

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Worcester Cathedral



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Worcester Cathedral has been a place of Christian worship and prayer for fourteen centuries, and is the burial place of

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both King John and Prince Arthur Tudor. The present building was begun in 1084 and is dedicated to Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Located in the centre of Worcester City, on the banks of the River Severn, we offer a range of tours, exhibitions and events throughout the year, as well a charming gift shop and cosy café, nestled in the Cathedral's medieval cloister.

People and places

A post Christmas tractor run for Ballintoy Parish development fund was well supported





The rector, Reverend Patrick Barton presents the cup to the winning driver

News reports

Massgoers raise over €4.5m to assist Ukrainian refugees

Over €4.53 million has been raised from collections at Masses in Catholic Churches throughout Ireland to help support the Ukrainian people since their country was invaded by Russia on February 24th last.

A further €230,000 has been raised for Church projects across Ireland for the benefit of thousands of Ukrainian refugees, Patsy McGarry reports in the Irish Times.

At their winter meeting earlier this month the Catholic Bishops expressed gratitude for the outpouring of solidarity, support and welcome from individuals, parishes and communities across Ireland to the people of Ukraine who have come to live among us. They asked all Christians to join in daily spiritual and practical efforts in support of a ceasefire, humanitarian outreach and the immediate laying down of weapons in the war.

Since the invasion last February, and in response to the needs of Ukrainian refugees coming to Ireland, the Bishops' Conference has been working with funders, including The Albert Gubay Charitable Foundation and Benefact Trust, to secure funding of over €230,000 for Church projects across Ireland for the benefit of thousands of Ukrainian refugees.



Christmas in Puglia, Italy

These include working with the Irish Red Cross and county councils to upgrade parochial houses to provide accommodation for Ukrainian families; supporting the provision of services and supports to Ukrainians such as English language classes, information sessions, respite activities, language resources and the purchase of basic goods; and obtaining a grant for the Ukrainian Church,

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based in Donnycarney parish in Dublin, to provide support for over 3,500 Ukrainians.

In addition €4,532,265 has been raised at Masses to date for charitable projects to assist refugees and those remaining in Ukraine.

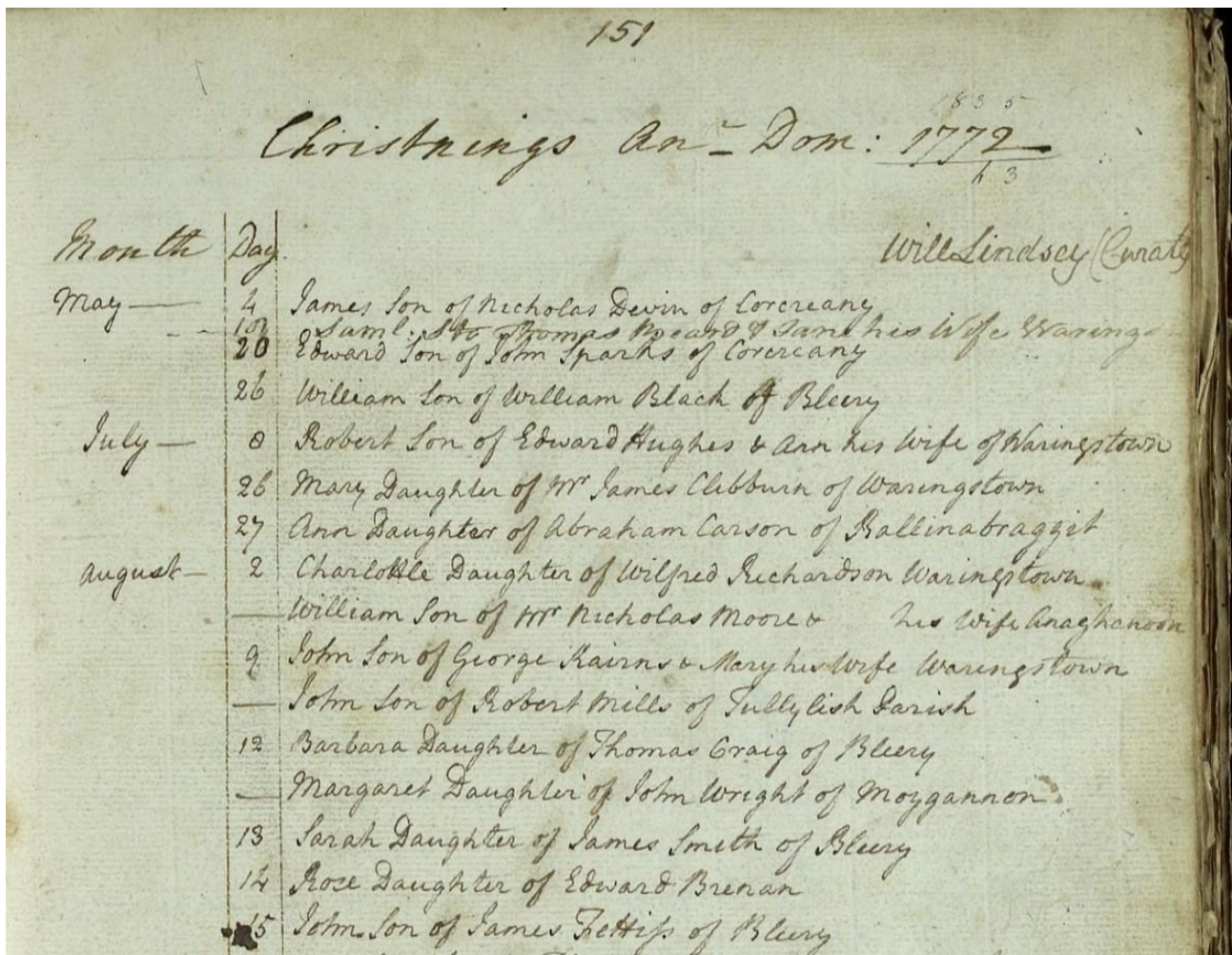
The Bishops said it was “inspiring that people all over Ireland have responded with customary generosity in support of this humanitarian crisis. We commend Trócaire for assisting with our response to the crisis through its partners Caritas Ukraine and Caritas Poland which have a strong presence in the region and can use resources strategically to the greatest effect.” More at -

[\[https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2022/12/29/massgoers-raise-over-45m-to-assist-ukrainian-refugees/\]](https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2022/12/29/massgoers-raise-over-45m-to-assist-ukrainian-refugees/)

Church Records Digitisation – New records available

This year as part of its ongoing church records digitisation programme, PRONI (Public Record Office Northern Ireland) have completed digitisation of a further 19 volumes.

The volumes date from 1772 to 1970 and relate to 6 individual churches and 3 denominations across Northern Ireland.



PRONI Ref CR1/103/4/1 (page 151) - Baptism Register of Donaghcloney Parish Church, Co. Down, 1772

The records comprise baptisms, marriages and burials as well as vestry minutes and family notebooks. The project includes records from the Church of Ireland, the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland.

PRONI thanks the various churches involved for allowing us to digitise their records.

The digital records are now available to view freely onsite through our catalogue.

The number of evangelical Christians continues to grow in France.

A new statistical report by the National Council of Evangelical Christians (CNEF) shows that there is now one church for every 25,000 inhabitants.

Five years ago, there was one church for every 29,000 inhabitants.

The number of evangelical churches has risen from 2,521 in 2017 to over 2,700 today.

It is a significant increase from 1970, when CNEF said there were 769 evangelical churches.

In the last half century, evangelical churches have been opening in France at a rate of about 35 a year.

The Assemblies of God France accounts for the largest share of evangelical churches (530), followed by independent churches (308).

In 2017, there were 650,000 practising evangelicals across France and its overseas territories. Today, that figure stands at 745,000.

According to CNEF, the numbers represent a 15-fold increase in French evangelicals since 1950.



Seagoe to Seafarers

The Mission to Seafarers in Belfast reports - This week we received a fantastic donation of hats, scarves, gloves, toiletries and chocolate from Seagoe Parish! Delivered by the lovely Eileen and Stephen and received by our manager Paul and colleague Gillian. Thank you so much ❤️ 🎄 ❤️ this will make a real difference to a Seafarers Christmas away from home.

Israel's Christian community sees slight growth

Israel's Christian community saw a slight increase in 2021, according to latest figures released by the Central Bureau of Statistics.

The data published on Christmas Day reported a 2% increase in the number of Christians in Israel last year.

Christians make up 1.9% of the total population in Israel.

Most of the Christians in Israel are Arab Christians (75.8%). They account for 6.9% of Israel's Arab population.

The largest concentration of Arab Christians in the country is to be found in Nazareth, home to 21,100.

This was followed by Haifa (16,700), Jerusalem (12,900), and Shefar'am (10,500).

The size of the average Christian household (3.06 people) was comparable to Jewish households (3.05), but smaller than Muslim households (4.46).

Israeli Christian families had fewer children on average (1.86) than Arab Christian families (1.94), Jewish families (2.42) and Muslim families (2.62).

Non-Arab Christians and Arab Muslims were least likely to pursue higher education after finishing high school (31.2%

each), compared to nearly half of Jews (48.2%) and over half of Arab Christians (52.9%).

Of the Christian students studying for a first degree, the most popular subject was musicology (15.7%) followed by management information systems (10.5%), and food engineering and technology (9.9%).

In the media

Churches still haunted by pandemic

Many worshippers have not returned to services since the Covid outbreak, says Church of England.

Churchgoers failed to return to services following the pandemic, a Telegraph analysis has revealed, BenButche and Gabriella SWerling write in the Daily Telegraph

Earlier this month, the Church of England published its Statistics for Mission 2021, which details attendance and participation within churches across the country.

Dr Ken Eames, senior statistical researcher within the Church's Data Services team, who authored the report, acknowledges that the pandemic "continued to have an impact on the worshipping life of the Church of England in 2021" but added that its effects were "less severe" than in 2020.

Analysis of the data has shown that in 2021 churches failed to bounce back from the drop-off in attendance figures as a result of the pandemic.

Across all English dioceses, church attendance was just 72 per cent of what it was in 2019.

Churchwardens and members of General Synod – the Church’s legislative body – have responded to the data claiming that “the untold trend is the decline that is being driven by the Church of England itself”. They claim this is because it is failing to recruit more vicars and by merging parishes.

Last year the average Sunday church attendance was 509,200 across the country – up from 297,600 in 2020 but significantly down on the 707,100 recorded in 2019.

The Church figures are derived from an in-person attendance survey conducted in October 2021. That month, there were no Covid restrictions, after they were all lifted in July that year. The Government’s Plan B policy (including wearing face masks and Covid passes) was not introduced until December 2021 with the rise of the Omicron variant.

The latest church data, which covers the year 2021, come just weeks after the Office for National Statistics (ONS) revealed that Christians now account for less than half of England and Wales’ population for the first time in census history.

The Census results showed that 46.2 per cent of the population (27.5 million people) described themselves as

‘Christian’ in 2021. This marks a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3 per cent (33.3 million people) in 2011.

Despite the decrease and ‘Christian’ remaining the most common response to the Census question about religion, every major religion increased over the ten-year period, except for Christianity.

Separate analysis of Church of England data in January found that 423 churches were closed between 2010 and 2019.

The figure signifies the downward trend regarding the number of churches in the country and prompted senior clergy to warn of the “shocking” threat to parishes as “the bedrock of the Church of England”.

Admiral Sir James Burnell-Nugen, a retired admiral, churchwarden and a Deanery Synod member, said: “There are obviously several factors at play in these statistics. The impact of Covid is clearly the greatest, as can easily be seen.

“The gradual secularisation of society is probably the second largest factor and that shows in the longer term trend over several decades.”

Courtesy The Daily Telegraph

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Irish rugby star Josh Van Der Flier talks about faith and sport

'I bring my passion for sport and connect that with my passion for God'

In the early summer of 2022, Josh van der Flier was officially in the form of his life.

The 29-year-old was named Ireland's Players' Player of the Year, voted on by his peers, and then a week later he was selected European Player of the Year, receiving over 30,000 votes from fans across the continent.

When Ireland travelled down to New Zealand, nobody expected the greatest month in Irish rugby history. The All Blacks held a 14-0 record over Ireland in matches on home soil over the last 46 years, but after losing the first test, Andy Farrell's team came back with the most formidable back-to-back displays ever seen in green... and wiped the hosts away with a 2-1 series win.

And the Irish player of the series was the red-capped Josh van der Flier. In Leinster blue and Ireland green, Josh is living his dream. But it was necessarily destiny, rather the life choice of his grandparents (Johannes and Joke) on his father's side, who are Dutch.

They came to Ireland with plans to start a radiator factory in the 1950s, landing first in Finglas, and then moving to Wicklow. His mother is from Kilkenny.

Josh has lived in Wicklow town all his life. It was there he began his love of sport, which grew when he attended Wesley College, a Methodist school, as a boarder in Dublin for six years. He was quiet as a boy in school and was small, and started his career as a scrum half.

‘I enjoyed the ethos of the school... there was a good atmosphere... a good place to be. I was lucky to have been able to go there. There were opportunities for everyone to do well.’

Scripture and Ball

‘Each Sunday we would go to the local church, which is Church of Ireland in Wicklow. Mum and dad would take time to read some bible stories to us from those children’s books. We also had prayer every mealtime to bless the food. I also prayed before I went to sleep. Prayer was an integral part of our family at home and growing up.’

Dirk van der Flier, who had played rugby for Old Wesley and also for Leinster under-21s, and his wife were also involved with Scripture Union, a nondenominational Christian organisation. His mother helped to run summer camps for young people and at one time his dad was chairperson.

These camps were simply fun, with some religious activities.

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‘Many of the young people were mad for the sports aspects, but there were some fun games and some reflective quiet moments when it was quite normal to have talks and discussions. It was all natural and normal.’

‘It made an impact on me. All my upbringing involved faith... Sunday School or opportunities for kids to be part of prayer.’

As a teenager it can be tough to express faith, due to pressure from peers. Josh came home from boarding school at weekends and joined his family in church. ‘I found it hard early on to talk about faith. I still do. It does not come natural to me like others... telling people about my faith.

‘I am a private and quiet person.’ More at -
[\[https://www.the42.ie/josh-van-der-flier-rugby-5955945-Dec2022/\]](https://www.the42.ie/josh-van-der-flier-rugby-5955945-Dec2022/)

This extract is from ‘Faith: In Search Of Greater Glory In Sport’ by Gerard Gallagher published by Hero Books. Available from Amazon.
Courtesy The42 Team

Poem for today

Diary of a Church Mouse by John Betjeman

Here among long-discarded cassocks,
Damp stools, and half-split open hassocks,
Here where the vicar never looks
I nibble through old service books.

Lean and alone I spend my days
Behind this Church of England baize.
I share my dark forgotten room
With two oil-lamps and half a broom.
The cleaner never bothers me,
So here I eat my frugal tea.
My bread is sawdust mixed with straw;
My jam is polish for the floor.
Christmas and Easter may be feasts
For congregations and for priests,
And so may Whitsun. All the same,
They do not fill my meagre frame.
For me the only feast at all
Is Autumn's Harvest Festival,
When I can satisfy my want
With ears of corn around the font.
I climb the eagle's brazen head
To burrow through a loaf of bread.
I scramble up the pulpit stair
And gnaw the marrows hanging there.
It is enjoyable to taste
These items ere they go to waste,
But how annoying when one finds
That other mice with pagan minds
Come into church my food to share
Who have no proper business there.
Two field mice who have no desire
To be baptized, invade the choir.
A large and most unfriendly rat
Comes in to see what we are at.
He says he thinks there is no God
And yet he comes ... it's rather odd.
This year he stole a sheaf of wheat

(It screened our special preacher's seat),
And prosperous mice from fields away
Come in to hear our organ play,
And under cover of its notes
Ate through the altar's sheaf of oats.
A Low Church mouse, who thinks that I
Am too papistical, and High,
Yet somehow doesn't think it wrong
To munch through Harvest Evensong,
While I, who starve the whole year through,
Must share my food with rodents who
Except at this time of the year
Not once inside the church appear.
Within the human world I know
Such goings-on could not be so,
For human beings only do
What their religion tells them to.
They read the Bible every day
And always, night and morning, pray,
And just like me, the good church mouse,
Worship each week in God's own house,
But all the same it's strange to me
How very full the church can be
With people I don't see at all
Except at Harvest Festival.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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