

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Armagh Choral concert

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Armagh City Choir concert

Armagh City Choir presented a wonderful night's music in St Patrick's C of I Cathedral with Neuschel Brass and guest organist Phillip Elliott. Well done to choir members and all the readers. A great start to the Christmas season. Armagh City Choir was formed in 1985 as a cross community choir. Since then it has performed most of the major oratorios including this year The Armed Man by Karl Jenkins.

News reports

Archbishop Jackson endorses the Government's new appeal to Offer A Home, Offer Hope, and Welcome People Fleeing War in Ukraine

Archbishop Michael Jackson has endorsed the Government's new appeal for offers of unoccupied properties to provide temporary homes for people from Ukraine who are seeking shelter and a welcome in Ireland.

Archbishop Jackson, who chairs the Church of Ireland's Church and Society Commission, said: "As winter grows deeper, darker and longer, we in Ireland find that the exodus of people from war-torn Ukraine continues unabated. Like

ourselves, they need shelter, welcome and a home in the most practical of ways possible. I commend the scheme now being rolled out as an expression of practical generosity in a deeply distressing human situation of need, which calls for a generous response. I encourage all who can participate in it to do so and to respond as speedily as possible.”

More than 60,000 people have arrived in Ireland from Ukraine, and most are in need of safe and secure accommodation. This new call aims to make use of unoccupied houses, apartments or holiday homes to provide accommodation on a temporary basis.

About the call for offers

Under the new programme, local authorities are appealing for offers of houses, apartments, or holiday homes for use as temporary accommodation for those arriving from Ukraine.

A tax-free recognition payment of €800 per month is available for properties offered.

Property owners can offer homes at offerahome.ie or by contacting the local authority in which the property is located.

The local authority in which the property is located will be the point of contact for owners throughout the offer and assessment process.

Local authorities will match suitable properties to Ukrainian beneficiaries and can support in agreeing licence agreement and other arrangements.

Full details of the call for properties are available at offerahome.ie where offers can be made.

Gettys' Christmas US tour

We wanted to write hymns that help people worship the whole beauty of the God of the Bible,” says Keith Getty.

“So we decided to start writing hymns that were deeper about the core truths of the Christian faith. The first one, of course, was, 'In Christ Alone.' That really just launched us on this journey.”

Grammy nominated artist Keith and Kristyn Getty have been writing modern day hymns for the church for over 20 years. Their beloved song 'In Christ Alone' has been sung worldwide by over 100 million people. This December they bring their hymns and favorite carols on a US tour in celebration of Christmas.

“Some of the greatest hymns that the church has is – it's found in the carols. And so we thought it'd be wonderful to shine the light on that, put a band together and tour around Christmastime, primarily to encourage people to sing, and to sing carols at Christmas and to remember that rich heritage,” says Kristyn.

Keith describes the concert, “The first half is a Christmas party, in the Irish tradition, with songs and dance and laughter and fun. And the second half is a Christmas Carol service.”

Since 2010 The Getty’s Christmas tour has performed in venues from Carnegie Hall to the Schermerhorn in Nashville, TN. - sharing the hope of God’s love for the world as found in the Christmas Story.

“Christmas can be a tricky time for so many of us. You know, it emphasizes feelings of loss, or frustration, or disappointment, or just cold weather and just pushing through to the spring,” says Kristyn. “And so, to shine a light on the true message of Christmas and what it is, and to sing that in what we hope is such a warm and winsome way that really brings that sense of true joy that is always there, whatever circumstances we face. Actually, speaking into those circumstances and giving people hope through them. And music is such a powerful tool to do that. I always hope that from, you know, beginning to end the gospel story is presented as beautifully, and as fully, and richly as possible and that people take that home, they sing these songs as they go. And that those songs are on repeat in their minds and hearts over the Christmas season.”

“Growing up in Ireland, we were taught very much the importance of hospitality,” says Keith. “And so, when we have this event, we want people to come in and laugh, and enjoy and hear great music but then the second half, we want them – to take them on this journey where they rediscover the beauty of the Christmas story yet again. We

pray that each person will leave refreshed and renewed in new ways.”

Irish Presbyterian church's appeal for aid for Middle Eastern victims

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has launched its annual development appeal, and this year the focus is in bringing much-needed humanitarian relief to impoverished communities in the Lebanese capital of Beirut in the Middle East.

Through this annual appeal the 500-plus Irish Presbyterian congregations have raised millions of pounds in support of life-changing sustainable development projects in some of the poorest communities and disadvantaged places in the world.

The Beirut centre, described as “a lighthouse in a dark place and a haven of hope”, will benefit from substantive Presbyterian generosity. The centre is also supported by the Lebanese society for education and social development, and has an input from Christian Aid and Tearfund charities.

The 2022 Presbyterian world development appeal is titled ‘Rekindled hope: from flight to flourishing’. and the Rev Liam Rutherford, convener, explains the lead project will benefit people who are described as “stateless” – Syrian and Palestinian refugees living beside undocumented Lebanese nationals.

Primarily for Presbyterian congregations, the appeal has taken place in the run up to Christmas and New Year for

more than 40 years, normally raising between £300,000 and £500,000.

The Rev Rutherford, a Banbridge minister, has spoken of the “forgotten people’ in places like Lebanon”.

Mr Rutherford said, “The situation in Lebanon has become one such forgotten place. It’s a country which faces enormous political, social and economic challenges, where 80 per cent of the population live below the poverty line. It hosts around 1.5 million refugees who fled the civil war in Syria, alongside a long-term Palestinian refugee community of more than 200,000 people. With refugees making up 25 per cent of the population, this is the highest percentage of refugees hosted by any country in the world.”

With the impact of the cost of living crisis at home, Mr Rutherford said he understood that this year times were hard, but he asked Presbyterians to pray and see how they could give sacrificially.

“While we have been blessed in so many different ways, through our appeal we have a wonderful opportunity to support the work of the centre in Beirut which was established 25 years ago.”

Glen Mitchell, head of Tearfund in Northern Ireland, said: “We are so grateful for the Presbyterian church’s faithful partnership with Tearfund through their appeal. With the generous support of Presbyterian congregations across Ireland, this centre in Beirut will continue its holistic work within a community that has experienced deep traumas due to conflict, Covid and crisis.”

While the Centre in Beirut is the lead project for the 2022 Presbyterian world development appeal, the church will also support a second featured project in South Sudan through Christian Aid's partner, South Sudan Council of Churches. Following the outbreak of violence in 2013, one in three people in South Sudan is an internally displaced person. The huge movement of people around the country has led to conflict

In the media

Welby attacks 'cruel' handling of migrant boat crisis

Archbishop takes swipe at the Home Secretary, but is warned by Tory peer against virtue signalling, Nick Gutteridge writes

Handling of the Channel migrant crisis has been attacked as "cruel" and "harmful" by Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In a speech to the Lords, he took a swipe at Suella Braverman, the Home Secretary, criticising her rhetoric over the small boats chaos, and branded the "hostile environment" towards asylum seekers "immoral", saying the Rwanda policy was "a mistake" that "will be a failure". But he was accused of "virtue signalling" by a Tory peer who said his "high-minded pronouncements" ignored the will of ordinary voters.

The Most Rev Welby repeatedly criticised the Government and accused it of pursuing a “shrill narrative” that demonised refugees. He hit out at the “disgraceful - politicisation” of the role of the Border Force and the RNLI in rescuing migrants from small boats.

“Recognition of human dignity is the first principle which must underpin our asylum policy. A hostile environment is an immoral environment,” he said.

“When we fail to challenge the harmful rhetoric that refugees are the cause of this country’s ills – that they should be treated as problems not people, invaders to be tackled and deterred – we deny the essential value and dignity of fellow human beings.

“The right to seek asylum and the duty of the global community together to protect refugees has been politically degraded in this country when it should be a positive source of pride.”

He said ministers should have “confidence to reject the shrill narrative that all who come to us for help should be treated as liars, scroungers or less than fully human”.

His remarks will be seen as a direct swipe at Rishi Sunak, the Prime Minister, and Mrs Braverman, who have vowed to crack down on illegal migration. Last month the Home - Secretary sparked uproar in the Commons when she branded the number of small boat arrivals an “invasion on our southern coast”.

Baroness Stowell, a Conservative peer, said the Most Rev Welby's remarks dismissed the "valid concerns of the majority of our citizens opposed to the rates of people entering the UK".

She added: "When did virtue signalling to one another within the elite become more important than keeping faith with the values we all have in common regardless of our status?"

"We've allowed criminal gangs and opportunists to weaponise our differences and to endanger the lives of economic migrants.

"If that's not bad enough, we're increasing divisions in our society by suggesting the democratic wishes of the majority don't matter. Dismissing people's concerns drives distrust in the democratic process."

Lord Murray, a Home Office minister, insisted: "Not all those who claim to be refugees are actually refugees. We must be sensible and not naive about this."

The Most Rev Welby has been a repeated critic of recent Conservative governments, attacking their austerity policies and branding Brexit "divisive".

Labour accused the Government of spouting "rhetoric" that hasn't been matched by action. Yvette Cooper, the shadow home secretary, called for a "common sense" approach that would "save substantial sums of money".

"It is a chaotic system, decision-making in the Home Office has collapsed, and that's why we will get a grip on this," she

told the BBC. Labour would bring in a new fast-tracking process for asylum applicants from “safe” countries.

Courtesy the Daily Telegraph

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Advent Responsory by Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge

The Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge (solo soprano: Molly Noon) and Stephen Layton perform the Advent Responsory by Richard Marlow (1939-2013), Director of Music at Trinity College, Cambridge from 1968-2006.

This responsory opens the Advent Carol Service held each year in Trinity College Chapel. The composition enacts the Advent drama of hope, with the lone soprano soloist calling forth three answering ensembles from the darkness. Two of these are fanfares: a bright SSA trio and a deep TTBB quartet. In between, the main SATB ensemble sings music freely based on J.S. Bach's harmonisation of the great Lutheran hymn 'Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme' by Philipp Nicolai.

In the published score, Marlow specifies careful placement and spacing of the singers to truly realise the work's dramatic and emotional impact.

This beautiful film of the Advent Responsory was made in Trinity College Chapel by David Hinitt and Adrian Peacock for www.classicalfilms.co.uk

For more information about Trinity College Choir, including joining as a Choral Scholar or Organ Scholar, and forthcoming livestream services and concerts, visit: www.trinitycollegechoir.com

A Service for the Third Sunday in Advent

A Service for the Third Sunday Of Advent led by Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York.

The C of E states - As we reflect on the hope of the Christmas story, join us from the chapel at Bishopthorpe Palace, for a service of comfort for those who may find this time of year difficult.

You are invited to this Advent service live on Sunday 11 December from 9am on our website, Facebook or YouTube . It will be available for playback immediately after as well.

All of our weekly service content is manually subtitled and contains British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation throughout.

[<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-church-online/weekly-online-services/service-third-sunday-advent-0>]

Down & Dromore film series coming in 2023

It may be Advent but filming is already underway for the Lent Series for 2023. “Transformations” will feature 40 stories of God at work in Down and Dromore, told by a real mix of people from around the diocese.

“We hope you’ll be encouraged by these personal accounts of how God is at work in partnerships, in community engagement and in children and young people. We’ll hear how God works when we step out in faith, how he is at work in church plants and in rejuvenating churches and individuals. And we will hear stories of vocation as God continues to call men and women into ordained ministry.

“We’re looking forward to sharing the series with you online from Ash Wednesday, 22 April 2023.”

Perspective

The essential Christian message is love, sacrifice and service - Dean William Morton

There’s a saying that "a week is a long time in politics",’ It’s probably true as well in some aspects of Church life. Last Sunday, in the gospel reading, John the Baptist was ready for action: he was baptising with water, but after him Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit, and fire.

John believed Jesus would “clear his threshing floor, gather his wheat into his granary, and burn the chaff with

unquenchable fire”. A week further on, however, John is languishing in prison. John had preached fearlessly, confronting the Pharisees and Sadducees, and called out Herod for divorcing his wife and marrying his sister-in-law. Herod had him imprisoned, but John did not mind as he considered that Jesus would rescue him.

John’s expectations of Jesus were not what he thought they would be. After many months in prison, when John heard what Jesus had been doing: healing the sick, casting out demons and teaching people that the meek and the persecuted are blessed, telling them to turn the other cheek and to love not just neighbours but enemies, he sent his disciples to Jesus to ask if he is the one who is to come, or should they look for another.

Like John, we have expectations of God and have been disappointed in that we wanted him to be invincible and powerful, and use His divine powers to heal the sick, stop wars, and wipe out world hunger. Jesus, however, is not this kind of Saviour. His way of saving the world is through love, sacrifice and service.

An episcopal priest in Guam, Western Pacific, Irene Egmalis-Maliaman, claims “the gospel is not a fairytale with a happy ending but rather a kaleidoscope of joy, pain, hope, suffering, peace, fear, triumph, surrender, faith, doubt, disappointments, meaning, loss, and fulfilment.”

Jesus shakes up the crowd, telling them to look for God – not among those dressed in fine robes or live in royal palaces – but rather among the least and vulnerable, among

God's prophets, like John the Baptist, Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, and Zechariah.

*Very Rev Dr William Morton of St Patrick's Cathedral Dublin
writing in the News Letter*

Poem for today

Advent 1955 by John Betjeman

The Advent wind begins to stir
With sea-like sounds in our Scotch fir,
It's dark at breakfast, dark at tea,
And in between we only see
Clouds hurrying across the sky
And rain-wet roads the wind blows dry
And branches bending to the gale
Against great skies all silver pale
The world seems travelling into space,
And travelling at a faster pace
Than in the leisured summer weather
When we and it sit out together,
For now we feel the world spin round
On some momentous journey bound -
Journey to what? to whom? to where?
The Advent bells call out 'Prepare,
Your world is journeying to the birth
Of God made Man for us on earth.'

And how, in fact, do we prepare
The great day that waits us there -

For the twenty-fifth day of December,
The birth of Christ? For some it means
An interchange of hunting scenes
On coloured cards, And I remember
Last year I sent out twenty yards,
Laid end to end, of Christmas cards
To people that I scarcely know -
They'd sent a card to me, and so
I had to send one back. Oh dear!
Is this a form of Christmas cheer?
Or is it, which is less surprising,
My pride gone in for advertising?
The only cards that really count
Are that extremely small amount
From real friends who keep in touch
And are not rich but love us much
Some ways indeed are very odd
By which we hail the birth of God.

We raise the price of things in shops,
We give plain boxes fancy tops
And lines which traders cannot sell
Thus parcell'd go extremely well
We dole out bribes we call a present
To those to whom we must be pleasant
For business reasons. Our defence is
These bribes are charged against expenses
And bring relief in Income Tax
Enough of these unworthy cracks!
'The time draws near the birth of Christ'.
A present that cannot be priced
Given two thousand years ago
Yet if God had not given so

December 13, News

He still would be a distant stranger
And not the Baby in the manger.

World Cup Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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