



Thousands of origami doves take flight at the National Cathedral

Make your own peace dove - invitation from Washington DC

Washington (Episcopalian) National Cathedral is hosting a new art exhibit showcasing thousands of paper doves suspended from the Cathedral's vaulted, 100-foot-high

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ceiling, beginning next week through to May 2021. The 'Les Colombes' exhibit is by German artist Michael Pendry, who has created similar works at Cathedrals



around the world, and symbolizes the Biblical theme of hope and optimism heading into the new year after a very challenging 2020.

"The past year tried and tested us in ways none could have anticipated, bringing a deadly global pandemic that has claimed 300,000 American lives as well as racial strife that has forced a long-overdue reckoning on justice and policing in our society," said The Very Rev Randolph Marshall Hollerith, dean of Washington National Cathedral. "While these issues are very much still with us, and will remain so, we look ahead to the new year with hope for a brighter day and a new chapter. These doves, beautifully arranged to give new life to our Cathedral, embody our resolve to be kind to our fellow man and to do our part in making a better tomorrow."

Once completed, the exhibit will include more than 2,000 paper doves, designed to appear like they are flying in a long, winding column through the Cathedral's nave, where worship services are held. The doves have appeared in Salisbury Cathedral and St Martin-in-the-Fields in London; Mount Zion in Jerusalem; Heilig-Geist Viktualienmarkt in Munich; and Grace Cathedral in San Francisco.

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"The 'Les Colombes' installation has found homes of some of the world's most iconic sacred spaces, and now I'm thrilled to exhibit this piece in Washington National Cathedral, where it can challenge and engage new audiences, both virtually and, eventually, in person," said Pendry. "It is a multimedia art installation that affects visitors on multiple sensory levels, and the doves featured in this piece symbolize peace and resilience, which are desperately needed in the troubled times we live in, especially as we reflect back on 2020."

The Cathedral remains closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but once it is deemed safe to reopen, members of the public will be able to visit the Cathedral and see the exhibit. In the interim, a special section of the Cathedral's website, [www.cathedral.org/doves], will allow visitors to experience the exhibit virtually. This exhibit is sponsored by a fund from the German Bishops Conference and Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Foreign Office in Berlin, which supports projects of German artists abroad.

To make your own paper dove of hope -

1. Grab a piece of paper and write your own inspirational or hopeful message
2. Download the PDF step-by-step pattern instruction guide based on Michael Pendry's Les Columbes
3. Fold into a dove and either hang it up or give it to a loved one

See - [<https://cathedral.org/visit-us/doves/>]

School discriminated against Catholic girl on religious grounds, rules WRC



The Workplace Relations Commission has found that a multi-denominational secondary school discriminated against a Catholic school girl on religious grounds.

A multi-denominational secondary school discriminated against a Catholic school girl on religious grounds by favouring for admission Church of Ireland students from a local primary school, Gordon Deegan writes in the Irish Examiner

That is the finding of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), which has now ordered the Dublin community school to admit the girl to second year for the start of the next school year next September.

WRC Adjudication Officer Brian Dalton has also ordered that the community school cease to give pupils of Church of Ireland faith attending the nearby national school priority when it comes to enrolment in first year.

Mr Dalton has also ordered that the community school amend its admission's policy to ensure the prohibited conduct under the Equal Status Act ends.

Mental distress and anxiety

In his ruling, Mr Dalton has also ordered that the girl be admitted to the secondary school for the next school year after taking into account the recommendation of her doctor and the mental distress and anxiety she had suffered arising from her unsuccessful school application.

The school contended it complies with the Equal Status Act and that it does not favour any one religious faith or none over another when deciding who it admits into first year.

However, Mr Dalton found it was difficult to reconcile how giving preference to Church of Ireland students was consistent with that stated objective while at the same time admitting it does give preference to a particular religious denomination.

The community school, established in 1995, has capacity for 200 first years each year and receives about 400 applications.

On September 27, 2019, the girl was told by letter that her application for school entry was unsuccessful.



Winter solstice at Newgrange

The letter told her that arising from the school’s enrolment policy, pupils of Church of Ireland faith attending a nearby national school “have priority when it comes to enrolment in First Year”.

An internal appeal lodged on behalf of the girl stated that she “was deeply distressed as she lives close to the school and all her close friends were accepted into the school who also attended the same national school”.

Denied discrimination

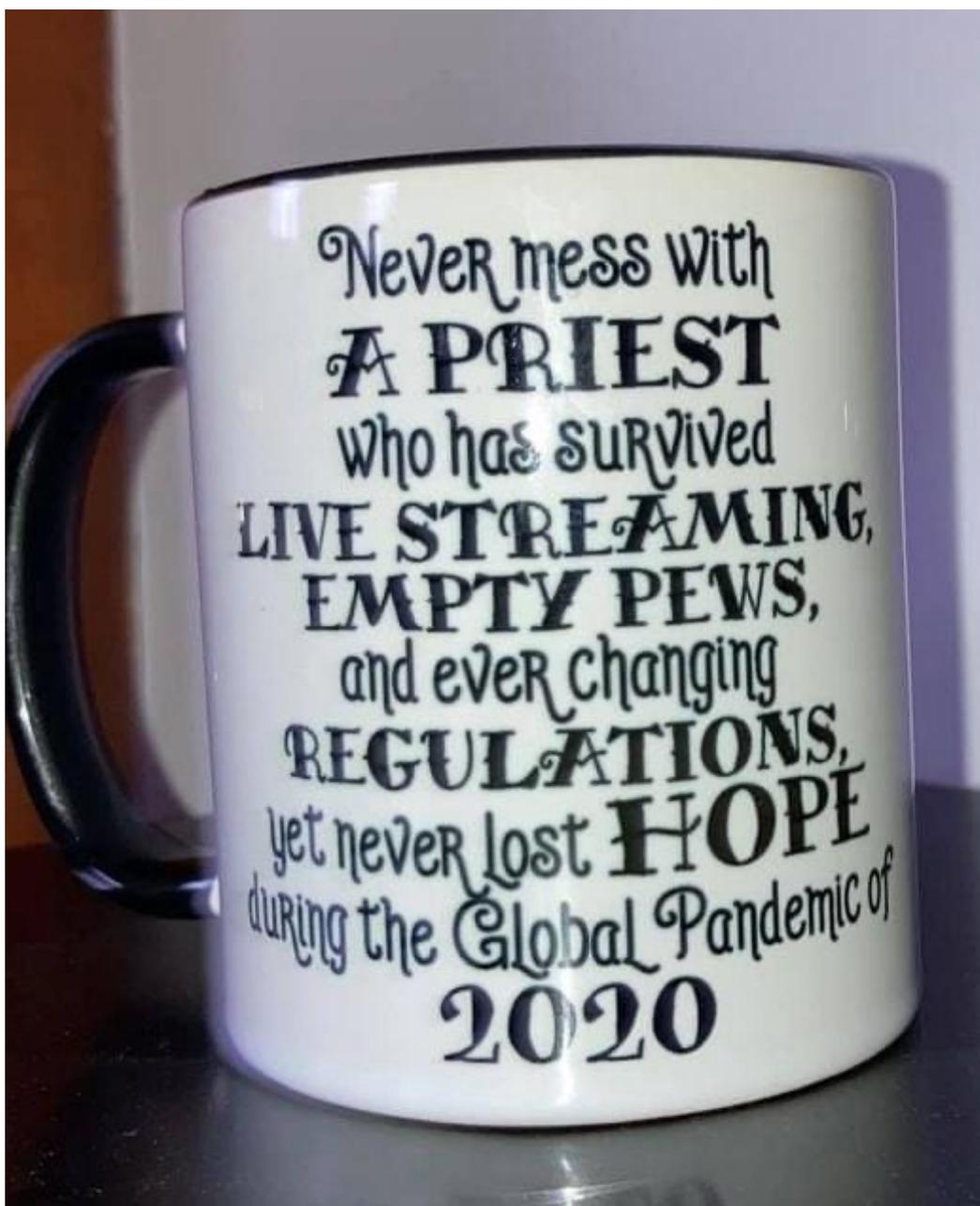
The appeal was unsuccessful and the discrimination case was lodged with the WRC in March 2020.

The girl was represented at the hearing by her father and an uncle, who is a solicitor.

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The school denied discrimination and stated it serves generally Catholic populations with suitable arrangements being made for members of other religions in consultation with appropriate authorities.

The rationale for giving Church of Ireland students from the nearby national school is provided in the school's admission policy.



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It states: “There is no non-fee paying Church of Ireland School in North West Dublin. Consequently, when the college was established, it was designated as a listed post-primary school for Church of Ireland children in order to protect the rights of this minority, thus ensuring that a significant number of this community could be educated together.”

The school’s board of management also includes a member of the Church of Ireland faith.

The school stated the priority given to the Church of Ireland students was comprehensively reviewed and approved by the board in January 2018 based on a consultation process held with key stakeholders in the community.

Report courtesy the Irish Examiner, 23 December 2020.

C of E and Christian Aid share service of lessons and carols with a global vision

The Church of England joined forces with Christian Aid for a special service of lessons and carols with participants from around the world.

Through Bible readings, carols and reflections, the service - which premieres on the Church of England website, Facebook and YouTube accounts at 9am on Tuesday December 22nd – issues a challenge to stand up for “righteousness and justice”.

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Lord Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, who is Chair of Christian Aid, gave the sermon and there were contributions from Kenya, Portugal and around the UK. Music came from the choir of St Martin-in-the-Fields, London, and the St Martin's Voices group.

Chine McDonald, Christian's Aid's Head of Community Fundraising & Public Engagement, opened the service with prayers, remembering "those among whom the Christ was born - the poor and helpless, the aged and young children; the cold, the hungry and the homeless; the victims of poverty, injustice and oppression, the sick and those who mourn, the lonely and the unloved; those in despair or in the shadow of death."

Dr Marianna Leite, Christian Aid's Global Lead for Gender and Inequality, originally from Brazil, joined from Lisbon, Portugal, where she is based, with a reading from Isaiah 9 - "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light".

And Wendy Lloyd, Christian Aid Faith Communications and Just Scripture co-ordinator, offered a reading from Luke 2 and reflection about the Shepherds from her home on Mull, Scotland.

Speaking from Nairobi, Kenya, Bob Kikuyu, Christian Aid's global theology adviser, reflected on the familiar passage in Jeremiah 23 which promises that God will "raise up a righteous branch".



Nativity at St Clements Parish Church, Templemore Avenue, Belfast

Noting how King David was once a shepherd, he says: “One ordinary person can make a difference in the destiny of a people.

“We should therefore not discount our contribution now.

“When we faithfully serve the Lord in righteousness and justice in our day and time it could very well be honoured in the days to come by God raising up someone on the foundation of the work we are doing now.

“Ordinary people in the hands of an extraordinary God can change the world.”

Lord Williams then picks up the theme in his sermon. He explains that the word “righteousness” in the readings should be understood as like “truthfulness” or “appropriateness”.

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“The very nature of God is to share the divine joy and beauty that is God’s eternally,” he says.

“Yet our own selfishness and ignorance means we regularly go about not noticing what God has given to the world we live in.

“The gift of Jesus’s life restores our ability to see clearly and to act generously – to be ‘righteous’, to do justice to what’s really there in front of our noses.

“Like the shepherds in Bethlehem, we have seen the night sky lit up with splendour and radiance; and with them we set out to see what it is that God has done and what God is doing in our midst.”

Inspiring: Ex-soldier hurt in bombing completes marathon walk

Six weeks ahead of schedule, a former UDR soldier who was seriously injured in a bomb attack over 40 years ago has crossed the finish line to complete his marathon walk for charity, Mark Bain writes in The Belfast Telegraph

Co Fermanagh man Grant Weir's 'Going for a Walk hi' campaign ended on Tuesday morning but he has already vowed to keep on walking until the end of January.

The final stretch of his marathon, which began on November 11, saw Grant finish where he had started at the SEFF Memorial in the grounds of Holy Trinity, Church of Ireland.



The memorial bears the name of missionary Sylvia Crowe who was murdered in the same incident that left Grant suffering from life-changing injuries.

Grant suffered his injuries aged 22 when the IRA detonated a bomb as his patrol drove past a bus stop near Rosslea on July 17, 1979.

To date the campaign has raised over of £10,000 with SEFF and The Ely Centre in Enniskillen the beneficiaries. Donations can be made up to January 31.

Grant and his family, including sister Michele Nixon who has helped care for him since he suffered his injuries, said the day had been a wonderful experience.

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“It's been emotional for all of us,” said Michele.

Report courtesy The Belfast Telegraph, 23 December 2020



Seat in House of Lords for Archbishop Sentamu

Congratulations to the former Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu on the fantabulous news of his Life

Peerage, granted by HM The Queen and announced from 10 Downing Street this week. He will take his seat on the cross benches.

New Bishop of Chelmsford fled Iranian persecution

The Queen has approved the nomination of The Right Reverend Dr Gulnar (Guli) Francis-Dehqani BA MA PhD, Suffragan Bishop of Loughborough, for election as Bishop of Chelmsford, in succession to the Most Reverend Stephen Cottrell following his appointment as Archbishop of York.

Background

Guli was born and raised in Iran and her faith was nurtured in the tiny and much persecuted Christian community there. Her father was Bishop in Iran and her brother was murdered subsequent to the Iranian Revolution. He is commemorated in the Chapel of the Modern Martyrs at Canterbury Cathedral. Guli and her family were forced into exile.

Now a UK Citizen, Guli was educated at Nottingham University and Bristol University and trained for ministry at The South East Institute for Theological Education. She served her title at Mortlake with East Sheen, in the Diocese of Southwark and was ordained priest in 1999. She also has a doctorate in theology on cross cultural mission.

In 2002, Guli was appointed Chaplain of the Royal Academy of Music and St Marylebone Church of England School, in the Diocese of London. In 2009, she took up the role of Inter-faith Liaison Research Assistant at the University of Northampton and in 2011 was appointed Curate Training Officer, in the Diocese of Peterborough.

In 2017, Guli took up her current role as Bishop of Loughborough, in the Diocese of Leicester.

She is married to Canon Lee Francis-Dehqani, also ordained, and they have three children, one at university and twins at school.

There is more on the Chelmsford diocesan website.

**"Christmas is about our unconditionally loving God, the creator of the Universe, becoming a vulnerable little baby on a bed of straw. God enters our humanity so that we could share in his divinity! Through this act of pure love, we are challenged to recognise the spark of the divine in those around us."
- Bishop Paul Dempsey**



Pointers for prayer

We pray for all for whom the celebration of Christmas is difficult; those who are ill, at home or in hospital, for the bereaved, the lost and the lonely. May they know the light of Christ in their lives at this time.

As we make our journey through Advent may we straighten out the pathways which lead us to the glory of the Lord. As we travel to worship our newborn King may we take each step with hope and joy.

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Lord Jesus, when our Advent journey becomes hard please give us the strength we need to overcome obstacles and difficulties along the path; whether these are problems of time, relationships or other complications.

Loving Lord, however many years we have made the journey through Advent, may we continue to find the way exciting and refreshing. Help us to be open to new challenges and inspiration, alongside finding comfort in the familiar delights.

Lord our Messiah, as we journey once more through Advent, thank you that we are not alone – we walk together with our fellow pilgrims, enjoying your loving presence as we travel towards the wonder of the nativity.

Thank God for the support of CMSI links in standing with Maridi Diocese in South Sudan in their aim to provide solar panels for the cathedral compound. This improves lighting in church and also water provision for the community from the new water tank.

As well as those now facing Christmas alone, please spare a thought and prayer today for the many, Health workers, police, clergy and others, who are working Christmas Day, for the benefit of others, and have planned their Christmas bubbles for some other day.

God of shadows and echoes, darkness and light, help us to be still in our dark moments, our waiting times, our uncertainties. And when morning comes, show us how to greet the dawn without trying to make sense of the amazing light. — Anonymous



Cottage Hospital, Ballymena

Speaking to the soul

"The Lord is our righteousness" by Dr Rowan Williams

That, says the prophet, is what the long-awaited saviour will be called. To get some sense of what this means, we need to set aside a lot of the associations that the word 'righteousness' has for us today. It often sounds a bit judgemental and superior. But for the Jewish prophets, it meant being fully in harmony with the way things were.

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To be righteous was to be in a truthful and fitting relationship with what was real—with God and with God's world.

No wonder, then, that Jesus tells us that it is 'blessed' to be hungry and thirsty for righteousness. We long to be at home with what's real, not to live in little worlds of our own invention. And the gift that is there for us in the coming of Jesus is the gift of a renewed and restored relationship to what is real.

We are all in one way or another stuck in little worlds of our own invention, stuck in an unreal, self-centred, short-term frame of reference, and we need to be pulled out of these fantasies into the light of reality – like the shepherds being startled and shocked by the blaze of light filling the night sky, so that they set off with a cleansed and renewed vision, eager to see what God is doing, to see the truth and respond to it.

All our service of and attention to the world's needs grows out of this. We see freshly; we see the dignity and beauty of human beings denied, frustrated, disfigured all around us, and we sense arising in us a hunger to see more fully the truth of what God has given in each and every person, and to welcome the gifts they offer us.

"The Lord is our righteousness": what does this mean? That in the Spirit of Jesus, we begin to see with God's own eyes the full glory of the world God has made and to respond with love and delight.

Pray

God of glory,

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Open our eyes to see your presence today and to find, as we do,

that our lives are filled with love and delight

towards you and the world you have made

Amen.

Rowan Williams is Chair of Christian Aid and former Archbishop of Canterbury

