

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Little Amal is coming to Belfast Cathedral

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Little Amal is coming to Belfast Cathedral

On Friday evening 17th May, Little Amal, a 12 foot puppet, representing a 10 year old Syrian refugee child, will make her way into Belfast Cathedral to find her place of rest and sanctuary.



She will arrive at St Anne's Cathedral having spent the day travelling to various key locations throughout Belfast. Exhausted and weary she will seek a safe place to find a bed for the night, and as she drifts off to sleep, Little Amal's dreams will be projected into the amazing space that is Nave of Belfast Cathedral.

Since July 2021, Little Amal has travelled to 160 towns and cities in 15 different countries. She has been welcomed by two million people. Over 440 unique events have been created for her by thousands of artists, members of civic society and faith leaders.

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Amal's journey represents the story of migration across continents, the result of the wars which make refugees out of those who have lost homes and homelands. Yet Amal's story also challenges us to see for ourselves potential, success, respect, hospitality and kindness.

From 16th to 19th May, Little Amal will bring her challenge to the people of Belfast.

And in a concert event starting at 8pm on Friday 17th May, she will be welcomed by the Dean into the safe place of Belfast Cathedral.



The Good Samaritan window a focus of Belfast Cathedral's Annual Sitout Appeal

In 2021 the Dean of Belfast's Sitout Appeal had a particular focus on supporting those who have arrived in Northern Ireland as refugees, whose stories are reflected in the story of little Amal.

Before Amal reaches the cathedral, there will be a spectacular community concert in the open space of the cathedral's Nave. This will feature some of Northern Ireland's most exciting musical talent, including: Beauty Sleep, Winne Ama, Hex hue, Huartan, Laytha, Garrett Laurie, and the Sanctuary Choir. The music performed will be cover a wide range of genres, including indie, folk, pop, and trad-tronic, all to be enjoyed in the open space of the cathedral nave. As this is a standing only concert, held over two hours, it is considered suitable only for those who are over 14 years of age.

In the middle of the open Nave will be Amal's bed. There she will lie down as her "Bedtime Story" is told by Nandi Jola. Animations will be by Fergus Wachala-Kelly. Finally as Amal's eyes close her dreams will be made visible to all who are present. This ticketed event runs from 8pm to 10pm.

Tickets (which are free) can be booked by clicking here: <https://artsekta.org.uk/events/the-big-dream/>

This event is in partnership with Belfast City Council, and is part of the Belfast 2024 year of cultural activities.

For further information on Little Amal's days in Belfast click here: <https://artsekta.org.uk/projects/little-amal/>

After her stay in Belfast. Little Amal will travel across the island of Ireland finishing in Dublin.

News



St Brendan's open a new coffee bar

St Brendan's C of I parish in Sydenham rightly held a grand opening of their new coffee bar on a recent Sunday morning.

Select Vestry member Margaret Harris cut the red ribbon and the congregation celebrated after the service with tea coffee and home baked treats.

The smart new coffee bar was funded by the Select Vestry as part of the St Brendan's ongoing vision to be a welcoming place for the church and the community.

What's more, it was built from scratch by parishioners Neil and Cameron Gorman. The father and son team volunteered to complete the bar and finished the project in an incredible two weeks.

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Sitting just inside the glass entrance to the church, the new facilities will be integral to Sunday service hospitality and outreach.

Andrew Brannigan, who is assisting at the church, thanked Neil and Cameron for their hard work and said the project was just another expression of the amazing job done by the small group of committed volunteers who serve the parish in so many ways.

The King to be Patron of Royal College of Organists

**The RCO
“announced
with delight”
that His
Majesty The
King has
accepted the
patronage of
the Royal
College of
Organists
(RCO).**



The College was granted its Royal Charter by

Queen Victoria in 1893, and the King is the third successive monarch to honour us as Patron. Read more here:

<https://bit.ly/3wz9PhN>



Second Day of C of I General Synod on Saturday past

The Second Day of General Synod began with a short time of worship led by Archdeacon Elizabeth Cairns and Archdeacon Peter Thompson.

Archbishop John McDowell sought leave from Synod members to send their greetings to **Lord Eames** who is in hospital in London.

Archbishop Eamon Martin, Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, brought greetings and blessings to Synod. He said

that Archbishop McDowell and he had been working together closely and were aware of the importance of this.

He said that communication was at the very heart of bringing the Gospel to all nations and urged people to use all ways, including modern methods of communication such as social media and artificial intelligence, to spread the Good News.

“We have to keep remembering that we are communicating not just words but Jesus Christ our saviour,” he said adding that it was important that our communication is from the heart and humanly rich.

Facebook comment - Canon Nigel Baylor

A very enjoyable General Synod. An excellent report from the Youth Department with recorded interviews from young people expressing their obvious faith in God. Very moving and impressive

If you missed the **Service from/in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh** you can watch it here:

<https://youtu.be/FTUMvnVWil4?si=4dKgoy3htgrRD\ N4>

C of I Synod - Motion on Baptism indicates different stances

The most emotive debate on the opening day of the General Synod concerned a motion on Baptism, which was proposed by Prof Patricia Barker (Dublin & Glendalough) and seconded by Lynn Wright (Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh).



The Motion affirmed the sanctity of marriage but called on Synod to acknowledge that it was a reality of modern life that infants were often born to single parents and/or to couples who are not married. The proposal revealed deep divisions among members of Synod on this sensitive issue.

The Proposer asked Synod to affirm that, in accordance with Canons, Chapter 9 of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland – irrespective of the marital status of the parents of an infant – a minister must not refuse or, save for the purpose of preparing or instructing the parents or godparents, delay to baptise any child within his or her cure who was brought to be baptised, provided that due notice had been given and the provisions relating to sponsors and godparents were observed.



This Synod Mascot was not asked for an opinion...

Before the motion was proposed, **Archbishop John McDowell** had observed that it had no power to do

what it sought to do. It could not impact the present or future practice of baptism by the Church of Ireland. He also said there had been a request for voting by orders.

Prof Barker said the Motion followed on from last year's General Synod when the matter of refusing to baptise an infant whose mother was not married was raised. A number of accounts of this practice had emerged in the intervening year, she said, and she asked that members of Synod affirm

what they believed was fundamentally already embedded in the Church's Canon law.

“Canon law begins from that basic affirmation of consistency, equity and equality, for all who are members in the Body of Christ,” Prof Barker said, “and it seeks clarity about who may do what and who is answerable to whom. In relation to the practice of bringing infants to Church for Holy Baptism, those two principles of consistency and clarity are being breached in some parishes in our island. Some clergy – indeed most clergy – will baptise an infant brought for baptism, without asking questions about the marital status of the mother of the infant. Our motion underpins our real concern that, in other cases, infants are refused Baptism by virtue only of the marital status of their mothers.”

Prof Barker said the motion did not seek to change Canon law but to affirm that law must be applied consistently and with clear equality to all parishioners who find themselves in the same situation.

She outlined the principals of Canon law which were common to the churches of the Anglican Communion. Nowhere, she said, in the principals or in the Church of Ireland's Canon 9 was there reference to the marital status of the mother of the child. “So this Motion this afternoon hinges around whether being the baby of a single parent is lawful cause to refuse Baptism to that baby. That is the issue on which you are being asked to decide today.”

She continued: “If this Synod believes that being a child of a single parent or of parents who are not married is lawful cause to refuse to baptise that child, the consequence of

that decision is that, therefore, all children born outside of marriage should be refused in order to comply with our fundamental principles of consistency, equity and clarity.”

Seconding the motion, **Lynn Wright**, said she came to the podium with a heavy heart. She had a passion of concern for babies born out of wedlock simply because they were born to single parents. She said clergy were allowed to pick which infant was suitable for baptism and asked whether clergy were being true to Jesus.

Debating the motion, Dr Lucy Michael (Dublin and Glendalough) said the Church practices baptism for the cleansing of original sin and the initiation into the church community. She asked why anyone would refuse children baptism. “It is the child that we baptise and not the parents,” she said. “The important thing is that the child knows they are part of us,” she added, asking why the church would spend so much time on mission while turning people away from our community.

Joe Deverell (Meath and Kildare) supported the motion and pointed out that no one got to choose who their parents were.

Canon David Gillespie (Dublin) said he was troubled by the need for the motion. He said that a church that would refuse to baptise a child was not the Church of Ireland that he knew. “We should welcome all families that come, no matter what shape that family takes,” he said.

The **Revd Sam Johnston** (Down) said the motion was well intentioned but had the potential to upset the balance of the

pastoral care and theological care, and that the need for pastoral sensitivity was never greater. He said that parents had the opportunity to apply to the bishop if they did not agree with the decision of their rector. Revd Johnston said the motion removed the opportunity for the clergy and parents to engage in meaningful dialogue. He urged the synod to reject the motion and rather mandate clergy and bishops to navigate these complex times.

Gillian Purser (Cashel, Ferns and Ossory) said that children were presented for baptism for a variety of reasons, but asked if that mattered. If a child was baptised they were welcomed into our communities and even if the parents had no faith and the child was admitted to a school where faith was taught, then that was a good thing.

The **Revd Mark Lennox** (Dromore) said the motion raised questions in his mind about his ordination vows and caused conflict between the outworking of ordination vows and what the motion wished to achieve.

Susan Compton (Elphin and Ardagh) said she could not believe that there were areas of the Church of Ireland where children were denied baptism. She asked if it was an open and welcoming church and wondered if the Church could afford not to be.

Archdeacon Robert Miller said that the Canons were shaped to trust the clergy and the motion suggested that the clergy were not trusted. He said baptism was a sacrament and God was a prime mover in it. He said everything that was necessary for generosity was already enshrined in the Canons of the Church.

Janet Bray (Tuam, Limerick and Killoe) spoke personally and said her mother had her baptised before giving her up for adoption. She said she had been an active member of her church and could not imagine a church that would refuse baptism.

Joy Little (Elphin and Ardagh) talked about her grandchildren and said if anyone had judged her grandchildren differently, none of them would be in church now.

The **Revd Catherine Simpson** (Down) said her parents taught her to read the Bible and pray, and brought her to church each week. She said baptism was administered to infants in the understanding that they would be brought up in the fellowship of the church. She said that the liturgy of baptism had potency. She was concerned that the church needed to be clear about what the motion was asking.

Revd Simpson said the church must not miss the opportunity of nurturing the infant and their family. The child baptised must model a faith and the parents' witness and connection to church was part of this. "The motion's intent is welcome but its outworking is impossible," she stated.

Phyllis Grothier (Cashel, Ferns and Ossory) said there was nothing in the motion that stopped the discussion between the rector and the parents. She said baptism was an opportunity for outreach. When someone brought an infant to church she asked people to use the opportunity to build that faith.

In response, Prof Barker thanked all who spoke and said she respected the dignity and sincerity with which people made their points. She said they were talking about babies who were refused holy baptism by virtue only of the marital status of their mother. Prof Barker said she was a counsellor with the Rape Crisis Centre and recalled working with a woman who had been raped. The woman realised she was pregnant and carried the baby to full term. After the baby was delivered, the mother asked Prof Barker if she would go with her to speak to her Rector about baptism. Her Rector welcomed the woman and her baby with open arms. Prof Barker said the Rector was supportive and non-judgemental and accepted both mother and baby.

The vote on the motion was taken by orders with the result:

Clergy for: 69. Clergy against: 72.

Lay for: 144. Lay against: 83.

To pass, the motion needed the support of a majority of both clergy and lay, so the motion fell.

Comments on Facebook

Welcome to the Church of Ireland in 2024. Most regrettable and sad. Whatever about the wording of the motion, the message that will be heard as the result of yesterday is that we will not baptise the children of unmarried mothers. Is it any wonder people are dismissive and stay away? At a time when the world is in chaos, and there is war and conflict in so many places, we in the Col are talking about the right of clergy to be able to deny the sacrament of baptism should

their conscience so decree. I mean really....a very sad day indeed.

Canon David Gillespie

The defeat of this motion demonstrates a desire among some clergy to be the gatekeepers of God's Grace - I would never refuse a request for baptism because I do not believe it is for me to judge the worthiness of those presented for baptism - Those who do believe this are far too wrapped up in their own personal agendas and lacking in trust of God's ability to meet and overcome the inadequacies we all share as mortal human beings

Stephen Neill



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Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books



Yarns and the Bible.



Some photos from the Dromara and Garvaghy Mothers' Union outing on Saturday to St. Catherine's Parish, Killead, to see an exhibition of Yarns



and the Bible.

Poem for today

Lines Written on a Seat on the Grand Canal, Dublin

By Patrick Kavanagh

'Erected to the memory of Mrs. Dermot O'Brien'

O commemorate me where there is water,
Canal water, preferably, so stilly
Greeny at the heart of summer. Brother
Commemorate me thus beautifully

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Where by a lock niagarously roars
The falls for those who sit in the tremendous silence
Of mid-July. No one will speak in prose
Who finds his way to these Parnassian islands.
A swan goes by head low with many apologies,
Fantastic light looks through the eyes of bridges -
And look! a barge comes bringing from Athy
And other far-flung towns mythologies.
O commemorate me with no hero-courageous
Tomb - just a canal-bank seat for the passer-by.

Speaking to the soul

Go

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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