

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – Advent Belfast**

January 6, 2024

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Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

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## Image of the day – Advent Belfast



**The great darkness of Belfast cathedral was gradually filled with candlelight on Sunday evening for one of the most powerful services: the Advent Procession.**

“Thanks to all who came to share with us our great hope, told in Scripture and song, of Christ's coming into the world.



“An enormous thank you to all who made this service happen, especially our wonderful music department and our tremendously talented choir, who put a great deal of time and effort into making Sunday evening one to remember.”

'Let us leave behind the darkness of sin, walk in the light that shines on our path, and renew within ourselves the hope of glory to which he beckons us.'

## News

### **2024 Dublin Black Santa Sit Out launching on Tuesday**



**The 2024 Dublin Black Santa Sit Out will be officially launched on Tuesday December 17 at 1pm at St. Ann's Church, Dawson St.**

The appeal will be launched by the Archbishop of Dublin and the Lord Mayor of Dublin together with the Vicar of St Ann's. The children of the Kildare Place School Choir will be on hand to sing some well known carols and Christmas songs.

The primary focus of Black Santa's fundraising efforts will be charities that support people in homelessness in the city.

The charities being supported this year include St Vincent de Paul, Simon, The Samaritans, Salvation Army, Protestant Aid, Alice Leahy Trust, Laura Lynn Foundation, Focus Ireland and the Solas Project, along with other local charities.



You can donate now via the parish website [www.stann.dublin.anglican.org](http://www.stann.dublin.anglican.org) or in person at the church with cash or card. As always, every cent donated is given to charity – everyone involved volunteers their time free of charge. Photos from last year's launch.

## **Archbishop will not deliver Christmas sermon**

**The Archbishop of Canterbury will not deliver the traditional Christmas Day sermon despite being in the post until January, Lambeth Palace has confirmed.**

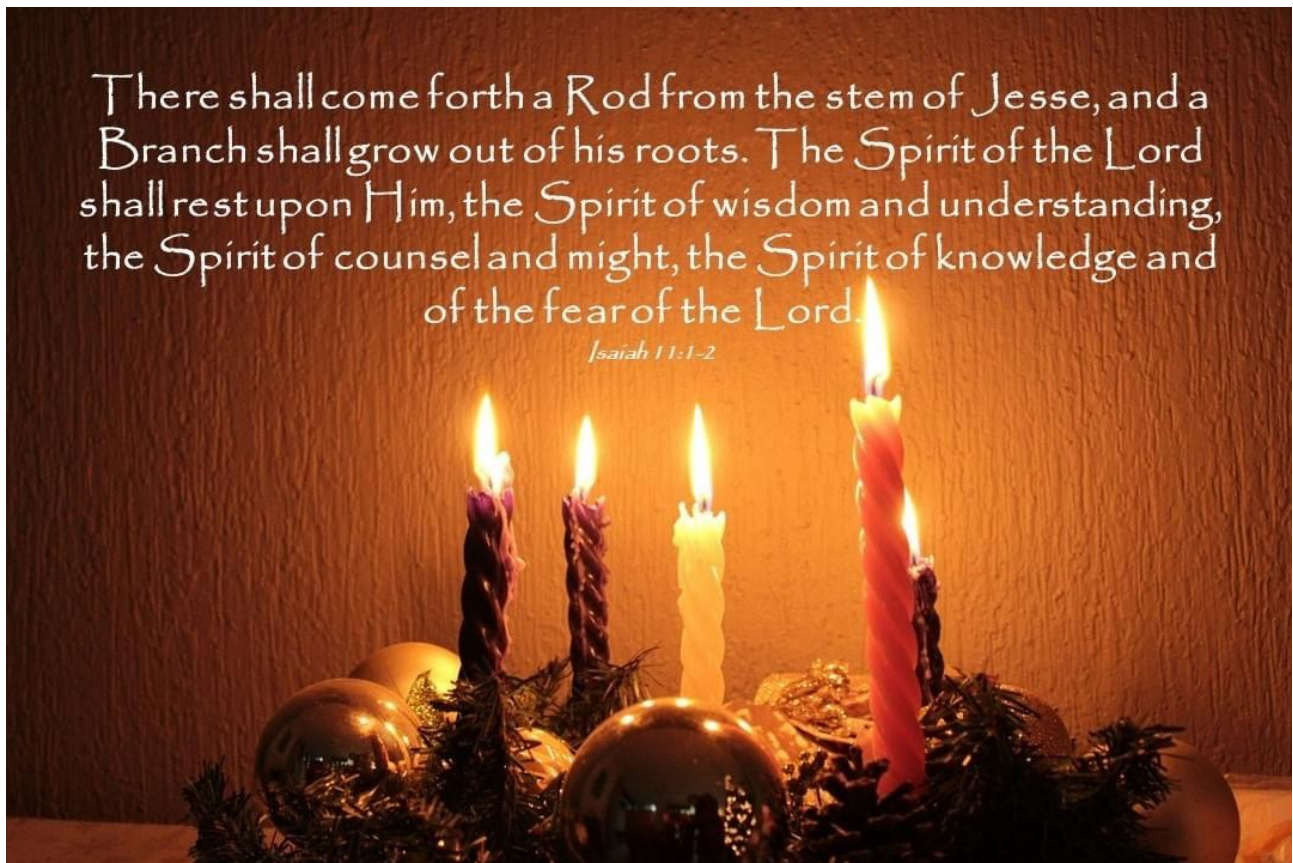
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The Most Rev Justin Welby will spend the festive period with family following the announcement that he is quitting over failures in the Church of England's handling of an abuse scandal.

He will not participate in any public Advent and Christmas services, including the traditional sermon from Canterbury Cathedral on Dec 25.

The BBC had already confirmed that he will not deliver the televised message on New Year's Day. The Archbishop of York's sermon is expected to be the focus on Christmas Day instead.

The Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, the second most senior bishop in the Church, will temporarily take over the Archbishop Welby's official functions.



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The process of appointing the next Archbishop of Canterbury is expected to take some months, with Archbishop Cottrell appearing to have taken himself out of the running.

At the time of his resignation announcement, Archbishop Welby said he was leaving the post following mounting pressure after the independent Makin Review concluded that John Smyth, the most prolific abuser associated with the Church, might have been brought to justice if the Archbishop had reported him to police in 2013.

The Archbishop initially declined to resign upon the report's publication, saying he had "no idea or suspicion of this abuse" before 2013.

However, he acknowledged the review's findings that he had "failed to ensure" it was investigated.

It was also confirmed the Rev Jo Bailey Wells, the former personal chaplain to the Archbishop in 2013, has "stepped back from her ministry" following the Makin Review.

She had since served as the first Bishop for Episcopal Ministry in the Anglican Communion.

A Diocese of London spokesman said: "In light of the Makin Report, Jo Bailey Wells stepped back from her ministry in the Diocese of London, pending a safeguarding risk assessment."





## Buttons and Widow Twanky are back

**It's been a busy start to their December.**

“We kicked things off in Limerick on Saturday with the United Dioceses of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe Youth Council with a day of workshops and then doing some Christmas sketches in the evening. Sadly Ross was sick and missed out, but Chris has a great time with the young people and leaders.

“Thankfully, Ross was better by Sunday and it was Panto time!

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“A really fun first show at Magheragall Methodist on Sunday and then two shows for the brilliant pupils of Downpatrick Primary School. It's always a bit of a nervous moment when you begin performing a show for the first time (will everyone else like it as much as you do?), so been very encouraging to see audiences of all ages enjoying it. 3 done, lots more to go!”

## **Carnmoney Parish annual Sands ‘Lights of Love’ Carol Service**

**Carnmoney Parish Church. holds its annual Sands ‘Lights of Love’ Carol Service on Sunday December 8 at 6.30pm.**



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This is especially for anyone who has lost a baby or a child either before, at or after birth, and may be finding the Christmas festivities difficult.

## Draperstown cross-community Carol Service



**Bishop Andrew Forster of Derry & Raphoe took part in a cross-community Carol Service in a packed St Columba's Parish Church in Draperstown on Sunday evening – the First Sunday of Advent.**

The local Parish Priest, Father Peter Madden, also took part and the worship was led by the wonderful Ballinascreen Parish Choir.

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The event was one of two services the Bishop attended yesterday evening in the Kilcronaghan Group of Parishes.

## Cathedral Calls



## Spectacular attractions at St Columb's Cathedral's 2024 Christmas Fair

**A model Victorian village – complete with railway, hot air balloons, a merry-go-round, windmill and watermill – is the spectacular main attraction in Derry at St Columb's Cathedral's 2024 Christmas Fair, which continues until Saturday 21st December.**

The cathedral has been decorated for the festival with more than 60 'Christmas trees' which greet visitors immediately on arrival at the front porch, adorn both aisles of the church



and continue as far as the chancel, at the front of the building.

The exhibits also include a 'retro sitting room' where people are invited to reflect on times gone by. The scores of dizzying tree creations and craft designs have been

## Derek's Christmas Cracker Jokes

(Some of your favourites, cheekily repurposed for the festive season)

In 1065 William the Conqueror agreed not to  
invade Britain.

In 1066 he changed his name.



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provided by schools, businesses, community groups, musical groups and sports organisations.

The Christmas Festival will continue from 10.00am until 5.00pm, Monday to Saturday, up until the weekend before Christmas and a Craft Sale Morning with Coffee Dock will be held as part of the event on Saturday 14th December at 10.00am.

## Clergy and ministry

### Crinken - A Church without Walls

**By Canon Tom O'Brien and Geoff Scargill**

As the surrounding community of Crinken Church expands with new housing developments in Woodbrook and Shanganagh Castle, the church has taken significant steps to connect with our new residents. We have used the building around us to create a vibrant community hub that caters to the social, emotional, and spiritual needs of our new population aligning with the Church's Five Marks of Mission to proclaim the Good News, teach, respond to human needs, transform unjust structures, and sustain creation.

An opportunity to connect through Outreach:

Crinken Church is positioned at the heart of these new developments. DLR Council building plans themselves situate Crinken at the centre of two new communities,



## **Daniella in Crinken's coffee pod where staff and volunteers also provide pastoral care.**

welcoming an estimated 5,400 new residents. The church's outreach plans aim to meet these residents with open arms, providing support systems that encourage a sense of belonging. This includes essential services such as access to mental health counselling, Health courses, English classes and the use of an outdoor coffee pod where pastoral care will be provided by staff and volunteers. All projects are designed to bridge the gap between new residents and their local community. By setting up a "Church Without Walls", where the church is open Monday to Friday, Crinken allows for accessibility and inclusivity, inviting people to experience a welcoming space where they can connect with others.

## **Practical Support for New Residents**

The needs of the community extend beyond spiritual guidance, and Crinken is ready to meet those needs headon. With our Storehouse Foodbank, mental health hub,

## Crinken's Saturday Lunch Club Christmas Dinner



plans well underway to develop vocational training, Crinken Church is addressing the practical needs of Woodbrook and Shanganagh's diverse residents. But we also support spiritual growth too. We are running Exploring Christianity at this time and have plans to offer further courses in leadership, marriage and supporting Growth for teens. We are already hosting residents' association meetings for Woodbrook, introducing them to our church and services.

### **The Camino in Shanganagh: building Spiritual Connection**

Interestingly, St James Church Crinken is also on the Bray to Dublin Camino. This Camino draws on the traditional



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pilgrimage concept, encouraging visitors and locals to engage in reflective, spiritual journeys. By opening our doors to visitors who come to stamp their passports, Crinken brings a unique spiritual element to Shanganagh and Woodbrook that aligns with our mission of offering holistic care and the Five Marks of Mission, particularly the call to proclaim the Good News and engage in transformative ministry.

## **Canon Tom O'Brien and his team building community together**



## **Why Community Engagement Matters**

For Crinken Church, these initiatives are more than just programmes—they're essential to elements that support the development of a thriving community. Crinken's proactive

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approach combats this, helping residents feel connected, supported, and valued. Invitations are open to join our Men's or Women's breakfasts, engage with our Saturday Lunch Club, play Bowls, take on art, come to communion explore healthy food, access a food parcel or simply come for a coffee.

Yah Personally, seeing the church work to blend spiritual support with tangible aid and practical help is what Jesus Himself modelled in His ministry. The work we are starting is to be a community-centred Church, bringing people together to provide for a spectrum of needs. Our congregation and committees are central to the success of what we do. They are dedicated to serving the community because we all share the goal of creating a model for meaningful engagement.

**Below - Rathmichael Parish aiding SVP**

**SVP** SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL  
HOMEMADE CAKES, TREATS AND SAVOURY DISHES

# Christmas Food Stall & Coffee Morning

Saturday 7th December  
10am - 12 noon  
Erck Hall

Bring the family and enjoy a cuppa with friends.

**Rathmichael**  
Parish Church

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As we continue to serve, Crinken Church remains a place where all are invited to “Come and See” to witness, belong, and grow within a welcoming community. And just as they leave, they are encouraged to “Go and Tell” to carry the message of love, hope, and connection into the world around them. This call, rooted in scripture, reflects our mission to build a thriving, supportive community that reaches beyond our walls and impacts lives near and far.

## **Week of Prayer for Pioneer Ministry currently under way**

**The West Cork Pioneer Hub has been working on our understanding of Pioneer Ministry, ‘Reaching those with little or no connection with church’ since last spring. This week six parishes from Kinsale to Schull are taking part in a week of prayer.**

The Dean of Ross, the Very Rev. Cliff Jeffers, said:

The parishes involved in the West Cork Pioneer Ministry Hub are seeking God’s guidance over eight days of prayer in our churches from the 30th November to the 8th of December. We welcome people to come along to pray using the prayer stations in the churches and to find out a little more about Pioneer Ministry in West Cork.

Last month, Dean Jeffers wrote for our Diocesan Magazine:

At General Synod in May 2023, a new initiative called Pioneer Ministry was launched which seeks to reach out to people who have little or no connection with church. In June 2023, Bishop Paul invited clergy and lay people in our



diocese who would be interested in Pioneer Ministry to an information and training session in Northridge House with Rev. Rob Jones, the Pioneer Ministry Co-Ordinator for the Church of Ireland.

A proposal was drafted for a West Cork Pioneer Ministry Hub, and following approval by Diocesan Council and Bishop Paul, we began to meet under the direction of Dean Cliff Jeffers. A Pioneer Ministry Hub is a group of people who wish to learn about Pioneer Ministry and seek an opportunity to establish a Pioneer Ministry Project in their area. First, we needed to learn what Pioneer Ministry was!

For the first half of 2024 we read and reflected on a book called 'Pioneering a new future' by Phil Potter and sought to discover how it might be applied in a rural West Cork

context. In August 2024 we visited the Carrig Centre to see an example of Pioneer Ministry in practice. We met with Pioneer Evangelists Matt Gould and Sarah-Louise Hockey and were inspired by their vision for reaching out to people in Ballincollig.

We then started to discuss what type of project might connect with the needs of people in West Cork, and although we have some ideas, we are less certain of where God is guiding us in this work. To seek God's guidance, the

**Stellar Voices**  
Presents  
*The Miracle of Christmas*  
With  
Special Guests

  
Mairead Healy  
Soprano

  
Claire McCollum  
Compere

  
David Curry  
Tenor

  
Naomi Hill  
Violinist

**The Three Tenors**  
Glenn Tweedie  
Graeme Hacking  
David Curry

  
Zoe Curry

  
The Belfast Ukulele Jam

  
The Rock Choir

**Saturday**  
14th Dec 2024  
7:00pm

**St Brigid's Church**  
Glengormley

For Tickets Tel:  
Erin: 02890859676  
or purchase at Venue Door  
Proceeds in aid of Greenisland Parish Building Fund

**Admission**  
£12  
Supper Included

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parishes involved are going to host 8 days of prayer in their churches from the 30 th of November to the 7 th of December, to which all are welcome.

There will be prayer stations to guide your reflections and someone there to answer any questions that may have.

The dates of each service can be found on the website of St Fachtna's Cathedral, Rosscarbery.

[<https://www.rosscathedral.ie/>]

## Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books



## Who Cares for the Carers?

**A Summary Evaluation Report of the Who Cares for the Carers? Pastoral Support Package 2018–2024 has now been published.**

The purpose of this summary evaluation, which was undertaken by Canon Professor Anne Lodge as part of her

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Self-Supporting Ministry, is to give an overview of the operation of the Who Cares for the Carers? initiative and to present an evaluation by a sample of those who used aspects of the pastoral support package during the first seven years of its operation.

You can read the report and get information on the Who Cares for the Carers? initiative on Dublin diocese website here: <https://dublin.anglican.org/news/2024/12/04/who-cares-for-the-carers>

## In the media

### **Churches carry huge crosses as they try to move on from mistakes of past - Alf McCreary in The Irish Times**

**A recent newspaper article claimed that King Charles and the Princess of Wales, who are both suffering from cancer, have found “strength in spirituality” in dealing with their illnesses.**

It is a sentiment which will be appreciated by people from all political and cultural backgrounds in these islands and further afield who would describe themselves as religious or spiritual, though these are not necessarily the same thing.

Many people nowadays would claim that “religion” is merely the structure of maintaining a Christian faith but that

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“spirituality” is the essence of faith itself, and not necessarily confined to Christianity alone.

On the other hand, many others who cannot accept these concepts may regard them as merely otherworldly escapism in our modern secular society where individuals seek their own “god” in other ways totally removed from what we would have once referred to as traditional religion.

In my recent book, *Keeping the Faith*, I set out to reflect on these and other issues which have helped to shape my values and career, during which I have spent more than 60 years as an author and journalist, and nearly 25 of those as the religion correspondent of the *Belfast Telegraph*.

Looking back to my childhood as a Presbyterian by accident of birth, I realise yet again how churchgoing was obligatory in the small model village of Bessbrook where I was brought up. Sunday worship was an important social occasion, and the Presbyterian Church was also known as the Meeting House because it gave everyone, including local farmers, an opportunity to meet one another and to catch up on local news and gossip. The same applied no doubt to the Anglican and Catholic Churches in our village, and smaller groups like the Quakers and Plymouth Brethren, but significantly each denomination kept strictly to its own beliefs and religious cultural practices.

The only inter-church service of the year was held in the local Methodist Church early on Christmas morning after we villagers walked around the dark streets with flash lamps while we awakened people with our medley of Christmas carols.



There was also a kind of cultural apartheid in death. People from the main denominations would express condolences to the bereaved but very few would dare to cross the threshold of a church belonging to “the other side”. Quite often it was regarded as respectful enough to stand silently outside the walls of the church, while the funeral service took place inside.

This, of course, was not exclusive to the “Black North”. That picture is mirrored in my colleague Patsy McGarry’s excellent new book, *Well, Holy God*, in which he forensically skewers the Catholic Church for its many sins of the flesh and spirit while prolonging the religious divisions in society. He and I were brought up as young country boys maybe 150-200 miles apart across the Border as the crow flies, but our experiences were uncannily similar.

There is no doubt the churches of all the main denominations singularly and collectively failed to lead their congregations across the man-made barriers and rules which were regarded at the time as the teachings of the Gospel – which they certainly were not – and which inevitably led to future scepticism and criticism when people felt free to make up their own minds about such important issues.

That said, I refer in my book to a number of individuals whose deep Christian faith made a difference to those around them. They included the Rev Dr Ray Davey, a former Presbyterian padre during the second World War who spent years in Italian and German prisoner-of-war

camps, and returned to his native Ulster to establish the seminal inter-church Corrymeela Community.

I was also in awe of my first Belfast Telegraph editor, John E Sayers, a dedicated member of the Methodist Church who survived a Royal Navy shipwreck and worked in Churchill's map room during the second World War. He then returned to Northern Ireland to try to drag stiff-necked unionism into the 20th century, thus incurring the baleful hostility of the Rev Ian Paisley, who was regarded by many of us as one of the people most responsible for the Troubles.

Sadly, Sayers and his supporters lost and Paisley won, and look what happened in the North over the next 40 years or so. Part of my motive in writing my book was to pay tribute to people such as Sayers and Davey and many, many other liberal and courageous bridge-builders who are now part of the forgotten undergrowth of Irish history. If they, and the thousands of others like them, had been successful, how much death, injury and heartache would have been avoided from 1968 onwards.

Today, there is talk of a possible Border poll which looks as if it will not come any time soon, and much less some kind of Irish unity on a very long finger. However the stark reality remains that you cannot successfully unite the island properly until you unite the people in the North.

Meanwhile, the churches still have their huge crosses to carry as they try to move on from the terrible mistakes of the past and strive to remain relevant in the face of advancing secularism. Perhaps GK Chesterton was right after all when

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he claimed that “the Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried.”

Alf McCreary is an author and journalist. His book Keeping the Faith is published by Messenger, at €14.95 and £12.95, and is available from local bookshops and on Amazon

## 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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# Church News Ireland

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

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

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