

GB News bulletin

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Queen to visit Pope

The Queen is will visit Pope Francis at the Vatican on April 3, Buckingham Palace has confirmed. The Queen will be accompanied by Prince Philip and the Royal visit will be her first overseas trip for three years.



The Queen will visit with Pope at the Vatican after meeting the Italian President, Giorgio Napolitano, at the presidential palace in Rome.



According to The Daily Mail, the Pontiff will break with tradition by welcoming the Queen to the Domus Sanctæ Marthæ, the boarding house where he resides, rather than the Papal state apartments inside the Apostolic Palace.

In 1982 the Queen became the first British monarch to welcome a reigning Pope to Great Britain when she met Blessed John Paul II at Buckingham Palace.

Benedict XVI was the first Pontiff to receive a full state welcome to the UK for his 2010 visit, with the Queen meeting him in Edinburgh during the trip.

Cathedral launches new King Richard III website

Leicester Cathedral has launched a new website www.kingrichardinleicester.com, outlining the story of King Richard III and his 500 year place in Leicester's history.



The Bishop and Dean of Leicester state their passionate desire to see that the mortal remains of the King are treated with dignity and honour and are reburied as soon as possible, in the city where he has belonged since his death. The website is a resource for the facts about Richard III and Leicester, and includes a short video, facts and fictions about the story and demonstrates the partnership within which we are working.

The website uses a video to emphasise the links between Leicester and Richard III, including an interview with Bishop Tim on the importance on why the remains should stay in the city. The launch of the website is timed to coincide with BBC One 'Inside Out' in the East and West Midlands tonight (Monday) which includes a film on the latest news on King Richard III.

<http://www.leicester.anglican.org/news/details/cathedral-launches-new-king-richard-iii-website>

Scotland's only Catholic adoption society saved

St Margaret's Children and Family Care Society has been successful in its appeal to keep its charitable status.

In a unanimous ruling, the Scottish Charity Appeal Panel has decided in favour of the adoption



agency, and overturned a ruling by OSCR (the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator) that St Margaret's must lose its charitable status.

A spokesman for St Margaret's said: "We are delighted and relieved that the threat hanging over us has been lifted. Our only wish is to continue to do the good work for which we have been recognised by the authorities, of placing children in need of families with loving parents."

Archbishop Philip Tartaglia of Glasgow, president of St Margaret's, said: "We are grateful for this wise decision. It means that families who are ready to adopt can look forward to the future with a little more serenity, and children in great need can be placed into loving homes. St Margaret's is a small agency which does great work for the wider community and helps transform the lives of some of the most vulnerable children in society. It would have been a great pity if it had been forced to close."

The National Secular Society said the ruling "kicks a hole right through the Equality Act".

St Margaret's Children and Family Care Society in Glasgow was warned in a direction by the charity regulator last year that it could lose its charitable status unless it included same-sex couples.

The ruling was overturned on appeal to the Scottish Charity Appeals Panel (SCAP), the Catholic Church in Scotland said.

Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society, said: "This ruling makes some highly dubious claims that need to be tested. It appears to widen the grounds on which religious groups can discriminate against gay people and make it possible to argue that because an organisation has a religious affiliation it can still qualify for charitable status even if it doesn't comply with the Equality Act."

He added: "In effect charities will be able to use taxpayers' money to discriminate against gay people."

Methodist Church to join major national credit union

The Methodist Council, has agreed to become a partner to the Churches Mutual Credit Union (CMCU).

The CMCU is an alliance between the Anglican


The Methodist Church

churches in Britain, the Church of Scotland and the Methodist Church in Britain. As well as offering the benefits of credit union membership to ministers, trustees and those employed by the Church, the CMCU will continue to show the Churches walking the walk as well as talking the talk of ethical investment.

Methodist Connexional Secretary Doug Swanney said: “The work that credit unions do is essential in helping people to access low-cost, ethical loans and savings accounts. Getting on board with this movement fits perfectly with the values of the Methodist Church and we are excited about the opportunity to enthuse people about the work of credit unions and to make their benefits available as widely as possible.”

The Churches are keen that this national body doesn't discourage people from joining and supporting local credit unions.

The Revd Dr Malcolm Brown, the Church of England's director of Mission and Public Affairs said, “It is great news that the Methodist Church has agreed to support the Churches' Mutual Credit Union. They join the partnership with the Church of England and the Church of Scotland which has brought the CMCU close to viability and, thanks to this new ecumenical dimension, the CMCU looks set fair to launch this summer. The CMCU is a strategic initiative which will not only serve the staff of our respective churches but conveys the important fact that credit unions are for everybody and not just about helping the worst off. Together with our partner churches, the Church of England is working to support local credit unions across the country and to strengthen the role of credit unions within a more diverse and competitive financial sector. The Methodist Church's support for the CMCU shows that this important work has caught people's imagination and that credit unions' day has come.”

The CMCU will initially be open to Methodist ministers, but the Council has pledged to ensure that over time membership is extended as widely as possible across the Methodist Church.

Death and the burden of funerals on the Church of Scotland

Death may be a topic most people want to avoid, but around 80 people came together at Edinburgh University's School of Divinity over the weekend to explore the place of death in life and society.

Christian Today - Far from morbid, the conference explored death from a broad range of angles, with everything from attitudes to death in the Middle Ages, death in art and literature, and modern funeral care.

The conference looked at death primarily from a Scottish perspective and was opened on Friday with a paper presented by Professor Jane Dawson on death as a part of life during the Reformation period.

She used the great reformer John Knox as the main subject of her talk to explain how death in some instances could dramatically shape outcomes in a person's life, and at other times deal terrible blows of pain and grief.

In addition to experiencing "intense grief" over the death of his first wife, Knox over the course of his life would see the death of many close friends through martyrdom, including his mentor George Wishart.

Contrary to the notion that the prevalence of death made people in the Middle Ages more immune to the pain of it, Prof Dawson argued that grief was as real and as difficult for people living in this period as it is for people today.

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/death.and.the.burden.of.funerals.on.the.church.of.scotland/35671.htm>



Bishop of Leeds appointed

BBC - The Church of England names Nick Baines as Bishop of Leeds, overseeing the newly-created diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales.

Baines is currently Bishop of Bradford. Includes comment from the Archbishop of York, Dr. John Sentamu, who said he is "delighted" with the appointment.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-26032031>

Biography at -

<http://www.bradford.anglican.org/who-we-are/bishop-nick/biography/>

Methodist Church response to government alcohol ban

Paul Morrison, policy adviser for the Methodist Church in Britain, said: "Today the government has announced that it will ban below-cost alcohol sales. This is a pale reflection of the Minimum Unit Pricing policy, which the government originally committed to.

"The government's own research indicates that today's policy is 40 times less effective than Minimum Unit Pricing. The same research judged today's policy to be so ineffective as to have "negligible" impact on the harm caused by alcohol.

"We are pleased that the government recognises that this is a serious problem that costs the economy £21 billion a year and ruins many lives. We fear, however, that the government's advice is correct and that this policy will have a "negligible" effect".

"We urge the government to take the brave step of introducing Minimum Unit Pricing. A genuinely effective policy, backed by the medical profession, the research community, as well as by an alliance of churches. The problems caused in society by alcohol demand more than merely a negligible solution."

Clowns gather for annual memorial service

Clowns attend the annual service in memory of celebrated clown Joseph Grimaldi, at the Holy Trinity Church, in Dalston, east London. It was no austere occasion at a London church on Sunday last as clowns came together to pay tribute to the father of all clowns, Joseph Grimaldi.

Holy Trinity Church, in Dalston, was full for the service, which has been on the first Sunday in February each year since 1946 in memory of the great entertainer and other clowns who have passed away.

Clowns donned colourful attire, wigs and full make-up for the occasion, and some were brandishing water-spraying flowers, whoopie cushions and balloon animals.



Joseph Grimaldi was born in 1778 and would go on to become one of England's most popular Regency actors.

He popularised the character of the clown on stage and in pantomimes, and the white face paint he wore for the part is still copied by clowns today.

He was a regular at the big theatres, like Drury Lane and Sadler's Wells, with audiences enjoying his humorous take on British life and the fashions of the day.

Work begins on Welsh Bible centre

Work started yesterday to turn a deconsecrated church in North Wales into a new £1 million visitor centre.

Mary Jones World will be based at St Beuno's Church, at Llanycil, Bala. The site has been a place of Christian worship for more than 1,500 years and has strong links with Bible Society, which bought the redundant Grade 2-listed building in 2007 and the adjoining field in 2009.

It was in 1800 that Mary Jones, aged 15, walked 25 miles from Llanfihangel-y-Pennant, across the Welsh mountains, to Bala to get a Bible from Rev Thomas Charles. Mary saved for six years to purchase one and Thomas

Charles was so moved by her determination that he helped establish Bible Society four years later. He is one of a number of notable figures buried in the churchyard at Llanycil.

The new centre will tell the story of Mary Jones and Thomas Charles and give visitors the chance to learn about the Bible's impact in Wales and the rest of the world. It will also be an educational centre.

The Mayor of Bala Dorothei Evans said, "This is fantastic news. We are really looking forward to this visitor centre.

"The story of Mary Jones and Thomas Charles is what we have been brought up with, but a lot of people don't know about them and in learning about them and learning about the history of the Bible Society people will be amazed."

For the last six years Bible Society has developed this project, secured funding and gained planning permission to enable the scheme to proceed. Funds have been raised through donations from Bible Societies around the world, supporters and the sale of some assets.

A new car park will be built next to the church along with a picnic area and access to local footpaths. Developers have also started work to transform the interior of the building.

Mary Thomas (see video above) is the Secretary of the Bible Society Acton Group in Bala and author of a guidebook to the Mary Jones Walk, encouraging walkers to follow in her footsteps.

She said: "This church is where Thomas Charles was married, this is where Thomas Charles is buried and lots of people do the Mary Jones walk as a pilgrimage. They walk into Bala and the shame is there is nowhere to celebrate after arriving. I think the visitors centre will be ideal for that."

Speaking before work commenced, Bible Society's Group Chief Executive James Catford said: "This project is hugely significant for Bible Society in Wales. The Bible's impact in Wales and, through Wales, the rest of the world has been immense. The centre will tell this story to tourists, school children and international visitors. We are very grateful to the people of Llanycil and Bala for their support and encouragement."

The new centre will be officially opened in the autumn to coincide with the bicentenary of Thomas Charles' death.

More details about the centre at www.maryjonesworld.org.uk

New challenge for National Marriage Week 2014

This year's National Marriage Week is being held from 7 to 14 February. Last year one and a half million people attended a Marriage Week event worldwide and the Big Promise adds a slightly new twist to the more recognisable marriage courses, marriage check-ups, Valentine suppers with after dinner speakers, communication workshops and other events held during the week.



The Big Promise is National Marriage Week's World Record attempt to get the most couples renewing their vows simultaneously. Calling it the BIG Promise, because marriage vows are the most long-term and far-reaching promise people ever make, the organisers are co-ordinating every venue that wishes to take part in this record attempt. It will be taking place on Saturday 8 February at 5.15pm.

The reason behind this? "More than 2/3 of families are headed by a married couple, and we want to draw attention to the tremendous work done by this silent majority," they explain. "Setting a world record is a practical and tangible way of getting the press to notice and report on the importance of marriage vows at the heart of society – it's a means to an end, not the end itself."

One couple celebrating 50 years of marriage together on the day of the Big Promise are Tom and Doreen Shaw from Sheffield. Taking part in the record attempt they will join with their friends, community and family to reaffirm their vows on their golden wedding anniversary at The Rock Christian Centre in Sheffield.

Says Doreen: "We started out with nothing but our marriage wasn't built on what we had, rather on who we were. Marriage has made us better people I

hope. We are so excited to celebrate 50 years together on the same day as the Big Promise."

Now in its 18th year, Marriage Week's aim is to celebrate marriage, pointing out the benefits to society, media and governments and it is celebrated in countries right around the world. It has always attracted the support and attention of political, religious and media figures.

Then Prime Ministers John Major and Tony Blair both launched and endorsed the week from Downing Street in 1997 and 1998 respectively while in 2007 it was launched in the Palace of Westminster with Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, and Iain Duncan Smith.

Marriage Week went international in 2008, and in 2011 the Mayor of Hainichen, Germany announced that: "Since Marriage Week has come to Hainichen the divorce rate has dropped and the marriage rate increased."

Founded by Richard and Maria Kane, Marriage Week has always been a collaborative project and has the backing of many Christian organisations, including CARE, Care for the Family, The Marriage Course, the Evangelical Alliance and CWR. A huge emphasis is given to local events, which is where churches really come into their own running and hosting these and offering support and advice where necessary.

The week also provides churches with opportunities to engage and celebrate with their communities, and to launch other marriage resources and events off the back of it.

During Marriage Week 2013 there was a formal launch of the Big Promise in the Houses of Parliament with a range of speakers headed by Baroness Ruth Deech.

Lyndon Bowring, Executive Chairman of CARE has this to say about Marriage Week's new initiative for 2014: "What a fantastic opportunity to celebrate marriage. Celia and I celebrate our 40th anniversary this year and look back over the times of joy and pain with gratitude to God for the unique stability and security marriage provides. We will be reaffirming our vows at a Big Promise event on Saturday February 8 and look forward to breaking the world record.'

So, for a final word on the Big Promise from Richard Kane: "Marriage Week is always finding new ways to encourage couples in their marriages. The Big

Promise will allow the whole nation to stand up and celebrate the value of marriage both to the couples taking part, and to society as a whole."