



Where would Jesus be born if this year were the first Christmas?

Where would Jesus be born if this year were the first Christmas? This was one of several questions in a new poll conducted by the Bible Society to get people thinking about the Christmas story.

Other questions included what presents would be offered to the newborn, and who would make the best Wise Man.

The poll revealed that the most popular birthplace of choice for Jesus is the Yorkshire Dales, with almost one third of the votes, while second place went to London with 23 per cent.



Swindon was last choice, with only two percent of those asked believed Jesus would be born there, which, ironically, makes it about as likely a choice as Bethlehem - a tiny city where no one expected a royal birth.

One third of those polled thought

Jesus would be born in a garden shed in the 21st century, while 17 per cent decided a Travelodge would be more fitting. Perhaps unsurprisingly, almost nobody chose the Hilton hotel or a bus stop as a likely modern birthplace for the Messiah.

Just over one in 10 (13.7%) think Jesus would have a sweet tooth and they would give him a chocolate orange if he was born this year.

Just over 10% would give him the more practical gift of a pair of socks, while 6% chose a Playstation 4, an iTunes voucher or a football shirt.

Professor Brian Cox was the most popular choice for a Wise Man with 33% of the vote. Sir Trevor Macdonald was runner up with 16%, while the unlikely pairing of the Archbishop of Canterbury and reality TV star Joey Essex each came close to the bottom of the list.

The survey also revealed that, given the chance, a whopping 40% of women want to be an angel in a Nativity play, while only 8% of men would choose to don the wings and tinsel halo, despite every angelic name in the Bible being masculine.

Matthew Van Duyvenbode, Head of Campaigns, Advocacy and Media at the Bible Society, said: "This poll is a bit of good fun, but it also points to a story of enduring significance.

"At the heart of Christmas is the message that God cares about the everyday, the ordinary and the seemingly insignificant.

"By encouraging people to think about the Nativity in terms of today's ordinary experiences, we hope that they'll revisit one of the world's best known stories with a fresh perspective."

IRISH NEWS

Belfast Black Santa effort



he Very Revd John Mann (left), Bishop Harold Miller and Canon David Humphries (right) with a generous member of the public.

The total raised so far is more than £50,000. In a single day (Tuesday 17 December) £15,000 was donated including one single anonymous donation of £7,000.

The Bishop of Down and Dromore and the Bishop of Connor traditionally lend their support to the Dean, along with Cathedral

Clergy and members of the Cathedral Chapter including its Ecumenical Canons. This Dean Mann's 3rd Black Santa sitout and the 37th since Dean Sammy Crooks began the tradition in 1976.

As usual, most of the money collected will be distributed to local charities, with a portion going towards overseas work. This year there will be a separate collection to be donated to the Philippines Appeal.

The sitout takes place from 9.00 am–5.30 pm every day now until Christmas Eve with the exception of Sunday

Overwhelming C of I Response to Typhoon Haiyan Disaster Appeal

The Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal has thanked all parishes and individuals who have contributed to the Philippines emergency relief fund.

Nearly €120,000 and nearly £40,000 has been received by Bishops' Appeal for the Philippines and these figures are being added to daily. The money is being released to Christian Aid and Tearfund partners on the ground in different parts of the Islands and the feedback has detailed the shock and devastation of the people who, amidst their suffering, are full of gratitude for the international support.

With 13.2 million people affected by the typhoon, 4.4 million people left homeless and further millions attempting to survive despite the loss of livelihoods, it is devastation on a scale likened to that of the Tsunami in 2004. People are using what they can salvage from the vast amounts of debris to build makeshift structures and are moving as close to roads as possible so as to avail of emergency aid. Money donated is being used to provide basic food, water, water purification tablets, tarpaulin, soap, hygiene kits and medical supplies.

Donations can still be made by sending a cheque to: Bishops' Appeal, Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Dublin 6 or by contacting Lydia Monds for lodgement details:

Tel: +353 (0)1 4125610

Email: bishopsappeal@ireland.anglican.org

Website: www.bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org

C of I recycles IT equipment

Running any busy organisation today requires change and adaptation to meet contemporary needs – technology advances to improve processes, new computer applications are required to cope with increased demand.

Recently, the RCB (Representative Church Body of the Church of Ireland) had to address the reality that the majority of the desktop computers and servers in Church House, Dublin were getting old and much of the existing equipment could not utilise the most current technology or run new applications. Having investigated the available options, the RCB undertook a comprehensive programme of upgrading its technological hardware during the course of 2013 and installed new (Windows 7) PCs and servers across Church House's departments.

However, while no longer fit for the RCB's purpose and too old to be passed on directly to schools in Ireland, the redundant equipment was still functional. RCB IT Manager Michelle Carter said 'We wanted to find a creative solution to put this kit to good use and buck the excesses of today's "throwaway society"'.

Camara is an international charity dedicated to using technology to improve education and livelihood skills in disadvantaged communities around the world and which takes in seemingly redundant IT equipment and turns it around for use in those communities. Founded seven years ago in Dublin, the



organisation has built a model of *sustainable education delivery*. Its guiding principle is, 'With better education we expect communities to break the cycle of poverty they find themselves in'. Impressed with its work, the RCB approached Camara and donated its old stock to the organisation which was more than happy to receive it.

Once Camara received the equipment, hard-drives were fully erased (this was in addition to the data wipe carried out by IT staff in Church House). Camara installed Linux on some of the PCs (as they were not suitable for Windows 7), stripped out working components for use in other PCs, and then recycled what was left over. In all, the charity has taken delivery of 16 desktops, 17 monitors, two laptops, two printers and a scanner to date, while three servers and eight desktops will make their way to its headquarters in Chapelizod once they have been fully decommissioned.

Each computer reused by Camara will now be put into a low income school in

Africa, Ireland or the Caribbean where they will enable children to develop digital literacy skills. Michelle sums up the initiative by saying, 'We have been delighted to create a situation where in upgrading our in-house needs we have been able to create a positive outcome from one which might have seemed negative – we hope that through the good work of Camara what we no longer required will help to enhance the outcomes of a new generation of children as they prepare for life and work.'

YPC 14

**Friday 3rd-
Sunday 5th Jan**
(Please note the change of days)
@ 8pm
in Lisneal College
Speaker:
BISHOP KEN CLARKE
Worship led by:
**Andy Lamberton
& Team**

Follow me!

Friday 3rd
Call
Mark 1:16-20

Saturday 4th
Compassion
Matthew 9:35-10:5

Sunday 5th
Command
Matthew 28: 18-20

Upcoming Derry youth event

YPC

For further information on Camara, see: <http://camara.org/>

Church Army CEO and Archbishop of Armagh discuss developments

Evangelism was top of the agenda this week as Church Army CEO, Mark Russell, met with the Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland, The Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke.

During the meeting Mark outlined Church Army's DARE strategy, doing, advocating, resourcing and enabling evangelism and how it could benefit the Church of Ireland.

Archbishop Richard said: 'The Church of Ireland really values the ministry of Church Army Evangelists working here in Ireland, and it was very good to meet with Mark and to explore how we can continue to work with Church Army both here in the Diocese of Armagh and in the wider Church of Ireland. He and I have already made some definite plans for next year which I am looking forward to seeing come to valuable fruition for the life of the church.'

Mark said: 'It was a real pleasure to spend time with Archbishop Richard and hear his heart both for the Diocese of Armagh and for the Church of Ireland. Church Army values our partnership with the Church of Ireland and it was good to discuss how we can serve it in the future.'

Mark will return to the Diocese of Armagh in October where he will be the keynote speaker at the Archbishop's Clergy Conference. Mark also met with the Bishop of Connor. Earlier this year he was the speaker at a conference in the Diocese of Cork.

Black Santa Appeal at St Ann's Church, Dublin

The 2013 Black Santa sit out at St Ann's Church on Dawson Street, Dublin, was officially launched by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson and the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Oisín Quinn.

The children's choir of the Kildare Place School sang festive songs for the launch of the annual Christmas charity appeal. Taney school choir had already performed earlier in the day.

The appeal, which continues outside the church every day right up until Christmas Eve, had a 'soft' start yesterday to facilitate the number of choirs wishing to take part before the start of the school holidays on Friday. Vicar of St Ann's, the Revd David Gillespie, reported a great first day with people



The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Oisín Quinn, the Revd David Gillespie and Archbishop Michael Jackson are pictured with the choir of Kildare Place School.

donating over €5,000l in a matter of hours.

David and his clerical colleagues along with staff from the church will collect each day from 10.00 am until 6.00 pm (apart from Sunday when hours will be reduced). They will be joined by different choirs

each lunchtime including the choirs of Castleknock National School, St James's Primary School, Taney Primary School, Catholic University Schools, John Scottus School, Loretto College, the Seafield Singers and the ICA Choir.

The Black Santa sit out is modeled on a similar appeal, which has been run by successive Deans of St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast for many years. It became known as the Black Santa appeal because of the long heavy black cloaks worn by the clergy to keep out the cold.

The money collected this year will be distributed to St Vincent de Paul, the Salvation Army, the Dublin Simon Community, Protestant Aid, Trust and the Church of Ireland Overseas Aid (Bishops' Appeal) along with a number of smaller charities.

"We're looking forward once again to witnessing the generosity of the people of Dublin and we urge them to support us this year as generously as they have done in the past. I want to assure people that every cent that is donated goes directly to the charities concerned. There is no administration cost whatsoever," the Revd David Gillespie stated.

Community Celebration in Jordanstown Parish

On Sunday December 22 Jordanstown Parish is opening the church to the wider community for a Christmas Community Celebration.

A Silver Band will play outside in a marquee, and there will be chocolate fountains, hot refreshments, mulled wine, face painting and a children's movie playing inside the church.

The fun begins in the grounds at 4.30pm and the community celebration will culminate in a short celebration of Carols in the Church from 6pm. All are welcome.

Christ Church Cathedral - Video of 1000 years of history

The link below gives an opportunity to view Christ Church Cathedral - one of Dublin's oldest buildings, a leading visitor attraction and a place of pilgrimage for almost 1,000 years.

Famous for its breathtaking beauty, magnificent architectural features and wonderful floor tiles, Christ Church is also popular as a venue and is host to many high profile concerts throughout the year. The famous 12th Century Crypt houses the Cathedral cafe and is available for events such as wedding receptions, graduations, dinner parties and Christmas parties etc.

The Medieval Crypt, one of the largest in Britain and Ireland extends under the entire Cathedral.

The Mummified cat and rat, trapped in the organ in the 1860s.

The tomb of Strongbow, leader of the Normans who captured Dublin in 1170.

The Medieval reliquary said to contain the heart of St Laurence O'Toole, patron saint of Dublin.

Architectural features and stone carvings which date from the 12th century through to the 20th century including original 13th century tiles.

The leaning wall of Dublin, out of line by eighteen inches or 46cm.

General information

Entrance Fees: Adults €6 (Conc.: €4.50/Child €2) Family €15

The cathedral is closed to sightseers ahead of and during services. However, visitors are most welcome to join in our worship, for which there is no cost of entry.

m.youtube.com/watch?v=0VxMomS08SE&desktop_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D0VxMomS08SE

Young cathedral poet is seeking your support!

CNI Readers are urged to vote for young poet Cameron McGaughey who is the only finalist from Northern Ireland in the UK wide Poetry Games Competition for young writers.

Cameron is a voluntary vergger at Belfast Cathedral where his mum is Gillian ishonorary secretary of the Board of St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

His poem, entitled The Starlight Road, can be read below.

If you are impressed by the poem, and would like to support Cameron, please register your vote at: <http://www.youngwriters.co.uk/poetry-games-voting.php>

Voting closes on January 14 2014.

The Starlight Road

*The road I long to travel features on no map.
No signposts, no pavements or coloured traffic lights.
No beginning and no end , no lanes marked out in white,
Yet ageless and matchless and dazzlingly bright.*

*The road I want to travel cannot be found by day.
Warm sunshine and dark shadow obscure its diamond ray.
But with the setting sun and the dying of the light,
I know my road awaits me, stretching off into the night.*

*It appears at first a glimmer – just a twinkle in the sky,
And as the dark grows deeper, sprays of glitter catch my eye.
Like diamonds sewn on velvet glistening bright against the night,
My starlight road unravels a thousand points of light.*

*I try in vain to count them but their number is too great.
They sparkle and they shimmer and silently they wait
In clustered constellations whose shapes I track and trace.
A plough, a belt, a hunter all sparkling in space.*

Astrologers say my future is written in the stars,

*Like some vast dot-to-dot predicts my fate
And planets in conjunction or at odds
Determine my successes and my flaws.*

*“Ignore such hocus pocus!” science scoffs
“These stars are only molten rocks and stone,
Great lifeless boulders orbiting the sun,
Your destiny is yours and yours alone.”*

*One day I’ll walk along my starlight pass
To find those jewelled worlds so far away.
Perhaps I’ll find their glint is that of glass
Through which another watches me today.*

Iomainn agus Carúil Choitianta - Familiar hymn and Carols as Gaeilge



Familiar Hymns and Carols as Gaeilge CD

This CD, produced by Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise, will be launched on 24 January 2013. Copies will be available from 24 January. The organisers say, “We hope that these familiar hymns and carols will add to your experience of worship as Gaeilge.”

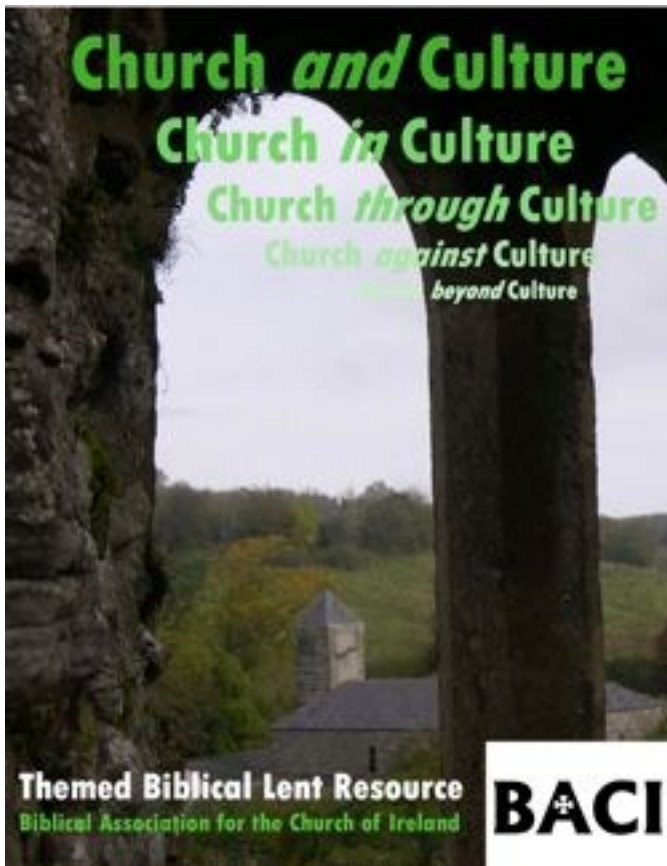
An A4 booklet with the words in Irish will accompany the CD. The list of hymns and an order form is at -

http://www.gaeleaglais.ie/files/2713/8719/6862/carols_as_gaeilge_.pdf

Church and Culture the Focus of BACI 2014 Lent Course

The Biblical Association for the Church of Ireland’s Lent Course on Church and Culture will be launched in Christ Church Cathedral Dublin on Thursday January 16 at 6.00 pm and in St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast, on Monday January 20.

For the past three years BACI has provided a Lenten Bible study resource which has been linked to the Anglican Communion’s Bible in the Life of the Church Project on the subjects of creation, economic justice and gender justice. That project has now concluded and this year BACI has chosen the subject Church and culture. These studies have been developed with the



Revd Dr Ron Elsdon from a series he designed for Connor Diocese.

In their forward to the 2014 study, Drs Ginnie Kennerley and William Olhausen say that the Church's relation to its surrounding culture is a perennial question for Christians but it is one of increasing urgency today when the gap between the internal life of the churches and the culture in which they are set has been widening at an alarming rate.

The Bible studies come under the headings *Affirmation and Celebration, Definition and Separation, Understanding and Compassion, Faithfulness and Service and Lifestyle and*

Proclamation.

Printed copies of the Lent Course can be made available at a modest cost and e-copies will also be downloadable without charge from the BACI website <www.bibliahibernica.wordpress.com> from mid January.

Archbishop rejects claim of Anglican school discrimination

The Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin has rejected the Ombudsman for Children's claims that denominational schools operate a policy of "religious discrimination" in their admissions policies.

Irish Independent - Archbishop [Michael Jackson](#) told the [Irish Independent](#) that the Constitution made provision for parents to exercise a choice to have their children attend a school "in the tradition of the faith and ethos which they hold dear".

The archbishop, who is patron of 49 denominational schools in the Anglican tradition, said this constitutional and democratic right was not in any way "designed to be a slap in the face" to people who wanted a more secular or pluralist education.



Dr Jackson said part of the difficulty was that Ireland had inherited an educational system where historically the churches had provided education for altruistic reasons and now found themselves "very much boxed in to denominational self-identity".

Ombudsman for Children, Emily Logan, in her submission to the Department of Education on draft legislation on schools' selection policies, called for the provision which allows schools to select students on the basis of religion to be removed.

DISADVANTAGE

She suggested that where a denominational school was oversubscribed, children who did not belong to the school's denomination were at an unfair disadvantage.

The archbishop was speaking after he launched this year's Black Santa Sit Out which aims to raise money for St Vincent de Paul, the [Salvation Army](#), the [Dublin](#) Simon Community, Protestant Aid, Trust and the Church of Ireland Overseas Aid (Bishops' Appeal).

He said there was "an urgent need" for regulation of the charity sector in Ireland because people were confused, anxious and angry over the CRC scandal. He said the lack of regulation of charitable fundraising meant people were concerned about making donations and what was happening to the money they give to charities.

YouVersion launches Bible app for kids

YouVersion is launching an adaptation of its popular free Bible app to appeal to younger users.

Designed for children aged between four and ten, the Bible App for Kids has been developed in partnership with OneHope, an international ministry which has reached



nearly a billion young people worldwide with the Bible.

The app is part of the outworking of OneHope's vision that every young person, in every nation, will be reached with a relevant Gospel message by the year 2030.

As smart phones and tablet devices become the norm in many children's everyday lives, the developers of the app saw an opportunity to engage the younger generation with the Bible in a way that is both stimulating and relevant.

GB NEWS

Giant screen to extend the festive cheer at St Paul's this Christmas

A giant screen will relay three of St Paul's Cathedral's most popular Christmas services, allowing thousands more people to experience the worship and music taking place inside.

Owing to the enduring popularity of Christmas services at the Cathedral, which often see many thousands more people queuing to enter than can be safely accommodated, the large screen will be placed in Paternoster Square, in the shadow of Wren's great church, allowing everyone the chance to experience the services live.

Saturday 21 December
1pm - **Family Carols**



Enjoy Christmas favourites in a service lasting 45 minutes, sung by the chamber choir, Cantate. Children especially welcome.

Monday 23 December
4pm - **Christmas Carol Service**
Sung by the Cathedral Choir.

Tuesday 24 December, Christmas Eve
4pm - **Christmas Carol Service**
Sung by the Cathedral Choir.

The screen is sponsored by [Oxford Properties](#).

WORLD NEWS

West must open its eyes to reality facing Middle East Christians

The Archbishop of Baghdad, Louis Raphael I Sako, has called on the West to help put an end to the "mortal exodus" of Christians from the Middle East.

Sako, who is also Patriarch of Babylon, told a conference in Rome, "Christianity and Freedom: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives", that the West must assist the Muslim nations of the Middle East in "modernising Islam's approach to religious freedom" and "convince Muslim nations that their repression and persecution of their minority Christian communities is not only harming the Christians, but is harming the societies themselves".

Sako, a keynote speaker at the conference run by the Religious Freedom Project at Georgetown University, which recently hosted the UK's Baroness Warsi, said the situation in Iraq over the past 10 years has gone from bad to worse, and that he can see similar situations unfolding in Egypt and Syria.

"In Iraq, after 10 years, we still don't have security. There are daily attacks, explosions, kidnappings and murders. The same scenario is happening in Syria and in Egypt," he said.

Sako quoted the Coptic Catholic Patriarch, Ibrahim Isaac Sidrak, who said that in the past 18 months, more than 100 Egyptian churches have been

attacked. In Syria, Sako said 67 churches have been attacked and 45,000 Christians have left the country.



In this file photo, an Iraqi Christian woman leaves a church in Tal Kaef, north of Mosul.

The Iraqi Archbishop pointed towards the rise of political Islam as one of the major opponents of the Church in the Middle East, while he said the US-led invasion of Iraq has "destroyed the country", being replaced by a period of sectarian violence.

He added that governments seem "generally incapable" of controlling the sectarian battles between Sunni and Shiite Muslims.

"Suffering became an everyday struggle for all Iraqis, but especially for Christians," he said. "Muslims are always strong enough with their tribes. They also have the advantage of living in a country ruled under Islamic orders. But Christians and other minority groups have been worn down by a worsening security situation."

Since 2003, Sako said more than 1000 Christians have been killed in Iraq (and others kidnapped and tortured), while 62 churches and monasteries have been attacked.

He added that less than half of Iraq's 1.2 million Christians in 1987 remain – "and the numbers continue dropping".

The United Nations Committee for Refugees recently stated that 850,000 Iraqi Christians have left since 2003. Sako said the West "does not understand" the difficulties and fears of Middle Eastern Christians.

"Religious radicalism is growing and becoming very aggressive," he said. "Religious violence is on the increase across the Middle East, breaking up communities and destroying relations between peoples from different religious traditions. This violence is damaging the very fabric of Middle Eastern societies. Islamist extremists want to take advantage of the current situation (that is, the anarchy in several regions) in order to empty the Christian presence in the Middle East, as if it were an obstacle for their plans."

He called on the West to "open its eyes" to see the reality of the situations facing Christians in Iraq, Syria and Egypt.

The Archbishop echoed Pope Francis's declaration that he "would not accept" a Middle East without Christians, which Sako said would "fundamentally alter the contours of culture and society in nations such as Iraq, Syria, and Egypt" and "deal a severe blow to any hope of pluralism and democracy". Christians are "an integral part of the national Arab tissue," he said.

Prayer for Today

**Empowering God,
Grant that directed by your Spirit,
we may confess Christ as Lord
and combine our diverse gifts with a singular passion
to continue his mission in this world
until we join in your eternal praise. Amen.**