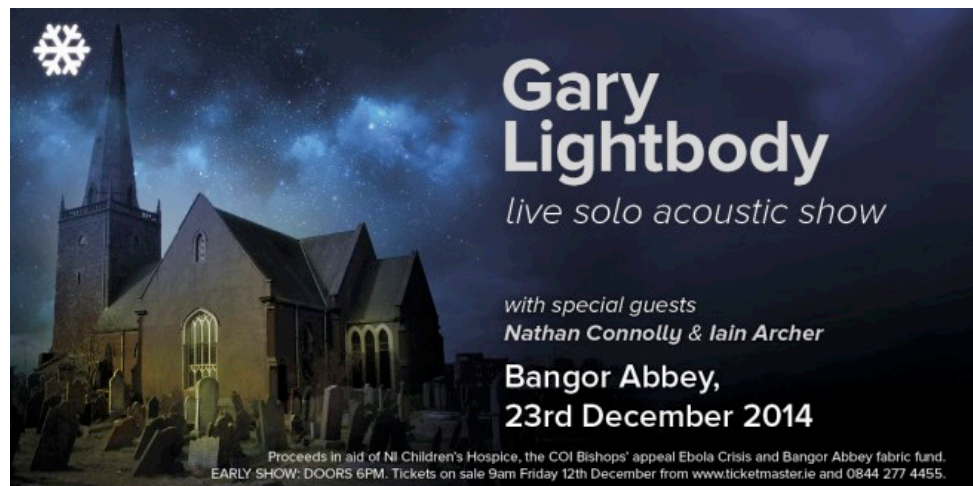




Jesus Christ plays for Chelsea, according to one in five children

Bangor Abbey hosts Gary Lightbody charity concert

Gary Lightbody best known as the frontman of the alternative rock band Snow Patrol, will be performing a solo acoustic show 23 December in Bangor Abbey, County Down. He will be joined by Nathan Connolly and Iain Archer, both of whom will also perform solo acoustic sets.



Gary is a Bangor-born musician and songwriter and the Abbey is delighted to host this home-town event which sold out very quickly.

All proceeds will be donated to the Northern Ireland Children's Hospice, The Church of Ireland Bishop's Appeal – Ebola Crisis, and Bangor Abbey fabric fund.

Silent Night 1914 to be remembered in Craigyhill, Larne

The amazing spontaneous peace that broke out in the trenches of the Western Front is being remembered this Christmas in a series of poignant services at St Patrick's, Cairncastle & All Saints', Craigyhill, Larne. Focussing on the moment when German troops began singing the carol "Silent Night" in their own language, and allied troops sang back in English, the services will explore how the message of Christmas brings peace against all the odds.

The first service – taking place this Sunday 21st December at 3.30pm in All Saints', Linn Road, Craigyhill – will feature traditional carols led by the Magheramorne Silver Band. These will be interspersed with readings & a short video telling the Christmas story and linking it with the events that took place 100 years ago, when enemy soldiers put down their weapons, meeting in no man's land, exchanging gifts and even playing football.

St Patrick's, Cairncastle will also mark the event on Sunday morning at their "Carols Alive" service at 11.30am. Then at the midnight communion on Christmas Eve [starting at 11.30pm] the centenary will be marked by the lighting of individual candles, recalling the Chinese lanterns & Christmas trees that appeared on the parapets of German trenches. The speaker at this service will be local Presbyterian minister Revd Fiona Forbes, and members of all denominations are warmly invited to attend. Afterwards there is cup of festive cheer with shortbread & mince pies for everyone to enjoy.

Roger Thompson (Rector of St Patrick's with All Saints) commented, "These services form part of a UK wide initiative sponsored by The Archbishop of Canterbury and Prince William, bringing people together in the true Spirit of Christmas [see <http://www.greaterlove.org.uk/silent-night-carols.html>] A collection will be taken in aid of Tearfund's work with Syrian refugees." For more details contact Roger on 28583220 or rqtfi@btinternet.com

Belfast healing service for young people

Divine Healing ministries are organising a healing service in St Anne's Cathedral on Monday, January 26th at 8pm. Commenting, Brother David Jardine said, "It will be more geared towards young people (teens, 20's and 30's). Our speaker will be Jonny Clarke, director of YWAM Ireland, and he will be telling us how to receive healing. His theme will be 'God heals us, God forgives us, God loves us'.

"If you could encourage some younger people to come that night I think they will find it a good experience. Personal prayer and anointing with oil will be available. Many thanks for any help you can give us."

Áras Attracta a symptom of malaise in Irish society, says C of I Dean

Irish Times - The litany of abuses revealed in Irish society over recent years, including that at Swinford's Áras Attracta broadcast on *Prime Time* last Tuesday night, points to a sickness at the heart of our society, the [Church of Ireland](#) Dean of [Leighlin](#) has said.

“The fact that much of this abuse happened in institutions run by the churches, also tells us that there is something equally sick about our way of being Christian,” Very Rev [Tom Gordon](#) said. “The week that is past has painfully revealed another dark underside of Irish life.”

In a homily at the Cathedral of St Laserian, Leighlin, Co [Carlow](#), on Sunday, he said that of particular interest in responses to the Áras Attracta scandal was “the manner in which the staff have been demonised. They have become monsters in the public eye.” But, there was “no ‘them’ and ‘us’. There is only ‘us’, ” he said. There was “the universal human capacity for corruption, inhumanity and cruelty. All it takes is a particular set of circumstances. All it takes is a context of unaccountable power,” he said.

“Whether it is the politician faking mobile phone bills, the clergy abusing children or the cruelty of the staff in Áras Attracta; we, as a society, need to rethink our relationship with power: how we do it and how we allow others to do it in our midst.”

He said “the constantly recurring horrors in our political life, in our institutions of care, and in our churches are not only the corrupt acts of individual people; they emerge from a deeper and darker sickness, namely, the historic inability of the Irish psyche to negotiate power per se.”

The churches, he said, had “singularly failed to provide that alternative relationship with power to which the gospel calls us”. They had “in large measure forsaken their prophetic witness on the basis that their life merely mirrors – not challenges – the life and power structures of the world around them”.

Advent, he suggested, might “be an opportunity not to point fingers at ‘bad people’ in a [Mayo](#) bungalow”. It might “be a time to reflect on how we as Christians create the society which gives rise to the cruelty we have seen in the past week. It might be a time to question how we as Christians collude in making the marginalised even more marginalised.”

[Mum told me I was made in Ireland - Dermot -X Factor's Plastic Paddy](#)

Irish independent - Self proclaimed "plastic paddy" Dermot O'Leary has opened up about his Irish roots, Catholic upbringing and the incorporation of Christmas.



The X Factor presenter grew up in England, but said his roots are firmly in Ireland. He told the RTE Guide his Wexford-born parents left a decidedly Irish impact upon him.

"My mum reliably informs me that I was made in Ireland, but I try not to dwell too much on that process," he said.

"They were still young and developing their own tastes and direction and like a lot of families who come over from Ireland they held onto a lot of what they had back home."

The TV star from Essex was in Ireland promoting *The Soundtrack to My Life*, his new memoir based around the music that has left the greatest impression on him.

The fact that Morrissey's *Irish Blood, English Heart* is a favourite will come as no surprise, although the choice of Brendan Shine's *Catch Me If You Can* at the top of his list raised a few eyebrows.

O'Leary remains a regular churchgoer and pinpoints his catholic upbringing as a framework for his life.

"I'm not the conservative style religious fanatic. For me it is about a moral framework more than anything else," he said.

Archbishop Welby invited to China

The Archbishop of Canterbury is considering a visit to China after being invited by the country's ambassador to the UK.

It's thought the Most Revd Justin Welby is unsure about the trip because of the diplomatic problems it might create.

The country has seen a massive growth in Christianity despite years of repression and aggression against believers.

The archbishop faces a difficult decision as reports continue to emerge of Christians being persecuted for not practicing in state registered churches.



Catholics in the country must attend a church which is not officially linked to the Vatican whilst protestants must pick between two groups.

Archbishop Justin's invitation comes after he met with the Chinese ambassador to the UK (pictured) in November.

The Chinese Embassy in London claims Archbishop Justin "hoped that he will have the opportunity to witness China's enormous economic and social changes and the profound impacts on families and religions, and to learn from China's successful models and experiences in independent development of religions and positive interactions between the government and religious organisations."

A statement from the embassy said: "He [the ambassador] invited Archbishop Welby to visit China in due course to witness the harmonious coexistence of different religions and ethnic groups and the constant economic and social progress in China."

Lambeth Palace declined to comment on the visit saying there had not been an official invitation yet.

See also -

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11290806/Justin-Welby-ponders-landmark-China-tour-to-see-explosion-of-Christianity.html>

Vocations Champions get to work in Church of Scotland

The first [Vocations Champions](#) recruited by the Church of Scotland are beginning their work after being inducted into their new roles.

The initiative will raise the profile of ministry and service in the Church, and ultimately aims to increase the numbers applying for ministry.

Vocations Promotions Officer Heather French says this is an exciting time for her, seeing the plans finally become a reality. 'We've not



The first Vocations Champions recruited by the Church of Scotland are beginning their work after being inducted into their new roles

concentrated enough, in the past, on raising the profile of ministry and service in the Church of Scotland, and the number of applicants for ministry had dropped in recent years. A focus on vocations is vital as we enter the start of our 'Decade for Ministry' in the new year. While it's the responsibility of the whole Church to take up the challenge, Vocations Champions will be invaluable in this role, inspiring people to think about ministry as a vocation and encouraging others to do that, too'.

The first Champions to be recruited are Rev Alan Kimmitt, who will cover Fife, Rev Stuart Fulton who will cover Stirling, Falkirk and West Lothian, Rev David Logan for the huge area of England and the Channel Islands, and Rev Alison Burnside, for Inverness, Abernethy and Moray.

All four come from different backgrounds. Alan Kimmitt had a career in IT, and David Logan rose to the rank of Inspector during his 30 years in the police service. "I first felt my call when I was 14," says David. "I feel for 30 years my call to ministry was on hold. Sometimes, like a candle flame, it was the merest glow and other times it was burning like a blow torch. I have no regrets in becoming a minister, it's a fantastic job."

With four Champions now in post, Heather says the next step will be to recruit more people to promote vocations across the country. "We have four enthusiastic Champions in place, and we are sure their work will speak for itself and help attract others to the role. Ultimately, we hope to have Vocations Champions working in every area of Scotland, and we'll be advertising the role again in the new year.'

Alan Kimmitt sees his role as encouraging people to explore a possible calling to service within the Church in any way. He was previously an elder and a reader in the Church before he followed his own vocation. He says "I think a lot of people already might have some inner voice, and what we'd like to do is set up networks so if people are experiencing that call they can come and explore that with us and find out more. For me, success will be helping people to find their first steps, wherever that leads them, so that they find a way to start the journey.

The induction day included an inspiring session from Rev Dr Benjamin Carter, the Church of England's Young Vocations Champion for the Diocese of Newcastle. Similar to the Church of Scotland, he spoke of how many young people had been put off entering ministry in favour of gaining life experience, and had never returned. Indications are that a change in approach is now delivering results.

One of the Vocations Champions first tasks will be helping promote the first ever [Volunteering Vocations](#) gap year scheme for 18 – 25-year-olds. It's designed to encourage young people to consider long term service in the Church through completing a year's work experience in the community. Potential candidates have until the end of February to apply for the first 7 places on offer. Heather says 'This is an encouraging time for the Church of Scotland. I'm sure that our Vocations Champions will agree that it's a privilege to be involved in something which promises to be so positive and fruitful for the Church.'

Poll shock: Jesus Christ plays for Chelsea, according to one in five children

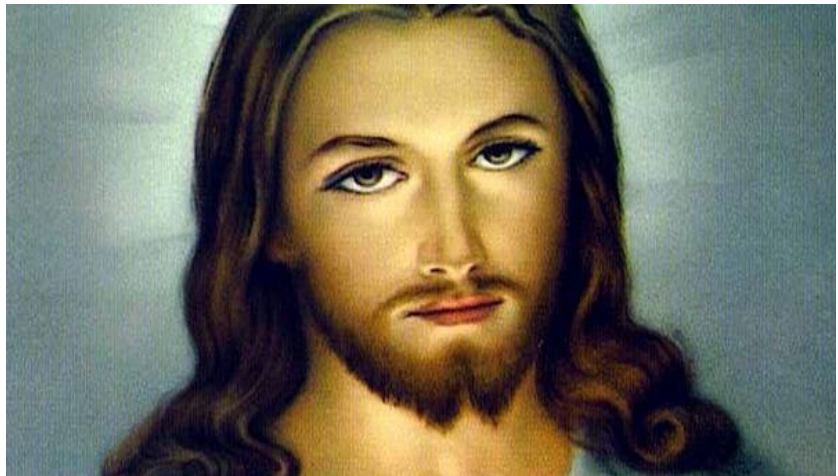
Belfast Telegraph - Chelsea have made some big name transfer swoops over the years but this one would trump the lot - that of the Son of God himself Jesus Christ.

However, even with all his roubles, Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich won't be bringing the Son of God to Stamford Bridge. But a survey has found that 20 per cent of kids think he already plays for the Blues.

A total of 1,000 children were asked the following multiple choice question as part of a survey for Brent Cross Shopping Centre: Who is Jesus Christ? a) A footballer for Chelsea b) Son of God c) TV presenter d) X Factor contestant or e) An astronaut.

Incredibly, 20 per cent of the children asked at a shopping centre in Brent Cross went with option a).

Even if Jesus was available in the transfer market, one suspects Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho, who styles himself as the 'Special One', might feel uncomfortable about being upstaged by such a star name.



Jesus Christ does not play for Chelsea - which will come as a shock to the 20 per cent of children who thought he was a regular at Stamford Bridge

It might be possible the children confused Jesus Christ with Jesus Navas, who plays for Manchester City.

The discovery that many children believe Jesus plays for Chelsea wasn't the only worrying finding. According to the results a quarter of them think the shepherds found the infant Jesus with the assistance of Google Maps and that more than half think Christmas Day marks Santa Claus's birthday.

Iraq at Christmas - a report

At the request of Archbishop Justin, last week Bishop Geoffrey Rowell, former Bishop in Europe, and Canon William Taylor, Vicar of St John Notting Hill, went to Iraq in a gesture of solidarity from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church of England



There are people who have gone through an experience of violent trauma, have lost everything materially, but are spiritually and existentially vibrant. Again and again we heard that it was people's faith which sustained them, and gives them hope for the future.

as well as from the Diocese of London.

The visit arose directly out of a day the Archbishop hosted at Lambeth Palace in September, at which I was present, for representatives of Christian communities from the Middle East, especially those from Iraq and Syria in their current critical situation.

All of these churches have significant communities here in London, so the presence of someone from the Diocese of London was important at that meeting and in last week's follow up visit to Iraq.

This is a very moving report and I encourage you to read it at this season when soon we will be hearing of the Holy Family fleeing for safety to Egypt as they fear for their lives.

To read the report visit <http://www.london.anglican.org/articles/iraq-at-christmas-a-report/iraq-at-christmas/>