

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Penelope’s Nativity Festival



Image of the day

Penelope's Nativity Festival

The Rector of St Canice's Church in Eglinton got robbed for a special service, on Friday morning, but not in his usual garb. Rev Canon Paul Hoey, and Rector's Churchwarden Elaine Way, dressed as Mary and Joseph for the launch of the parish's three-day Nativity Festival.

And they were joined by a special guest, Penelope the donkey, who was brought to St Canice's by local parishioner Alison Leighton.



Between then and Sunday evening, parishioners and the wider community called into the church to see dozens of



nativity scenes created by local people.

The Festival began with an opening service at 10am on Friday morning, during which the choir of Eglinton Primary School performed a number of Christmas favourites. The Rector wore a Christmas jumper for the occasion.

Donations from the festival will be shared with two charities, 'Jennifer's Journey' and the Simon Community, and some will also go towards the proposed new parish centre.

St Canice's has a number of other activities planned for the Advent season, including the Altnagelvin Hospital Choir Carol Service, which will take place in the church tonight Tuesday 6th December at 7pm.

News reports

Festive fun at Destination Christmas event

The Parish Centre at All Saints', Antrim, was positively brimming with Christmas spirit on Friday December 2 when it hosted the Destination Christmas Event, organised by Engage Connor Youth (full gallery below).

There were Santa hats, reindeer horns and Christmas jumpers galore, as 80 young people came together to have festive fun and share in worship. Destination is a series of events run by young people for young people, and while the



Destination Christmas event in Antrim

young people took the lead, their leaders and clergy were also seen to be having a great time!

There was representation from parishes right across the diocese on the evening which began at 7pm with pizza and soft drinks for all, before the young people split into three groups for a variety of activities.

There was dodgeball and a game involving a net and lots of snowball-like balls in the main hall, gingerbread house building upstairs (with a lot of necessary finger licking!), and a variety of tabletop games in another section of the hall.

At around 8.30pm, the groups all converged in the main hall to worship together in song, led by the youth band from the United Parish of Christ Church and St John, Ballyclare.

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Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie said: “We were delighted to have so much support from across the diocese for Connor Youth Forum’s Christmas event, with 14 parishes attending.

“The young people from the Youth Forum planned the evening and led each aspect with such confidence and ability. We are so grateful to have amazing young people like them in our parishes!”

Thanking the band for leading worship, Christina added: “It was such a blessing and everyone really engaged well!”

Before heading back to their parishes, the young people and their leaders enjoyed some delicious hot chocolate.

[See image gallery at connor.anglican.org]

Called to be people of hope - Bishop of Cashel at his enthronement

"We are called to be people of hope" says Bishop of Cashel at his enthronement

The enthronement of The Right Reverend Adrian Mark Wilkinson as Bishop of Cashel took place at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Baptist in Cashel on Sunday December 4th.

In his sermon at the enthronement Bishop Wilkinson said that as a church we are called to be people of hope and that



this is a challenge at times. "Some have suggested that the church in Western Europe is 'anxiety driven'.

“We are concerned about numbers and finances, about buildings and their costly maintenance, about the young and the Sunday morning activities and distractions that keep young families away from the church. And these concerns are real, but we must guard against an all-encompassing narrative of scarcity and decline.

“Advent reminds us that what we are called to is faithfulness to hold steady and wait for God's future to emerge. Like Noah, Abraham, Moses and the prophets who spoke out in difficult times. Like John the Baptist and Mary, we don't yet know what that future will look like, but God does, and we can hold on to that.

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“The challenge for us all is to be God's people in our part of God's world. To be faithful beacons of love and hope in the context of our own communities. Today the first two candles are lighting on the Advent wreath. As the days shorten and darkness closes in, we light ever more candles in this wreath as an act of liturgical defiance. It reminds us that darkness does not have the last word.



“I like the definition of hope given to us by the early Christian writer Tertullian. Hope is 'patience with the lamp lit'. So as a Diocese, as we continue our Advent journey, may we not be just people of hope, but people of Christian hope" concluded the Bishop.



Representatives of the community in Cashel were also in attendance at the enthronement along with Bishop Wilkinson's wife Jacqui, who is lecturer in teacher education at the Church of Ireland Centre at Dublin City University, and their three children.

Diocesan and visiting clergy along with the Dean of Cashel,

Dean James

Mulhall, and the RC Archbishop of Cashel & Emly, Kieran O'Reilly, along with local clergy, were present for the occasion. Also present was the County Cathaoirleach, Cllr Roger Kennedy and Cllr Michael Fitzgerald.

Bishop Wilkinson began his ministry as curate in Douglas Union, Cork in 1994. He then moved to the Dioceses of Meath and Kildare in 1997 as Rector of the Dunboyne Union and Rathmolyon, before returning to the Douglas Union in 2002 as their Rector.

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He was appointed as Archdeacon of Cork, Cloyne and Ross in 2014. He was elected Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory on 23 June 2022. He succeeds the Rt Revd Michael Burrows, who was translated as Bishop of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe on 14th April 2022, following his election to that role in January of this year.

Speaking prior to Sunday's ceremony the Bishop-elect said that he was humbled and honoured to have been elected Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory and that he looks forward to this new chapter in his ministry. His childhood years were spent in Cashel, Ferns and Ossory so he has a particular affinity with the area.

Archbishop Eamon Martin rejects Westminster's priority of abortion during Cost-of-living Crisis

On Friday 25 November, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Chris Heaton-Harris MP, instructed the Department of Health in Northern Ireland to fast track the commissioning and funding of “abortion services”.

In a statement, Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, rejected Westminster's priority of abortion during a time of which people are struggling to feed their children and heat their homes, and as our overstretched health workers are barely coping under the pressure of financial constraints.

Archbishop Eamon said, “This urgency to push through abortion while the Northern Ireland Assembly is down,



continues as Christmas approaches, while little is seemingly being done to ensure the urgent provision of Westminster support for the most vulnerable, including children, impacted by the Cost of Living Crisis.”

The Archbishop of Armagh continued, “The abortion regulations being introduced by Westminster are predicated on the assumption that the unborn child in the womb has no right to love, care and protection from society, unless the child is wanted. Nothing could be further from the truth. None of us acquire our humanity, or our fundamental right to existence, on the basis of whether or not we are wanted. Followers of Jesus, and countless others who advocate the equal right to life of every mother and her unborn baby, believe that as a human family we have the capacity to love and care for one another ... in a way that does not involve

bringing about the death and destruction of vulnerable children in the womb.

“The Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland have spoken out strongly and often on these issues in recent years. We remain committed to working with all sectors of society in Northern Ireland so that a culture of life and care becomes a reality for all. I therefore appeal once more to all people of goodwill to publicly defend the rights of all children in the womb to be treated equally and to have their right and that of their mothers to love, care and protection by our society respected and upheld.”

In the media

More from Northern Ireland support staying in UK over Irish unity, poll shows - Belfast Telegraph

Twice as many people from Northern Ireland would vote to remain in the UK rather than for Irish unity, according to a new survey.

However, the Irish Times opinion poll also shows there is a majority of more than four to one in favour

Big majority in North against united Ireland

Simultaneous polls show four-to-one majority in Republic in favour of unity

PAT LEAHY
Political Editor

Northern Ireland would vote decisively against a united Ireland if there was a Border poll, according to an Ipsos opinion poll for a new research project into North-South relations and political views on the future of the island.

The poll shows almost twice as many voters who expressed a preference want to remain in the United Kingdom.

In the Republic, however, there is a majority of more than four to one in favour of unity, according to a simultaneous, identical poll.

Majorities in both jurisdictions believe that referendums on the unity question should be held, with voters in the Republic more likely to favour a vote in the next five years, while a majority of voters in the North want a Border poll in the next 10 years.

The findings are contained in twin opinion polls carried out north and south of the Border for The Irish Times and the ARINS Project. ARINS — Analysing and Researching Ireland North and South — is a joint initiative of the Royal Irish Academy and the University of Notre Dame. The polls, along with a series of focus groups, were carried out among more than 1,000 voters in Northern Ireland and the Republic in August and September this year.

Half of all respondents (50 per cent) in Northern Ireland said they would vote against Irish unity, which included 21

Irish unity: the North-South divide

If there was a referendum asking people whether they want Northern Ireland to remain in the UK or to unify with the Republic, how would you vote?



per cent of those from a Catholic background.

Just over a quarter (26 per cent) in the North said they would vote for unity, while 19 per cent said they didn't know how they would vote and 5 per cent said they would not vote.

The highest percentage of don't knows was among the

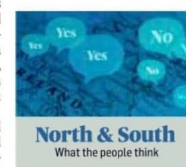
“others” — those who do not identify as being from a Catholic or Protestant background — where almost one-third (31 per cent) are undecided.

The strongest opposition to unity was among those of a Protestant background (78 per cent). Those of a Catholic background were most in favour of unity, although only just over half (54 per cent) of all Catholic respondents said they would vote in favour, with 21 per cent against and 22 per cent undecided.

Republic
In the Republic, the picture is very different. Almost two-thirds of all respondents (66 per cent) said they would vote for unity, with just 16 per cent against, Don't knows were at 13 per cent.

Despite the differing outcomes, there are strong majorities in both jurisdictions in favour of holding referendums. More than three-quarters of voters (76 per cent) in the Republic are in favour of a Border poll, with a majority favouring one within five years.

More than half of Northern voters (55 per cent) favour a referendum, with a majority preferring a longer timescale of 10 years.



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Irish unity: The North says no, for now Weekend Review

Inside Politics
podcast
Reunification hinges on those who are undecided

of unity in the Republic.

The findings are contained in twin opinion polls carried out on either side of the border for the paper and the Arins Project by Ipsos for a new research project into north-south relations and political views on the future of the island.

The two polls were carried out among more than 1,000 voters in Northern Ireland and the Republic in August and September of this year.

Half of all those who responded in Northern Ireland said they would vote against unity, including 21% from a Catholic background.

Poll shows support for scrapping European Court of Justice influence in Northern Ireland Protocol arrangement - BelfastTelegraph.

The European Court of Justice should have no role in any potential deal on the Northern Ireland Protocol, according to almost three quarters of those questioned in a new poll.

The new poll of those in Great Britain, by More in Common, shows 72% think it is important any negotiation and deal with Brussels over the issues of the protocol remove any oversight from the ECJ.

The survey, reported by the Daily Telegraph, also shows half of those in GB believe Brexit was a mistake, however less than a third want to rejoin the EU.

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The protocol was agreed by the UK and EU as a way to ensure the Irish land border remained free flowing post-Brexit. It achieves that by moving regulatory and customs checks to the sea border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

Many loyalists and unionists are vehemently opposed to the protocol, claiming it has weakened Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the UK.

Bible free speech controversy: Leader of traditionalist Irish church group says silencing parts ...- Belfast News Letter

Rev Tim Anderson, who has played a leading role in conservative Anglican group GAFCON in recent years, was reacting to reports in the News Letter ...

[\[https://www.newsletter.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/heritage/bible-free-speech-controversy-leader-of-traditionalist-irish-church-group-says-silencing-parts-of-scripture-cuts-our-culture-off-from-its-roots-3940383\]](https://www.newsletter.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/heritage/bible-free-speech-controversy-leader-of-traditionalist-irish-church-group-says-silencing-parts-of-scripture-cuts-our-culture-off-from-its-roots-3940383)

Archbishop of Canterbury: Russian invasion must not succeed

The Archbishop of Canterbury has said Ukraine must not be forced to accept a peace deal with Russia, while on a visit to the war-torn nation.

The Most Reverend Justin Welby told the BBC "justice demands that there is defeat" of "an evil invasion".

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He visited Bucha where evidence of atrocities and civilian killings were found after Russian troops withdrew.

It comes as millions of people remain without power or heating due to Russian attacks on Ukraine's power grid.

The most senior cleric in the Church of England was highlighting the need for support for the country ahead of a tough winter.

"I am clear that President (Vladimir) Putin chose to start the war and release the evil" that comes from that, he said.

More at -

[\[https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-63833573\]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-63833573)

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Be-Longing: Praying for Unity amidst Injustice

Materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2023 have been prepared by the churches of Minneapolis.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed from the 18th to the 25th January – the octave of St. Peter and St. Paul. However, some areas observe it at Pentecost or some other time

Introduction

Churches in Ireland say - For this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we are guided by the churches of Minneapolis as we seek to explore how the work of Christian unity can contribute to the promotion of racial justice across all levels of society. Through this resource, the CTBI writers' group has also focussed our attention on the 30th anniversary of the murder of Stephen Lawrence, which we mark in 2023. The work of restoring hope through justice undertaken in Stephen's memory continues to inspire and change lives for the better.

As we join with other Christians around the world for the Week of Prayer we pray that our hearts will be open to see and hear the many ways in which racism continues to destroy lives, and to discern the steps we can take as individuals and communities to heal the hurts and build a better future for everyone.

Christian Aid

Each year Christian Aid provides the Go and Do action points for each of the daily reflections – linking into the important work of Christian Aid in the relief of poverty and advocacy of justice.

Resources

For 2023, we are making the resources available both as downloads and printed versions that can be ordered. The English pamphlet, bilingual Welsh/English pamphlet and posters are available now, with other resources becoming available during September/October 2023. The pamphlet will also be made available in Irish and Scots Gaelic.

Social media

Show your support for Christian Unity by posting unity messages and details of your events to our Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Twitter wall – simply add the #wpcuwall hashtag to your Twitter post (note there is a delay before they appear). You can also find updates about the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Twitter by following the #wpcu2023 hashtag.

Download or order resources at -

[\[https://www.irishchurches.org/news-blog/5478/week-of-prayer-for-christian\]](https://www.irishchurches.org/news-blog/5478/week-of-prayer-for-christian)

Perspective

Jesus suffered setbacks and so will Christians, says Archbishop of York - The Telegraph

Jesus suffered setbacks over the years and so will Christians, the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell has said in the wake of the Census.

The Archbishop made the comments after earlier this week it was revealed that for the first time in Census history, Christians now account for less than half of England and Wales' population.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) results showed that 46.2 per cent of the population (27.5 million people) described themselves as “Christian” in 2021, marking a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3 per cent (33.3 million people) in 2011.

The Census data also showed that every major religion increased over the 10-year period, except for Christianity.

Despite the Census results, the Archbishop insisted that he is “full of hope” because Christians “are part of the largest global movement on Earth”. He added that Christianity is not in “terminal decline” because “the story that defines our identity has never been one of overwhelming numerical growth nor fear of extinction”.

Writing in *The Sunday Telegraph*, he did admit that he did not find the ONS results “surprising”, because “we have left behind the time when many people almost automatically identified as Christian”.

However, he said that while “some commentators have responded to the census data... by predicting the terminal decline of Christianity in our nation or declaring this as a statistical watershed moment. I am interested in the overall story that this census snapshot informs”.

“Christians should approach this data with humility, attentiveness, and self-reflection.”

He said that Christianity also continues to play a vital role in secular society, especially during the current cost of living

through offering food banks and warm spaces to people in need.

“Across our nation Christians are offering practical help and spiritual support to anyone in need,” he said. “This winter, perhaps more than ever before, food and warmth and companionship are being made available by Christians.”

The ONS results also come in the wake of multiple senior clergy and laypeople warning that the “bedrock” of the Church of England was crumbling amid fears over its “collapse” in rural communities. Analysis of Church of England data by this newspaper earlier this year found that 423 churches were closed between 2010 and 2019.

The Archbishop has previously spoken out about this subject insisting that he is committed to revitalising rural parish churches, and he has suffered “sleepless nights” after being accused of jeopardising them.

However, following the Census results, the Archbishop admitted that while the rise of secularism has impacted the number of regular churchgoers, there are contrasting “snapshots” of evidence that reveal the faith is not in “terminal decline”.

He added: “There are fewer people in the pews on a typical Sunday morning than a few decades ago but, at the same time, some of our churches - of all traditions and styles - are growing significantly and we are also seeing people coming to faith in Jesus Christ to whom the idea of joining a weekly service would not necessarily occur.

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“These apparently contrasting statistical snapshots inform a more complicated though incomplete story, which is not one of terminal decline for religious faith nor Christianity, but more about how individuals in our ever-changing nation and culture choose to express their identity.

“This is a story on which I and other Christians must reflect carefully and humbly... [Jesus’] story is not a tale of linear success, but about how that light shines through the difficult realities of our lives and finally overcomes all darkness.”

Despite the decrease in the number of Christians in England and Wales, the Census data did show that “Christian” remained the most common response to the question about religion. “No religion” was the second most common response, increasing to 37.2 per cent (22.2 million) from 25.2 per cent (14.1 million) across the 10-year period.

Following the results of the Census, Andrew Copson, the chief executive of Humanists UK, said the “biggest demographic change in England and Wales of the last 10 years has been the dramatic growth of the non-religious”.

“They mean the UK is almost certainly one of the least religious countries on Earth.”

[\[https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/12/03/jesus-suffered-setbacks-will-christians-says-archbishop-york/\]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/12/03/jesus-suffered-setbacks-will-christians-says-archbishop-york/)

World Cup Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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