

Archbishop Martin launches online Advent calendar

Archbishop Eamon Martin has launched a novel online Advent calendar to mark the Church's new year

To mark the beginning of Advent, Archbishop Eamon Martin launched a specially commissioned Advent calendar on the homepage of the Irish Catholic bishops' website www.catholicbishops.ie.

The first day of Advent heralds the beginning of the Church's new year.

Archbishop Eamon said, "I am delighted to launch our new Advent calendar which each day up to Christmas Eve will reveal Advent information and prayer resources by clicking on a virtual numerical door in our online calendar.

For many years we have provided online resources to assist with our Advent preparations, but this year we offer the faithful our novel online calendar for this purpose.



"Why is the Advent calendar useful? Preparation does not happen at once but over time. The season of Advent is a time of spiritual preparation for the Lord's coming at Christmas. Advent also prepares us for the second coming of Christ at the end of time. As Christians, we must always be prepared for the coming of the Lord as reflected in today's Gospel reading at Mass, 'You must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect' [Mt 24:37-44]. Taken



together then, each day of Advent amounts to a period of time which allows us to journey and reflect on 'the joy of the Gospel'.

Archbishop Eamon continued, "As we begin our Catholic new year, I invite everyone during the Advent season to visit and to enjoy the information provided on our online calendar, which will provide details on:

- Mass readings of the day;
- Pope Francis's new Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel), published on 26 November last, will be promoted using excerpts from it;
- Advent videos: blessing of the crib in the home, blessing of the advent wreath in the home, prayer when lighting the lights on the Christmas tree, family table prayer;
- Advent music;
- information on saints during the Advent such as Saint Nicholas on 6 December;

- video and text reflections from Pope Francis and Irish bishops (The Creed, The Liturgy etc)

- family prayers (mother and child, children, grandparents, parents and godparents);

- prayers for the season: for families in need, for those suffering neglect and violence, for Irish emigrants, for those in prison, for those who are sick, for those in difficulty;

- Tweets from individuals, parishes, Irish Church agencies and from the Vatican;

- resources for Advent and Christmas from Veritas;

- Trócaire Global Gifts for 2013 information campaign;

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- Christmas messages from Irish bishops in preparation for the Nativity of our Lord.

Archbishop Eamon concluded, "As Advent is the season of preparation for the coming of our Lord, I encourage the faithful, notwithstanding our hectic schedule over the coming weeks, to make time to pray – alone and with loved ones – and by so doing to draw nearer to Christ."

Archbishop Eamon Martin is coadjutor Archbishop of Armagh, chair of the Bishops' Council for Communications and can be followed on Twitter



Pictured at the launch of 'The Carry Centre' Redevelopment Plan are (l to r): Alleyn Manley (Building Committee); Gareth Irvine, with daughter Juliette (Fundraising Committee); Clive Christie (Finance Committee); the Rev'd Niall Sloane (Rector); Peter Hayes (Parishioner who was chosen by lottery to launch the plan); Peter Roberts (Architect)

Crosscare's Dublin Food Bank appeal;

- work of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul; and

@archbishopeamon

Upgrade of Killiney's Carry Hall Unveiled

The Carry Hall, Holy Trinity Killiney's parochial hall, is to receive a major facelift.

A redevelopment plan for the hall was launched on Advent Sunday, December 1. The works will cost approximately €140,000.

The Carry Hall was built in 1958 and since then has served the needs of the parish. However, with new government legislation and the parish's desire to make the hall a more usable space it was felt that major work was needed. Over the last year a number of committees have been working along with architect, Peter Roberts to create a building capable of meeting the needs of Killiney in 2013 and beyond.

In recognition of the change the hall has been renamed 'The Carry Centre'. Over the coming months there will be an intensive fundraising campaign to support the project, this will culminate with an event on Friday April 25 2014 – *'Who wants to be a Thousandaire?'* This will be held in Fitzpatrick's Castle Hotel, Killiney.

At the launch Parishioners were invited to make a pledge to the project, these were placed on the 'Pledge Tree'.

Building work is due to commence in early June with the centre reopening on Sunday September 7 2014.

For more information visit

www.carrycentre.ie, www.facebook.com/carrycentre, Twitter: @carrycentre

Methodist Women's Project in Nepal

Kopila -Nepal is a partner project of the World Development & Relief Committee (WDRC) of the Methodist Church in Ireland. The funding from the WDRC will enable the project to carry out their successful work until 2015.

Kopila does exemplary work amongst marginalised communities in Nepal by working with Dalit and lower caste women and children. It is a non-profit making, non-sectarian, non-governmental social organization based in Pokhara, Nepal.



Kopila provides workshops on rights and vocational training. These provide women with business skills which they can use to start small businesses and provides them with financial independence at home.

The training also enables the women to set up Self Help Groups from which they can advocate for their legal rights from local authorities. The Groups also have pools of money from which members can borrow to pursue business plans or pay for unexpected costs such as medicines.

Kopila is Nepali for flower bud, a thing that needs nurturing and protection until it can bloom.

Find out more about Kopila at <http://www.kopilanepal.org.np/>.

C of I Institute Advent Carol Service

The Church of Ireland Theological Institute Advent Carol Service takes place on Wednesday December 4 in the Lady Chapel of St Patrick's Cathedral at 7.00 pm.

A collection will be taken up of the Bishops' Appeal Syrian Appeal. Refreshments will be served afterwards and parking will be available at St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School.

Christmas Truce concert

'Voices of the 1914 Christmas Truce' concert takes place in Christ Church Cathedral on Saturday December 7 at 8.00 pm. The evening will celebrate the 1914 Christmas Truce with choral music, verse and prose and will feature the Omagh–Waterford Peace Choir and special guests.

Proceeds from the concert will go towards the Omagh–Waterford Peace Choir as well as the National Children's Hospital,

Tallaght and the Little Prince Children's Hospital, Brazil.

One of the Christmas Truce voices was a young British soldier, Albert Moren who, recalling the trenches near La Chapelle d'Armentieres, France, 12 kilometres from Messines, Flanders, wrote:

"It was a beautiful moonlit night, frost on the ground, white almost everywhere; ... there was a lot of commotion in the German trenches and then there were those lights – I don't know what they were. And then they sang 'Stille Nacht' – 'Silent Night'. I shall never forget it. It was one of the highlights of my life."

The 'Voices of the Christmas Truce' concert is based around the memories evoked by young Albert Moren, and other soldiers, from that extraordinary night during the first Christmas of World War One, beautifully complimented by the singing of the Omagh–Waterford Peace Choir, and special guests.

Tickets cost €10 and are available from Christ Church Cathedral on 01–6778099 or www.entertainment.ie/tickets/christ-church-cathedral-dublin.asp

Bishop Kelly welcomes new post-primary schools

The Council for Education of the Irish Episcopal Conference has welcomed the announcement by the Minister for Education and Skills Mr Ruairi Quinn TD of nine new post-primary schools.

Bishop Brendan Kelly, chairman of the Council, said, "I wish to congratulate the Edmund Rice Schools Trust and the Diocese of Cloyne, in partnership with the Cork Education & Training Board, on their successful applications for new schools in Carrigaline and Midleton/Carrigtwohill respectively." Bishop Kelly continued, "These were the only two areas where Catholic patrons applied and it is notable

that in both cases there is strong parental demand for the proposed school."

"The new Edmund Rice school in Carrigaline will be a welcome addition to the Catholic voluntary sector while the joint ETB/Diocese of Cloyne school in Midleton/Carrigtwohill will further strengthen the already excellent partnership approach between the ETBs and Catholic patrons around the country," Bishop Kelly said.

C of E Scheme launched for would-be young vicars

Young people are being given a taste of life behind the dog collar with the launch of the Church of England Ministry Experience Scheme (CEMES), run by the Ministry Division.

The scheme, which began with a pilot phase (see case studies below) this September in four dioceses, is a one year programme of theological teaching, practical experience and personal development for young people aged 18-30 who are considering future ministry in the church. The scheme was set up to encourage more young people to consider being involved in ministry and focus on the nine criteria used in the selection of clergy.

The scheme is currently being run in the dioceses of Sodor and Man, Newcastle, Peterborough and the Stepney area of London. Ministry Division are working with 15 more dioceses interested in the scheme, with a view to provide a CEMES programme in every diocese.

The Bishop of Sheffield, Rt Revd Steven Croft, who is Chair of Ministry Division said: "The Church of England has a fresh vision and commitment to see people in their teens and twenties exploring God's call to ministry. The Ministry Experience scheme will help many young people

explore that call in the years to come"

The Revd Canon Steve Benoy, Diocesan Director of Ordinands in Peterborough, said: "The scheme is not rocket science. Similar schemes have existed in many organisations and churches. The gap in the market, however, has been for a programme which intentionally connects with the processes and criteria for ordination in the Church of England. We are not trying to squeeze people into a dog collar if that is not their vocation. The CEMES genuinely offers a broad space for young people to explore their sense of calling in ministry."

The Revd Fiona Green, Director of the Intern Programme in Stepney, who is overseeing four young people involved in the programme in London said: "It's both about supporting mission and ministry but also testing the vocations of people who are thinking about ministry.

Applications for the 2014-15 academic year, which begins on 1st September, will



be available in the spring.

Celebrating 10 years of Street Pastors



Last weekend 1,200 guests gathered at Southwark Cathedral to celebrate the 20th anniversary of The Ascension Trust, along with the 10 th anniversary of Street Pastors, one of their best known initiatives. Guests included the Mayor of Southwark, the High Commissioner for Antigua and Barbuda, David Burrowes MP, local church leaders and Street Pastors from across the UK.

Street Pastors has trained 11,000 adult volunteers to engage with people on the streets through dialogue, listening and caring actions. There are more than 280 Street Pastor teams across the UK, each consisting of at least three groups of four volunteers. Each volunteer goes out a minimum of once a month, usually on a Friday or Saturday night from 10pm to around 4am. Street Pastors is an international organisation, with teams not only in the UK but across the world, including Trinidad and Tobago, the US and, this year, Nigeria.

Street Pastor teams bring together Christians from different denominations, all concerned about the safety and wellbeing of people in their community and willing to regularly give up a night's sleep to be there for people. The Bishop of Southwark, the Right Rev Christopher Chessun, noted in his keynote address that Street Pastors was a special example of unity across

traditional divides, with Christians working together for a common purpose. He said that Street Pastors was also an example of "the energy of black independent churches enthusing traditional denominations, with God's grace outpoured and crossing boundaries".

Steve Clifford, general director of the Evangelical Alliance, said: "I love the thought that if people ask 'where is the UK Church on a Friday and Saturday night?' the answer comes back: 'They are out on the streets in their thousands, until the early hours of the morning, handing out water and flip flops, getting people safely onto transport home and working alongside the police to see peace on our streets'. Street Pastors is the business of heaven and I cheer it on."

Many have noticed the remarkable impact of Street Pastors' efforts, including significant reductions in crime rates and anti-social behaviour. Commander Simon Letchford of the Metropolitan Police thanked Street Pastors during the service for making a significant difference to safety on the streets. David Burrowes MP said that Street Pastors provide a real, relevant answer to the question 'who is my neighbour?', offering hope and unconditional love to people in the same way that Jesus did.

Rev Les Isaac founded Street Pastors in Brixton in 2003. He said of the anniversary celebrations:

"I want people to know that the mission of Ascension Trust is about longevity and we are here to serve humanity, be relevant to the community and to equip people to display the true meaning of the Gospel. We also want to remind members of the community that there are Christians who care and who are trying to bring hope to those most in need."

During his talk Les recognised the contributions of the many individuals who

God had used to make Street Pastors a reality, and said "together we are salting and lighting our wonderful nation".

The service included the graduation of newly-trained Street, School and College Pastors, including Carol Losinski from the Lewisham Street Pastors team in south-east London. She told us what made her sign up: "We were asked at church if anyone would like to be a Street Pastor for Lewisham People's Day, so I did the course and volunteered there two-years running. I enjoyed it so much I felt that God was calling me to be a Street Pastor."

Sharing about her first night volunteering on the streets, Carol said: "We met a girl who was very drunk, so we sat with her and then made arrangements to put her on a bus and have a friend meet her at the other end. When she stood up she held onto my arm and as we walked to the bus stop she asked me why I was doing this. I said 'if you were my daughter I would like to know you were being looked after'. I got home at 5am that morning and went to bed feeling content and happy that I had helped someone."

Anne Scarfe, an 86-year-old Street Pastor and recent winner of a Pride of Britain Award, also attended the service. She said: "Street Pastors are special people, as they take the Church out of the building on to the street."

Street Pastors is just one of the 300 individual charities that come under The Ascension Trust's umbrella. Others include Gift My Time, encouraging people to volunteer and bless their communities, and weapon exchange programme [Word for Weapons](#). [Prayer Pastors](#) co-ordinates Christians to pray for the Street Pastor



team in their area, and another of their initiatives, [School Pastors](#), has seen Christians listening, caring for and supporting young people in schools since 2011.

Methodists hold consultation on same sex marriage and civil partnership

The **Methodist Church in Britain** has announced this consultation: [Methodist same sex marriage and civil partnership working party - consultation](#):

Legislation is now in place which will allow people of the same sex to marry each other in England and Wales (and similar legislation is likely in Scotland). The Government has promised that the first same sex marriages will take place before summer 2014.

This is at odds with the Methodist Church's belief (found in Standing Order 011A, and its marriage services): "The Methodist Church believes that marriage is a gift of God, and that it is God's intention that a marriage should be a life-long union in body, mind and spirit of one man and one woman."

There have also been other significant changes in society concerning sex and relationships. Divorced people marry in Methodist Churches as do many who have been co-habiting. The Methodist Conference has established a working party to consult Methodists as to whether the Church's understanding of marriage should be looked at again.

This consultation is **not** a poll on the views of homosexuality amongst Methodists, nor is it asking Methodists to **decide** whether same sex marriages should take place in Methodist churches.

Instead it seeks views about the implications of the new legislation for their church, and whether, as a consequence, they need to revise our understanding of marriage...

<http://dotmailer-surveys.com/09bvi0c-85nxo41>

See also the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) which explains exactly where Methodists currently are on this issue -

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/961284/ssmcp-faq-1013.pdf>

What is the Methodist Church doing about this now?

The Methodist Conference in July 2013 set up a working group "to consider whether the Methodist Church's position on marriage needs revising in light of changes in society, undertaking this consideration with reference to scripture, tradition, reason and experience. The terms of reference would be:

- a. To consider the implications for the Methodist Church of a change in legislation covering same-sex marriage;
- b. To consider whether the Methodist Church's position on marriage needs revising in the light of changes in society;
- c. To undertake the work directed by the reply to Memorial 29(2012) [a Memorial from the Birmingham Synod seeking for a review of the Conference's ruling that blessing of civil partnerships should not take place on Methodist premises.
- d. To make recommendations for any changes in practice or polity."

The working party is mindful of what was

Prayer for Today

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Question 18 reads as follows:

said to the Conference about the relatively limited ambit of the working group's remit at this stage: "to consider whether the

Methodist Church's position needed reviewing in light of changes in society rather than to make substantive proposal for change. If a revision is thought potentially necessary, it is expected that a further working party would be appointed to examine the substantive issues."

The working group has therefore identified a range of possible areas for consideration, and intends to test out by wide consultation whether these are indeed the issues about which it should make recommendations to the 2014 Conference that they be explored more fully.

Before going out to full consultation however, there will be a short pilot exercise with a small number of selected groups during the next few weeks, designed to clarify how to frame the consultation questions.