

**CNI**  
CHURCH  
NEWS  
IRELAND

### Networking for peacemakers

Labour must 'do God' to fight persecutions

BBC Nine Lessons on Radio3 tomorrow

Derek Jacobi in

The Bethlehem Tales



### Praxis Care seeks befrienders

Praxis Care supports individuals who feel lonely and isolated as a result of their mental ill health through a volunteer befriending programme.

Volunteers support people in the community who could benefit from this befriending service.

Praxis Care is mental health and learning disability charity which supports adults and children through residential and day care, respite and floating support across Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, the Isle of Man and England.

### Carol service ever popular

*It was standing room only at the west end at St Paul's Cathedral carol service last week.*

New befriending matches have been funded by the Big Lottery Fund through the Together for You



*School choir contributing to the Sitout at St Ann's, Dublin*

programme, an innovative and exciting new project led by Action Mental Health in partnership with Aware Defeat Depression, CAUSE, Cruse, MindWise, NEXUS NI, Praxis Care and Relate NI, which will deliver mental health and wellbeing services to a range of people across Northern Ireland.

Volunteers build friendships which have a lasting positive impact on both themselves and the people they befriend. We receive referrals from Community Mental Health Teams and then we match volunteers to those individuals.

There aren't any particular skills or qualifications needed to become a volunteer befriender, someone who has good communication skills, an interest in people and time to meet their befriender on a regular basis is all that it takes. We will provide training and support to volunteers to ensure that they feel equipped and ready for their role. Volunteer befrienders get involved in everyday activities like going for a walk, meeting for a cup of coffee, going shopping or to the cinema.

To get involved contact Catherine Little, Volunteer Co-ordinator at Praxis Care, on 028 9072 7161, [catherinelittle@praxiscare.org.uk](mailto:catherinelittle@praxiscare.org.uk) or visit [www.praxiscare.org.uk](http://www.praxiscare.org.uk) If you would like to find out more about the work of Praxis Care please feel free to get in touch.

## **Belfast Muslims call for new mosque**

**Muslims say they desperately need a new purpose-built mosque in Belfast.**

About 5,000 followers of Islam live in the city, but their main centre of prayer is a large Victorian house in south Belfast.



BBC Asian Network - About 200 people regularly attend congregational Friday prayers, when every room in the house at Wellington Park is crammed full.

Northern Ireland's Muslim population has more than doubled over the last decade or so.

There has been an influx of professionals and students from more than 40 countries.

Although they have raised more than £650,000 for new premises, they have not been able to find a convenient location.

One of the regular attendees, Mohammed Shakir, said: "You can't find a place to park; it's a residential

area.

"People are praying everywhere - believe it or not, they even pray on the stairs."

The mosque trustees have been looking for an alternative site for more than a decade.

Dr Saleem Tareen, the recently elected chairperson of the centre, said: "It saddens me when people come and can't find a place to pray, or if children come and they don't find the place adequate.

"I certainly don't want that to continue."



Plans to build the region's first purpose-built mosque in Craigavon, County Armagh, were shelved ten years ago, after complaints from locals that it would open the door to militants and result in noise pollution.

It can be difficult to find a place to

pray

The group's attempts to find new premises have been supported by Northern Ireland's first assembly member from an ethnic minority.

Anna Lo, who is an Alliance Party MLA for South Belfast, said: "I know they are very specific about which area they want to be based in.

"South Belfast is very popular and house prices are expensive, so this is a difficulty for them - they will need to raise more money."

## Networking for Belfast Peacebuilders

**Are you involved in a faith group and engaged in peace-building? The 4 Corners Festival invites you to attend an afternoon of networking designed for you.**

Held in conjunction with the Belfast City Council, the afternoon will give space for attendees to learn about peace-building work in other parts of the city and to get inspiration for future projects while connecting with other groups dedicated to peace to Belfast. Networking for groups from the **north** or **west** of the city is at 4pm Thursday, 16th January. See the event [poster](#) for more details.

If you are from the **south** or **east** sides of the city, check out our event at 6pm Tuesday, 21st January. You can find more details on the event [poster](#).

[4 Corners Networking Invite \(North/West\) 16 January 2014](#)

<http://www.4cornersfestival.com/wp-content/uploads/4-corners-invite-16-January-2014.pdf>

[4 Corners Networking Invite \(South/East\) 21 January 2014](#)

<http://www.4cornersfestival.com/wp-content/uploads/4-corners-invite-21-January-2014.pdf>



## Black Santa pops in to visit lady who knit his famous scarf!

**Belfast's Black Santa, the Very Rev John Mann, took a break from his daily sitout on the steps of St Anne's Cathedral on Friday**

## **to visit a very special lady.**

Thanks to Florence Ringland, aged 95, Dean Mann has had a nice warm neck over the three years that he has been Black Santa.

Florence lives in the Bethany Nursing Home in Osborne Park, where Dean Mann held regular services during his time as rector of St John's, Malone. She began knitting the lovely multi-coloured scarf for the Dean when she first heard he was leaving for St Anne's, and had it finished in time for Dean Mann's first sitout in December 2011.

And Florence's needles have produced what has probably become the most famous scarf in Belfast at Christmas time, as Dean Mann has worn it with pride every day on the Cathedral steps and for numerous photo shoots and television interviews!

Florence was delighted to see Dean Mann when he called in on Friday afternoon, and he was able to tell her that this year's appeal had that day passed the £100,000 mark.

"£100,000! That's a lot of money," Florence commented. "I'm glad you are still wearing the scarf as long as it does the job!"

## **BBC Broadcast Nine Lessons & Carols**

**Tomorrow on BBC Radio 3 Wed 25th December at 3.30 pm**  
**Repeat of A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols (first broadcast Tues 24th December – BBC Radio 4)**  
**Recorded in King's College Chapel, Cambridge**

Hymn: Once in Royal David's City (desc. Cleobury)  
Bidding Prayer read by the Dean  
Ding, Dong! merrily on high (arr. Williamson)  
First lesson: Genesis 3, vv 8-19 read by a Chorister  
Jesus Christ the apple tree (Poston)  
Hear the voice of the Bard (Musgrave - first performance, commissioned by King's College)  
Second lesson: Genesis 22 vv 15-18 read by a Choral Scholar  
Love came down at Christmas (Morris, arr. Cleobury)  
Joy to the world (Holford, arr. Keyte and Parrott)  
Third lesson: Isaiah 9 vv 2, 6-7 read by a Member of the College Staff  
Illuminare, Jerusalem (Weir)  
Hymn: Unto us is born a Son (arr. Willcocks)  
Fourth lesson: Isaiah 11 vv 1-3a, 4a, 6-9 read by a Representative of the City of Cambridge  
The Lamb (Tavener)

A New Year Carol (Britten)

Fifth lesson: Luke 1 vv 26-35, 38 read by a representative of the sister College at Eton

Angelus ad Virginem (arr. Cleobury)

Hymn to the Virgin (Britten)

Sixth lesson: Luke 2 vv 1, 3-7 read by the Chaplain

Away in a manger (arr. Willcocks)

A Boy was born (Britten)

Seventh lesson: Luke 2 vv 8-16 read by the Director of Music

The Shepherd's Carol (Chilcott)

Hymn: While shepherds watched (desc. Cleobury)

Eighth lesson: Matthew 2 vv 1-12 read by the Vice-Provost

Susanni (Bennett)

I saw three ships (arr. Preston)

Ninth lesson: John 1 vv 1-14 read by the Provost

Hymn: O come, all ye faithful (arr. Willcocks)

Collect and Blessing

Hymn: Hark, the Herald Angels Sing (desc. Cleobury)

Organ voluntaries:

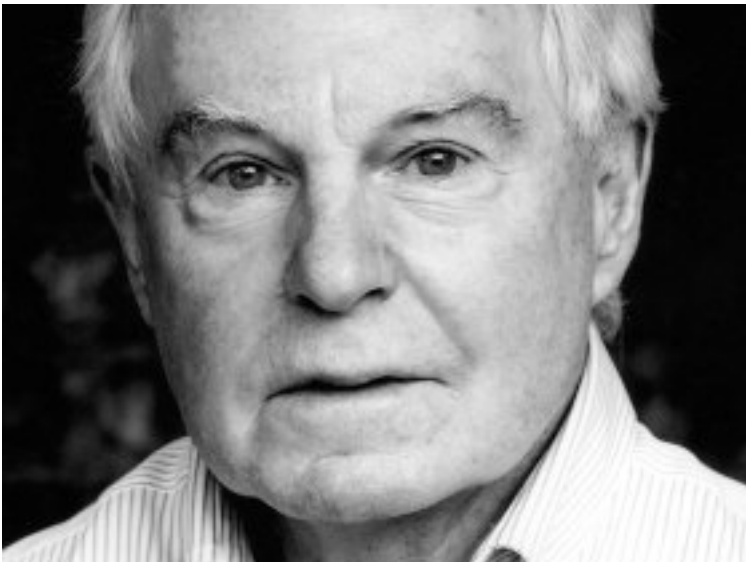
In dulci jubilo (BWV 729) (Bach)

Dieu parmi nous (Messiaen)

Director of Music: Stephen Cleobury

Organ Scholar: Douglas Tang

## The Bethlehem Tales



**Actor and stage director Sir Derek Jacobi heads the cast for Classic FM's Christmas Day Drama, *The Bethlehem Tales*.**

Part thriller, part magical comedy, the drama tells the Christmas story, from the announcement of Jesus' birth to Mary to the Flight into Egypt, from the point of view of contemporary eye-witnesses. Interwoven with

music drawn from three centuries, the family radio play offers a different perspective on the Nativity of Jesus.

The story begins at the point when political tension is building in Israel following the Roman census. A series of confused rumours about signs and forewarnings in the City of David are going around. Somewhere on the road

from Bethlehem, a merchant - one of Herod's agents - stops at an isolated inn. Here a group of travellers heading towards Egypt is whiling away the evening telling stories. Each of the travellers witnessed a different part of the events surrounding the Nativity. Now, during this one night, these Bethlehem Tales try to convince Herod's informer to abandon his calling and follow a new star.

Award-winning Jacobi stars as the Merchant. The cast also features other well known actors from stage and screen including Simon Greenall, Sally Bretton, Kris Marshall, Pippa Heywood and Pip Donaghy.

Written by David Spicer and directed by Frank Stirling, *The Bethlehem Tales* is the third Christmas drama made by Unique for Classic FM in association with Jerusalem Productions. The same team has previously adapted Michael Morpurgo's *On Angel Wings*, narrated by the author, and *The Christmas Mysteries*, based on the Second Shepherd's Play from the Wakefield Mysteries, starring Jack Shepherd and Mark Benton.

Jerusalem Productions is a media co-production company working to increase understanding and knowledge of the Christian religion and its values, via the broadcast media, to as wide an audience as possible. The company, established in 1990, is involved in radio, television and online productions.

The Bethlehem Tales will be broadcast on Classic FM at 7pm on Christmas Day.

## **GB NEWS**

### **The last Noel for Llandaff**

**The five lay clerks of Llandaff Cathedral Choir were made redundant on Friday, in addition to a part-time choral scholar and the assistant organist. The announcement came after several weeks of negotiation and speculation .**

Church Times - A statement from the Chapter said that the redundancies were "part of the Cathedral's strategy to address a significant financial deficit and protect the long-term future of its choral tradition". The move is set to save £45,000, more than half the Cathedral's projected deficit of £81,000.

The adults choristers will "in future be contracted on a flexible, occasional basis, to sing with the boy choristers in the cathedral choir for Sunday services and special events."



The Chapter first announced plans to "slim down" the choir at the beginning of November. A consultation with those affected was held, but a spokesperson for the Chapter said on Friday that it had "come to the conclusion that the new funding arrangement for the choir is the best and most responsible way to secure both its long-term future, and the future of the cathedral community as a whole."

The spokesperson said: "The Cathedral values its choral tradition very highly. The music department was the last area of expenditure that Chapter had to examine in detail, and the last area where we could see that necessary cost savings could be made."

"At present the music department constitutes one sixth of the Cathedral's total budget - more than the combined budget available for all energy costs and fabric repairs and maintenance. This is despite the fact that the Cathedral choir sings at fewer than 35 per cent of all services and only during school term-time.

"We fear that the alternative of relying on constant fundraising for one area of our responsibilities would overshadow or diminish support for other pressing needs, such as the fabric of the building, and even then could not guarantee a sustainable long-term solution. Instead, delivering long-term sustainability must come from changing the structure of the Cathedral choir, strengthening relationships with other organisations involved with music, and developing the complementary roles of the girls' and parish choirs."

In response to the announcement on Friday, David Abrahams, head of legal affairs at the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM), said: "This is a terrible decision by the Cathedral Chapter with huge repercussions for the individuals involved and for Llandaff Cathedral. We believe that donations from supporters of the Save Llandaff Choir Campaign and the Choir's own fundraising plans could have raised the necessary funds to keep these musicians employed."

The chief executive of the ISM, Deborah Annetts, said: "Making people redundant the week before Christmas and at the choir's busiest time of year



is a shocking decision that will do lasting damage both to the musical life and the reputation of Llandaff Cathedral."

The statement from the ISM said that the musicians who had been made redundant were considering an appeal against the decision.

Professor Peter Toyne, who chairs Friends of Cathedral Music (FCM), appeared to me more sympathetic to the cathedral's plight. He said: "The heritage represented by cathedral music is priceless but it comes at a very high price and that is why, if it is to be safeguarded and sustained for generations to come, imaginative leadership and clear long-term sustainable plans for its development are needed at acutely difficult times like this."

Representatives of FCM and the Ouseley Trust, a choral liturgy charity, had discussed alternatives to the redundancies with the Chapter. The statement from the two charities on Friday said that they "recognise and welcome the cathedral authorities' firm commitment, despite the cuts they have had to make, to identify a robust strategic plan for the long-term sustainable development of their choirs."

On Friday, John Pockett, a member of the congregation of the cathedral, described his "great disappointment" at the decision of the Chapter, which "appears to be a knee-jerk reaction. . . It would have been far better to have looked at ways to raise money to keep the choir, which is one of the two great attractions of Llanduff. The building and the choir make up the worship, which is at the heart of all of it."

## **Foodbank users need justice more than charity, says church leader**

**The head of the Church of Scotland's Church and Society Council says that what she wants for Christmas is real justice for people currently reliant on foodbanks.**

"There is a gospel bias for the poor and the Church of Scotland makes deliberate decisions to ensure that its resources, material and spiritual, correspond to that bias, not as an issue of charity, but of justice," declared the Rev Sally Foster-Fulton, Convener of the influential Kirk council.

Her comments came in the wake of a Westminster debate on foodbanks, provoked by a petition signed by 142,000 members of the public, in which many MPs on the government side were dismissive towards heart-rending stories of suffering associated with the alarming growth in food poverty across the country.

Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith has been criticised for leaving the debate early, while Esther McVey, Minister of State for Employment and previously Minister for Disabled People, claimed that there were just 60,000 foodbank users in Britain. Oxfam and Christian charity the Tressell Trust say the figure is up to ten times that number.

Writing about the situation in Scotland on her blog, Ms Foster-Fulton continues: "In our society we are seeing a huge increase in reliance on foodbanks. Thank God there are still people who will work to tackle food poverty and food insecurity. To people who donate, who volunteer, who embody care -- thank you. Your commitment and love is inspirational. My comments aren't meant to undermine this, but rather to ask the question 'is this enough?' Are we in danger of offering a band aid without looking for the source of the bleeding?"

She continued: "We're called to question the systems which mean, despite living in one of the most affluent and developed countries in history, there are children who still go hungry, whilst others have a super-abundance of wealth. Inequality like this is an appalling indictment on our system and our society. Where is the justice in foodbanks? Every time you donate a tin, you should pick up a pen, write your MP or MSP and ask why you have just donated food to a foodbank in one of the richest countries in the world!"

The Church of Scotland is dedicated to removing the inequalities that blight so much of society, and the measure of any society is how it looks after its most vulnerable members, added Ms Foster-Fulton. She concluded: "This is about what kind of Scotland we want to be. What kind of Scotland do we want for the one-in-five children living in poverty and for their parents who might be relying on foodbanks. As we fill up our trolleys and put presents under the tree and wait for Santa, what I want for Christmas is justice, a society where everyone has enough food to eat and a roof over their heads."

\* Sally Foster-Fulton's blog: [http://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/blogs/church\\_and\\_society/](http://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/blogs/church_and_society/)

\* Thoughts on the foodbank debate, from the public gallery (Jack Monroe, originator of the foodbank petition): <http://agirlcalledjack.com/2013/12/19/thoughts-on-the-foodbank-debate-fr...>

## **Labour must 'do God' to fight persecution**

**Douglas Alexander, Labour's shadow foreign secretary, says politicians should speak out about the persecution of Christians in the Middle East, and not be put off doing so for fear of causing offence**



*Egyptian Copts carry four coffins down the aisle of the Virgin Mary Coptic Christian church.*

Daily Telegraph - The [Labour Party](#) has admitted that politicians should stop feeling a “sense of embarrassment” about discussing God.

Douglas Alexander, a senior frontbencher, suggested that public figures have allowed “political correctness” to prevent them talking about faith and the

persecution of Christians in the [Middle East](#).

In a thinly-veiled attack on the Tony Blair era, when Alastair Campbell, the then communications director in Downing Street, said “[we don’t do God](#)”, Mr Alexander warned that people should have the courage to speak up for Christians without fear of causing offence.

Mr Alexander, the shadow foreign secretary, spoke out to voice his concerns about growing harassment and attacks suffered by Christians in the Middle East.

[Writing in the Telegraph](#), he warns that the mounting persecution of Christians is a “story that goes largely untold”, describing those who have spoken out on the issue, including the Prince of Wales, as lone voices. More at -

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10531964/Christians-left-by-the-world-to-suffer.html>

## Prayer for Today

**God of the past, present and the future, of the old covenant and the new, speak to us today. Amen**