



Police close roads as 175 Christmas Trees attract worshippers to Clogher parish Advent Carols

Thousands of people have been enthralled at the Festival of 175 Christmas Trees which ended at Rossorry Parish Church near Enniskillen on Sunday 27th November.

An Advent Carol Service concluded the four days of the Festival which had been sponsored by the Killyhevlin Lakeside Hotel and Lodges and supported by the business community, charities, community groups, schools and churches.

The event was organised by Rossorry Parish to mark their 175th anniversary year and to raise money for their parish building fund and support a number of charities.

The target of 175 Christmas trees was exceeded with over 200 on display in the church, adjoining marquee, a stables building and the parish hall.

There were so many visitors arriving on Sunday afternoon that the PSNI had to close a number of approach roads because of the traffic congestion.

At the Advent Carol Service on Sunday evening, attended by the First Minister, Arlene Foster; M.P. for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, Tom Elliott as well as representatives from a number of charities, the rector, Canon Dr. Ian Ellis, said the Christmas Tree Festival gave Rossorry Church an opportunity to present the Christian hope and to shine a light on the work of many charities, community groups, schools and churches which

seek to transform our world for good and to extend the kingdom of God.”

'We come now to the end of our Festival and we give thanks to God that he has blessed us more than we might ever have imagined.

“We are so glad that this has been the response - glad because our theme was Joy to the World and in a way this festival has brought so much joy to so many lives as we approach the season of Christmas. Our lovely outdoor lighting and the star on the church and the lights on the trees have spoken so profoundly of the light of Christ which we trust will continue to shine from Rossorry Parish Church.'

Among those taking part in the service were former rectors, Archdeacon Cecil Pringle and Dean Arthur Barrett as well as Father Brian D'Arcy from the Graan.

Concluding, Canon Ellis added: 'While this was mostly about fundraising and doing something positive for the community and also something exciting and enjoyable together – all of this is about bringing Glory to God. We do trust that the Light and Joy of the Saviour has also been made known. “Many people have visited our festival.

My prayer is that they have experienced something of the presence of the living God, the love of his Son and the living Spirit of his church. Perhaps some may return on an ordinary Sunday here or elsewhere and pick up where they left off and join us in the journey of faith in the one who brings Joy to the World.'

Christian Aid Partner In Aleppo 'Message To The World' on massacre unfolding In the besieged city

NGOs operating in the besieged city of Aleppo, including a partner organisation of Christian Aid, have released a 'message to the world' about the unfolding massacre taking place.

It comes on the same day that the UN has reported that civilians are being 'shot on the spot' by Syrian pro-government forces entering homes in eastern Aleppo.

Yesterday a staff member working for Christian Aid's partner in Aleppo was killed during continuous shelling, which is taking place across previously rebel-held eastern Aleppo.

The civil society organisations said in their statement: “In effect, the regime is besieging around 50,000 civilians in eastern Aleppo and is practicing forms of systematic violence such as the use of bunker buster bombs and summary executions without discrimination between women, men and children.”

The group has declared that it is suspending its humanitarian operations in what it describes as an “outcry against the international community’s complicity in the massacre” taking place.

Máiréad Collins, Advocacy and Programme Officer for Syria at Christian Aid, said: “What we are witnessing in Aleppo right now is horrifying. We are seeing the massacre of innocent men, women and children in their homes and on the streets, while the world watches in a state of paralysis.

“We are witnessing the unravelling of humanity before our eyes. People are posting their final goodbyes on social media, expecting that they will now be killed by regime forces. This is unbearable.

“Christian Aid, like thousands of other NGOs and civil society organisations, call again for an immediate ceasefire and humanitarian access to civilians in besieged areas.”

Christian Aid is calling for the UK government to significantly step up its diplomatic engagement on Syria to hasten a political process for ending the nearly six-year long conflict, and prevent the deaths of even more civilians.

There is currently no access in or out of eastern Aleppo, and reports confirm that there is no food, water, medical facilities or staff. Yesterday civilians sought sanctuary in a community centre of Christian Aid's partner in Aleppo which lacks any access to water, food and blankets in a city which is facing sub-zero temperatures.

Christian Aid is working through trusted local organisations in Syria, and in Lebanon and Iraq, to provide vital assistance to thousands of families displaced by the crisis. The charity is supporting especially vulnerable refugees, such as women and people with disabilities, to access much needed services. To find out more, or to donate, visit the Christian Aid Syria Appeal webpage: www.christianaid.org.uk/syria.

Continuity and diversity celebrated at Dublin international carol service

Continuity and diversity were celebrated at the annual carol service for the international community and the parish in St George and St Thomas's Church, Cathal Brugha Street, on Sunday (December 11). The service was led by the Rector and Chaplain to the International Community, the Revd Obinna Ulogwara, and Archbishop Michael Jackson delivered his Christmas message to the international community.

The service featured wonderful music from the Zamar Ecumenical Choir, Discovery Gospel Choir and St George's Brass Band and the lessons were read in Irish, French, Swahili, Igbo, Hungarian, Malayalam/Hindi, Japanese, Filipino and English.

In his sermon, Archbishop Jackson focused on Light and Darkness and their particular resonance at Christmas. "From his earliest days, therefore, Jesus Christ is at the heart of light and darkness. He is challenging the world to follow



Archbishop Michael Jackson, the Revd Obinna Ulogwara and his wife Chika with St George's Brass Band.

the light and to be led in the light. The simple shepherds follow the light and the glory of God and they find faith. The Eastern intellectuals follow the light and they find a new type of king. The old guard of religion and politics simply bide their time to have him nailed to a tree – and the world goes dark,” the Archbishop said.

He spoke of convention – what we have become used to – and tradition – the heartbeat of our identity. He suggested that in the stable in Bethlehem we met a traditional homeless family in Mary, Joseph and Jesus. However, he said

they were also a radical family. “At the heart of every Christmas Card lies a radical tradition: God is doing new things; God is changing perceptions and building new communities at Christmas *not of human stock, not of the physical desire of a human father, but of God.* (St John 1.13),” he said.

Lisburn Cathedral parishioners drilling for water in Burkino Faso

Three Lisburn Cathedral parishioners returned from Burkino Faso at the weekend after spending three weeks with a Friends in Action drilling team.

Denis Fullerton, Keith Forsythe and Tim Flanagan had flown to the north African country to join a team led by Mark Collier and Tim Wilson.

During their trip, Denis, Tim and Keith kept Cathedral parishioners and friends updated on their work via the Lisburn Cathedral Facebook page.

Their first drilling site was in the Koudougou area, a three hour drive from Mark's home in



Keith, Denis and Tim, to the left of the photo, with the well drilling team in Burkino Faso.

Ouagadougou where they had been welcomed with Sunday lunch.

They posted: We found ourselves five miles off the main road, in a village, in the depths of the north African bush. Pastor Isaac, his wife and family live right beside the little church with a congregation of 250 in an area with many believers.

“They gave us a heartfelt welcome and led us in a prayer of thanksgiving for the return of the drillers to finish off the well almost completed by the previous team of volunteers from our neighbours in Legacurry Presbyterian church.”

The team quickly started drilling hoping a well would be established with a good flow of water within two days.

Things did not go quite to plan, but the ultimately the new well in the village, Tiekuy, was a great success, as the men recounted in their update on November 30.

“Today was a huge success. We had to change drilling location in Tiekuy due to a muddy hole. At the second location in the village we were making good progress when a hammer fell down the well, rendering it unusable.

“After speaking with the church pastor, whose congregation met to pray, we filled in the hole and started again five yards away – this time producing a 800 gallons per hour well at a depth of 165ft. Everyone in village (and on the team) was delighted.”

The men were presented with a goat for their efforts. “Pray that the well would continue to develop connections for the local church with their neighbours,” they posted.

The team drilled two wells in Tiekuy (pronounced Cheque-wee) before moving to Bombella to begin a third well in a particularly muddy area.

On the Saturday they went back to Ouagadougou for a break and church on Sunday, before returning to Bombella.

The team travelled back to Ouagadougou on Saturday afternoon with just time for a shower and something to eat before flying back to Northern Ireland that night. Lisburn Cathedral has had a long connection with Friends in Action, co-founded by parishioner Drew Johnston in 2002.

The Leaders Of Africa's Anglican Christian Churches Are 'Despotic' Says Nigerian Archbishop

The Archbishop who heads the leadership team at the Anglican Communion has confessed he took the job because he felt called to do

something to address the "disagreement and even hatred" between fellow Anglicans.

Josiah Idowu-Fearon, appointed secretary general of the Anglican Consultative Council last year, said his commitment to reconciliation remained firm.

But on the issue at the root of the disagreements, human sexuality, he admitted there was "no way" of finding agreement. "It's not possible," he said. The alternative to finding a way to live together was to allow separate "splinter groups".

Idowu-Fearon also criticised the leadership of Anglican churches in Africa as ineffective. He said he was speaking from experience, and described them as "despotic".

He said: "Church leaders in Africa generally do not see themselves as leading the way Christ leads his Church. Rather, the African Church leader sees himself - mainly 'himself' - in the light of the traditional rulers, those with absolute authority."

Idowu-Fearon was speaking to Canon Ian Ellis, editor of the **Church of Ireland Gazette**.



Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon

He said he had come across "hatred, vilification, character assassination".

His experience as a bridge-builder between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and across Africa meant he felt he had something he could offer to the warring Christians.

Idowu-Fearon, previously Archbishop of Kaduna in Nigeria, said he was wholly committed

to Resolution 1.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference which sets a traditional line on sexuality. He described it as a "benchmark" of Anglican teaching.

He said the next Lambeth Conference will take place in 2020.

He said: "I am conservative - I've always been conservative".

He wanted to address the issue from the perspective of Jesus Himself: "What is the Lord doing in his Church?"

He spoke about the conservative grouping GAFCON, which **warned in its Advent pastoral letter** last week that the Anglican Church is at risk of "sleepwalking into fatal compromise". GAFCON is among the groups **backing** the conservative Anglican Mission in England.

Idowu-Fearon suggested he had regarded GAFCON as a breakaway movement but believed it could now be "shifting" this position. He said he had even told one of the leadership team: "It is not a movement of the Holy Spirit because it is divisive."

He pledged to back the creation of a body for dialogue and reconciliation between GAFCON and the Anglican Communion.

Tribute: Bishop Gerard Clifford

Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of All Ireland and President of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, has issued the following statement on the death of Bishop Gerard Clifford.

Together with Cardinal Séan Brady, my fellow bishops and the people, clergy and religious of the Archdiocese of Armagh I am deeply saddened to hear of the death today in Dublin, of my dear episcopal colleague and friend Bishop Gerard Clifford.

We have always held Bishop Gerry in great affection and esteem. He was a devoted and generous priest and bishop who reluctantly had to resign from active ministry in 2013 due to ill health. Sadly, since then, he has had to endure increasing frailty and illness and he has done so with characteristic courage, patience and faith. When he retired, Bishop Gerry acknowledged and thanked the people of the diocese for "their



Bishop Gerard Clifford RIP

24 June 1941 -
12 December 2016

great warmth and affection". These were precisely the qualities that everyone received from this good and faithful priest and bishop. Bishop Clifford was a holy and humble man who instinctively placed the concerns of others first, as befits a true messenger of the Gospel.

Born in the border parish of his beloved Lordship and Ballymascanlon, Bishop Gerry was a tireless peacemaker and bridge-builder. He was one of the great figures of the ecumenical movement in Ireland – a role he accomplished through gentle friendship and witness. His episcopal motto in

1991 was “That all may be one”, from Christ’s prayer at the Last Supper. Bishop Gerry said at the time that “the unity implied is a firm ‘yes’ to the way of love and a firm ‘no’ to the way of hatred”. He placed great store in the innate decency of people and he used every opportunity to heal the wounds created by violence, distrust and fear.

Bishop Clifford served with distinction as a member of the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference for more than twenty years, having previously served as its Executive Secretary. His episcopal ministry involved working in ecumenism, education and, as President of Cura, in the pastoral care area of crisis pregnancy.

In my visits to Bishop Gerry in recent weeks and months he seemed at peace. As he was a man of deep faith I ask you to join with me in prayer for the repose of his soul. May he rest forever in the peace of The Lord whom he generously and faithfully served. May God console his sister Rose, brother Christopher, his extended family, the people, priests and religious of the Archdiocese of Armagh along with his many friends.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dilís.

Bishop Clifford's Life and Ministry

Gerard Clifford was born on 24 June 1941 into a farming family, the second child of the late Thomas and Margaret Clifford of Bellurgan. He was educated at Bellurgan National School, Bush Vocational School, Saint Mary's College, Dundalk, and Saint Patrick's College, Armagh, he studied for the priesthood at Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth. Ordained to the priesthood on 18 June 1967, he undertook post-graduate studies both at Maynooth and at Lumen Vitae, the international catechetical centre in Brussels.

From 1969 to 1979 he was appointed Director of Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Armagh. He liaised with all the schools of the diocese and published several guides to help parents in the religious formation of their children. After the 1979 pilgrimage by Pope Saint John Paul II to Ireland, Father Clifford was part of the response by the Catholic Church in Ireland to the late Pope's special appeal for Churches to work more closely together. He undertook this work in partnership with the late Church of Ireland Canon William Arlow. In 1979 the late Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich appointed him ecumenical and reconciliation officer of the

diocese, with a base in Richill, near Portadown. He worked closely with Canon William Arlow, who held a similar post in the Church of Ireland. Bishop Clifford regarded his ecumenical involvement as one of the most important aspects of his life as a priest. His interest in ecumenism went back to his student days – his theological degree was awarded for a study of ministry in the Anglican Church.

As ecumenical and reconciliation officer, he organised ecumenical talks twice a year between the diocese and Saint Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. He was responsible for organising the inter-church services in Armagh Cathedral during the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which brought a number of prominent ecumenists from abroad to Northern Ireland. With Canon Arlow he organised a major ecumenical pilgrimage to Iona in 1984. Also in the 1980s he brought a group of young people from Portadown to Philadelphia as part of an exchange programme. He was a member of the Ballymascanlon Inter-Church committee and co-chairman of its joint working party on social problems. With Bishop Anthony Farquhar he was observer for the Irish Catholic Bishops to the then

newly-formed Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland.

In 1984 Father Clifford was appointed first full-time executive secretary of the Irish Bishops' Conference. He was also joint secretary of the liaison committee which links the bishops of Britain and Ireland, and regularly represented the Bishops' Conference at meetings abroad.

Bishop Clifford was appointed as Titular Bishop of Geron on 25 March 1991 and his episcopal consecration took place on 21 April 1991. As a member of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, Bishop Clifford was a member of its Council for Ecumenism (and Dialogue); a member of the Episcopal Commission for Pastoral Care, and was President of CURA from 2010 until 2013.

News briefs

+++ Diocesan network course in Down - A diocesan network course, facilitated by Canon Norman Jardine has recently been completed in St. John's, Orangefield. The course has been used by over one million people worldwide to help people better understand what gifts and

passion they have to serve the church and how best to do it. The course was organised alongside the Development Officer, Andrew Brannigan who commented; 'this is a helpful course that has been run for many years in the diocese and we are pleased to have been able to offer it as an opportunity for church members to better understand God's design for the church and their unique role within it. We hope to run the course again next year and hope that it will become an important component in building up the church.'

+++ CD One Hundred Years a Nation released

- Carrick-on-Shannon's Millennium Choir (Association of Irish Choirs) features on a brand new RTÉ CD release of One Hundred Years a Nation, a major piece of choral music specially commissioned by RTÉ from composer Shaun Davey with text by writer Paul Muldoon and recorded with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and conductor David Brophy. See news link below.

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Julie Parsons set out to investigate why Church of Ireland parish in Dublin disappeared and ...

Belfast Telegraph

Her grandfather was rector at Mariners' Church in Dun Laoghaire but that **Church of Ireland** population has almost disappeared. Crime writer Julie ...

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/archive/julie-parsons-set-out-to-investigate-why-church-of-ireland-parish-in-dublin-disappeared-and-uncovered-tale-of-prejudice-and-even-murder-35287776.html>

Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh Gerard Clifford was a 'tireless peacemaker'

the Irish News

After the 1979 visit by Pope John Paul II to **Ireland**, Bishop Clifford was part of a response by the Catholic **Church** in **Ireland** to his appeal for Churches ...

<http://www.irishnews.com/paywall/tsb/irishnews/irishnews/irishnews//news/northernirelandnews/2016/12/13/news/auxiliary-bishop-of-armagh-gerard-clifford-remembered-as-tireless-peacemaker--834119/content.html>

Former Armagh bishop Gerard Clifford dies aged 75

Irish Times

http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/former-armagh-bishop-gerard-clifford-dies-aged-75-1.2903182?utm_content=sf-man

Archbishop says church must help people in marriage difficulty

Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/archbishop-says-church-must-help-people-in-marriage-difficulty-1.2902925>

Dublin New Years Festival launches and it's bigger and better than ever

Dublin Live

And just when you thought Tunes in the Church couldn't get any better Gary Hastings (a **Church of Ireland** pastor & Cannon of St. Patrick's Cathedral) ...

<http://www.dublinlive.ie/whats-on/music-nightlife-news/dublin-new-years-festival-launches-12308780>

Carrick's Millennium Choir features on RTÉ CD

Leitrim Observer

Carrick-on-Shannon's Millennium **Choir**

(Association of **Irish Choirs**) features on a brand new RTÉ CD release of One Hundred Years a Nation, ...

<http://www.leitrimobserver.ie/news/lifestyle/227407/carrick-s-millennium-choir-features-on-rte-cd.html>

Christian Today

Report that the Archbishop of Canterbury has been joined by Prince Charles and Pope Francis in offering prayers and sympathy to the Coptic Pope Tawadros II after 24 people were killed in a bomb attack during Sunday worship in a chapel adjoining Egypt's main Coptic Christian Cathedral, St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo. The Prince of Wales released a statement on Monday afternoon expressing sympathy over the "unbearably inhuman attack". (See also joint statement from Churches Together in England Presidents above)

Radio Times

Featuring a Christmas message from the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby in which

he says that Christmas can be a full time for some but an empty time for others – particularly those with no work, no home and perhaps no one to love them. In the article Archbishop Justin highlights the BBC Radio 4 Christmas Appeal with St Martin-in-the-Fields to help the homeless.
<http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2016-12-12/a-christmas-message-from-justin-welby-archbishop-of-canterbury>

Responsible Investor

Report that the Church of England's National Investing Bodies, along with the Environment Agency Pension Fund and the London School of Economics, will be launching the Transition Pathway Initiative in January, tracking the progress of companies they are invested in on climate change. The initiative has been spearheaded by the Church of England, and comes as a result of commitments made in the NIBs' climate change policy launched in May 2015.

https://www.responsible-investor.com/home/article/church_of_englands_tpi_launch/

Christian Today

Further coverage of the case of a nurse who has been dismissed after she gave a patient a bible

she did not want and spoke about religion with patients. Sister Sarah Kuteh, with the help of the Christian Legal Centre, is taking Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust to an employment tribunal for unfair dismissal.

Mail

Vicar and Broadcaster, the Revd Richard Coles take the paper's health quiz. Richard admits to being "lamentably unfit" but does take his four dachshunds for a 45-minute walk around the parish every day.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-4025934/I-don-t-think-affordable-rescue-face-moobs-muffin-Broadcaster-former-pop-star-reverend-Richard-Coles-takes-health-quiz.html>