the Season of Advent and the start of the Church's new year on Advent Sunday (December 1).

The service was sung by the Cathedral Choir whose

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members processed around the cathedral, their voices encircling the congregation as they went.

The readings reflected an emphasis on Christ's second coming and included themes of accountability, judgement and the hope of eternal life. The course of the service traced the witness of the prophets, of John the Baptist and of Mary, all of whom point towards the birth of Jesus.

Archbishop Michael Jackson presided at the service and read the Collects. Members of the cathedral community gave the readings with the final reading being read by Dean Dermot Dunne.

The Cathedral has a full programme of services and events for Advent and Christmas. You can find them on their website here: <https://christchurchcathedral.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Advent-Christmas-2024-1.pdf>

News

Stepping up in Ballylesson with a flyer drop

The good folk of Drumbo Parish were invited on Wednesday morning of this week at 10.30 after their 10am prayer meeting...

...to help give out the parish Christmas Flyers (designed by Rev Ryan) in and around their community in Ballylesson, Edenderry, Purdysburn, and Drumbo.



Victorian Christmas Bazaar Whitehead

**The Rev Canon
Mark Taylor and
his wife Fran
looking very much
the Victorian
couple at St
Patrick's Parish
Church,
Whitehead's
Victorian
Christmas**

Sports photo of the week

Cian Healy of Ireland receives his record-breaking cap from his son Beau in a heartwarming moment after the Autumn Nations Series victory over Australia at the Aviva Stadium.





... and
Christmas
Came
early
for
some

St Mark's Armagh invites you to the

Joy to the World

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL



Thursday 5th December
12noon - 9pm

Friday 6th December
10am - 9pm

Saturday 7th December
10am - 7pm

Sunday 8th December
2pm - 5pm

For more info: www.stmarksarmagh.org



Ballymoney Community Carol Service

One of the highlights of the Christmas season in Ballymoney each year is the Community Carol Service which took place on Monday evening (2nd).

Starting at Our Lady & St Patrick's, folk made their way on foot to Ballymoney Methodist, First Presbyterian and St Patrick's, Church of Ireland for carols and readings.

Hundreds of people from many different churches once more came together for this special event.



Festival of Cribs in Limavady Methodist Church

A Festival of Cribs was held at Limavady Methodist Church this past weekend.

On Saturday afternoon the Dungiven Community Choir entertained those who were visiting the Festival. Photo - Dungiven Community Choir at the Limavady Methodist Church's Festival of Cribs

Bethlehem faces another quiet Christmas

Rev Dr Munther Isaac, a pastor at Bethlehem's Lutheran Church has said that for a second year running, there is no Christmas cheer in Bethlehem, with tourists shunning the city and many residents seeking a way

out as the Gaza war grinds on. Bethlehem's Manger Square in front of the Church of the Nativity, is largely deserted and souvenir shops are shuttered.

Once again, there are no plans to put up the traditional light-festooned Christmas tree in the Square. "During these difficult times that our Palestinian cities are going through, especially in the Gaza Strip, it is difficult to show any signs of joy and happiness. "

Adding to the gloom, many local Christian families are also looking to escape, demoralized by both the tourist slump that has ravaged their economy and the constant threat of violence hovering over the territory northeast of Gaza. "The emigration out of Bethlehem is increasing daily and monthly, and ... this has a negative impact on the city," Fr Issa Thaljieh, an Orthodox priest who ministers at the Nativity Church said.

Christian communities have been in decline across the Middle East for generations, and the West Bank is no exception. In the last year of British rule over the region in 1947, some 85% of Bethlehem's population were Christian. As of a 2017 census, the overall population of Bethlehem was 215,514, with only 23,000 Christians among them. That puts the percentage of Christians in Bethlehem in 2017 at around 10%. The rate of departure has been gathering steam in recent months in the cradle of Christianity, with the economic lifeblood of the city no longer flowing and the Israeli occupation preventing freedom of movement around the territory.

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"People have started looking for better opportunities for their children, for better education, for a better future," Rev Isaac told Reuters. Difficult at the best of times, travel between Occupied West Bank cities such as Bethlehem, Ramallah, Jericho, Hebron has become increasingly fraught as more and more illegal settlers arrive, supported by the Israeli army.

Rev Isaac said local Muslim families have also been emigrating, squeezed by both financial problems and broader worries about the future.

"There is the fear that this war might extend to areas in the West Bank, especially after the arming of the settlers and the announcement of the possible annexation of the West Bank."

In Isaac's church, the Nativity scene has a figure of the baby Jesus lying in a pile of rubble. "We feel that this war will never end," he said.

To read more see. www.dailysabah.com/life/feature/bethlehem-faces-quiet-christmas-as-israels-war-deepens

See also Friends of the Holy Land which supports projects in the West Bank and Gaza:

www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/

Cathedral Calls



The St Anne Trust special first Carol Service at Belfast cathedral

HM Lord Lieutenant for Belfast was present at the first carol service from the pupils of Holy Cross Boys, Glenwood PS, Cliftonville Integrated PS and Jordanstown School.

“Thanks to the Dean of Belfast and Trust volunteers. Christmas is here.”

Clergy and ministry



Commissioned as a Diocesan Evangelist

Congratulations to Nevin Anderson who was commissioned as a Diocesan Evangelist on Sunday 24 November.

Bishop David McClay commissioned Nevin at a service in St Saviour's Dollingstown in his home parish of Magheralin. The Diocesan Warden of Evangelists, Capt George Newell, gave the address.

Nevin was encouraged to join the two-year Evangelist Training Course by his rector, Revd Simon Genoe, and he completed it alongside running his business.

In September Bishop David appointed Nevin and his wife Lorraine as Pioneer Ministers to serve in Warrenpoint. They were commissioned on 12 November as part of the first group of pioneer leaders in the Church of Ireland selected to be trained under the Church of Ireland's Pioneer initiative.

Nevin says:

“After Simon suggested the course, I prayed about it and I sensed from God that I should do it. I have always felt the need to share my faith with others and so I felt I would benefit by studying evangelism and understanding it more. “On the course I really enjoyed meeting other people who have a passion for evangelism. I found that listening to and being with them inspired me and encouraged me so much. Although I really enjoyed the classes and practical



A TEDDY BEAR CHRISTMAS

A festival telling through Teddy Bears how love came down at Christmas

Thurs 5 Dec 3 - 7pm Fri 6 Dec 3 - 7pm Sat 7 Dec 10am - 4pm
Cantiunculae Choir Concert - Sun 8 Dec 7.30pm

MAGHERALLY PARISH CHURCH
Rev Karen Salmon, 46 Kilmacrew Road, Banbridge BT32 4EP
T: 028 4052 0473 E: salmonk@tcd.ie



exercises, it's quite demanding on your time but my own year and the years above kept me going when it was Tough”

Nevin says the Diocesan Evangelist Training Course has helped to prepare him for church planting in Warrenpoint.

“I've been equipped both in my knowledge and understanding of evangelism, but it has especially given me the confidence in my calling as an Evangelist within the Church. I know I will be able to use all the knowledge and learning that I have received throughout the course in my ministry to the people of Warrenpoint.”

Go for it!

"To anyone who is considering doing the Evangelist Training Course I would say that yes, it can be a challenge on yourself and your time, but it also ultimately means that you will learn to depend on God for your strength and as your source. This dependence on God to get you through is really what you also need as an Evangelist and through the course you will meet so many people who like yourself are passionate about sharing your faith.

"George, and the team of facilitators will help stir up your evangelism gifting and encourage you to the finish line and therefore into the role of the Evangelist which is such a necessary role and call within the body of Christ.

"I would not have been able to progress into this next part of my journey in serving Christ if I had not "jumped into" the adventure of the Evangelist Training Course.”

In the media

Three dangers and priorities for the C of E after the Welby crisis

Philip North, The Bishop of Blackburn, writes in the Church of England Newsletter

Historically the Church of England is no stranger to crises: murdered Archbishops, defrocked Vicars, theological divisions. But the crisis that has swept down upon us with the publication of the Makin Report is right up there amongst the worst of them, fully deserving of that overused word ‘unprecedented.’

The report is one of the grimmest documents I have ever read. I suspect all those who have gone through it in detail will have endured sleepless nights, not just at the appalling horror of the abuse but at the combination of plot and inaction that led to decades of cover-up. What the survivors must have endured over the years and be enduring right now is unimaginable.

But just as grim as the content of the report are the recommendations – grim because they contain nothing new. Countless reports have told us that we need to listen to survivors, to report abuse at once, to have greater independence in safeguarding, to be alert to grooming behaviour and so on. And yet we have failed to respond. It is no surprise that in the midst of the horror, the Archbishop accepted he needed to take responsibility and resign. It was an honourable step to take.

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But the issue we now need to face is that even such a high profile and symbolic resignation doesn't solve the problem. On its own, it neither makes us a safer church nor addresses the structural issues that lie at the heart of the



THE ULSTER CONSORT

Messiah **HANDEL'S GREAT MASTERPIECE**

THE ULSTER CONSORT AND PLAYERS
(on period instruments)
MIRIAM ALLAN soprano
FRANCES GREGORY mezzo soprano
MATTHEW LONG tenor
DINGLE YANDELL bass
MATTHEW OWENS conductor

A stellar line up of soloists joins the Ulster Consort to give the annual performance of Handel's most famous work, *Messiah*. The Ulster Consort uses small forces and period instruments in an historically informed and exciting way, creating a soundscape similar to that of the first performance in Dublin, in 1742.

Friday 6 December, 7.30pm
St Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen BT74 7DR

Saturday 7 December, 7.30pm
Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, Belfast BT9 5DJ

Tickets: **£10 (under 18s), £20, £30, £40, available in advance via [eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk), and on the evening at the door**

lucyphoton.com

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crisis. So what next? Let me suggest three dangers we face, three priorities and then one overriding joy.

Danger one. A culture of blame and fear.

The 'heads must roll' feeding frenzy that we have seen unfold is understandable. The identification and expulsion of a scapegoat is a great way to evade self-examination. But good safeguarding requires a culture of openness and trust, not one of guilt and recrimination. I have been shocked in recent days by the levels of fear amongst colleagues who



are anxious that, if they have made any mistake in process, they too will be forced to resign. Of course, those who have actively connived to conceal criminal behaviour must be held responsible. But a culture of blame fosters cover-up. The Just Culture of the airline industry ('Ask why, not who') has a great deal to teach us here. We need the transparency that enables people to speak out, not the fear that silences them.

Danger two. The weaponising of theology.

The theological truce that lies at the very heart of the Anglican Settlement of the sixteenth century has always been a fragile one, and it was already under intense pressure with the LLF process. Smyth abused theology on an obscene scale. The image of a sound-proofed shed containing nothing but a leather-bound Bible and dressings for the wounds of those he abused is sickening. But we need to be clear that this was an abuse of theology (one reason why it is critical that we retain the category of spiritual abuse in our safeguarding policies). To weaponize this crisis for a wider-scale assault on one theological position or another will not make us a safer church. It will simply increase division and make reform harder.

Danger three. Growing disunity.

It is not revealing any secrets to say that both Synod and the College of Bishops are divided on the issue of LLF, a division that is in danger of becoming chronic and entrenched. A crisis such as the current one could lead in one of two directions. Either, against a backdrop of mutual recrimination, we could splinter even more and so make decision making and reform effectively impossible. Or we

could see the need to unite in order to build a renewed and healthy church.

The only way to achieve this is closer attention to the quality of our relationships and a deeper commitment to mutual prayer, modelled by Synod and the House of Bishops.

So those are the dangers. But what comes next is all the more important.

Priority 1. Independence in safeguarding. We need a strong, properly funded, self-governing body to scrutinise standards in safeguarding. Such a body must not involve ‘franchising out’ our responsibility for safeguarding which, critically, lies with everyone. Safeguarding professionals must remain rooted in Dioceses. But an external scrutiny body is critical and needed urgently. And one task for that body will be to receive complaints, because something that survivors have made clear to me is the re-traumatising impact of having to bring their complaints to the very body that abused them.

Priority 2. Resetting the relationship between the national and the local. As Andrew Graystone has pointed out, there seem to be two churches working in parallel. On the one hand there is the local church where the safeguarding culture has been transformed in recent years (as demonstrated by the thorough audits currently being conducted by INEQE) and where generous service and joyful worship are being offered to the people of the nation. And on the other there is this behemoth that we have created called the ‘national church’ – an expression that should be consigned to the dustbin as there is no such thing

THE ULSTER CONSORT

Christmas by Candlelight

CHRISTMAS WITH THE ULSTER CONSORT

**Friday 13 December,
7.30pm – 9.00pm**

THE ULSTER CONSORT
TRISTAN RUSSCHER piano/organ
MATTHEW OWENS conductor

Early booking is advised for this very popular concert when the Ulster Consort performs seasonal sacred music and lighter festive favourites, interspersed with readings, in the candlelit surroundings of C.S. Lewis's childhood church, St Mark's, Dundela.

With special guest Pamela Ballantine – Patron, Bowel Cancer UK

All proceeds in aid of

Bowel Cancer UK
Beating bowel cancer together

St Mark's Church, Dundela, Belfast BT4 2DR
Tickets: **£15 (£5 for under 18s)** available in advance via [eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk), and on the evening at the door

ulsterconsort.com

as the 'national church'. There are only 42 independent dioceses and some National Church Institutions.

All too often, crises in the national church have resulted in ever greater demands being made on the local. The whole relationship now needs resetting with a strategic emphasis

being placed on renewing parish life as the heart of the Church's mission. I hope that a new Archbishop has the courage to decentralise on a big scale.

Priority 3. Supporting the new Archbishop. There was characteristically incisive wisdom from the Bishop of Gloucester when she said that candidates to be next Archbishop “need their heads reading.”

Over the years, the job has become simply impossible. The ever-growing demands and expectations combined with the ambiguity surrounding the actual governance powers that go with the role make it undoable, even without relentless media and social media scrutiny. Before we throw the next Archbishop under a bus, immense thought needs to be given to the expectations we place on the role and the support and staffing structures we wrap around it. And what this requires above all is a more united House of Bishops.

But after so much talk of crisis, let's end with a joy. Because whilst the Lord has made us stewards of his Church and we must tend it with care it is His, not ours.

The task of responding to crisis, repenting of failure and restoring trust with survivors feels completely overwhelming. But let's not forget, it is when we feel at our weakest that we rely on the Lord's strength. That does not mean we relinquish our responsibility (and every single member of the Church of England carries some responsibility for digging ourselves out this hole). Rather it means that we find in Him the gifts we need and the solutions we never thought possible.

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Maybe this moment of crisis can be the moment when we learn afresh to rely on the Christ who is the Head of his Church. Maybe in this dark moment, Jesus is shaking his church awake.

+Philip Blackburn

In the media

Church of England spending ‘excessively’ on HR and diversity officers, report warns - Daily Telegraph

Civitas research found that a ‘managerial turn’ in the Anglican church had left ordinary parishes ‘struggling to survive’, Tim Sigsworth writes.

The Church of England is overspending on HR and diversity officers at the expense of parishes, a report has warned.

Research by the think-tank Civitas found that a “managerial turn” in the Anglican church in the past two decades had left ordinary parishes “struggling to survive”.

The report, released on Wednesday, said the Church’s 42 dioceses had taken on “large numbers of staff” since the turn of the millennium while merging parishes and reducing clergy numbers to cut costs.

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These administrative positions include human resources jobs and a series of “politicised roles” such as diversity, social justice, LGBT+ and net zero officers, the report found.

It means that “dioceses across the country now employ so many people that, on average, there is one administrator to every three-and-a-half priests”.

In Truro, the diocese covering Cornwall, there are as many as 39 diocesan officers to just 41 clerics. More at-

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/12/04/church-england-anglican-spend-hr-diversity-civitas-report/>

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

Church News Ireland

www.churchnewsireland.org

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

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