

December 17, 2021

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**Image of
the day -
winter**

December 17, 2021

Overview

+Image of the day

Winter

+People and places

Rector hangs up Christmas sand-bag stocking to raise awareness over Sudan

New youth officer in Down & Dromore

High praise for Choir of Belfast Cathedral

79th Anniversary of Cork Harbour Tragedy

Connor takes the Castle

Lisbellaw Parish deliver bags of goodies

Bishop of Connor to be installed in St Anne's on January 9

In Memoriam: Rev Dr R J Gordon Gray

+Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

RTE Carols Show from Saint Patrick's Cathedral

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's Christmas Message 2021

Cork nativity window features in Bishop's Christmas

Message to young people

In need of a festive treat?

Very festive service recorded by the Mothers Union in their Mary Sumner Chapel

+News Reports

Archbishop of Wales apologises for hurt caused in retirement of former Bishop of Monmouth

Church leaders worldwide protest at growing threat to Christian presence in Holy Lan

+Poem for today

In Drear Nighted December by John Keats

People and places

Rector hangs up Christmas sand-bag stocking to raise awareness over Sudan

A new festive tradition began in Wicklow this week when local clergyman Rev Jack Kinkead hung a sandbag on his mantelpiece instead of a Christmas stocking, to raise awareness of the hunger crisis in flood-hit South Sudan.

Rev Kinkead is the Church of Ireland rector of Wicklow and Killiskey.

Normally deployed in flood prevention, the sandbag is being used as a reminder that extreme weather exacerbated by climate change is a powerful driver of poverty and hunger, especially in flood-prone countries such as South Sudan.

In October, South Sudan saw its worst flooding in nearly 60 years, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to abandon their homes. Unusually heavy rainfall in recent months caused the Nile to burst its banks, leaving huge swathes of rich farmland under water. As well as destroying homes, the flooding killed livestock and destroyed crops, worsening a food crisis which has left 2.4 million people at risk of falling into famine.

With his sandbag Christmas stocking, Rev Kinkead is giving his backing to Christian Aid Ireland's Christmas appeal which this year focuses on the hunger crisis in South Sudan. The Church of Ireland is one of Christian Aid's sponsoring

December 17, 2021



churches and Rev Kinhead is an enthusiastic supporter of its work to end extreme poverty.

Christian Aid is working through local partners to respond to the hunger and flooding crisis in South Sudan. The charity is providing emergency life-saving

support including blankets, mosquito nets, water purification tablets and cash to flood-affected families as well as cash, seeds, farming tools and fishing kits to families struggling to get enough food to eat.

Christian Aid Ireland Chief Executive Rosamond Bennett thanked Rev Kinhead and all his parishioners who support the charity's work to relieve poverty in South Sudan and around the world:

December 17, 2021

She said; “Through his support for our work, Rev Kinhead is standing in solidarity with people living in desperate situations. This year, his ‘sandbag stocking’ is helping to raise awareness of the impact that flooding is having on an already terrible hunger crisis in South Sudan.”

To support Christian Aid’s Christmas appeal, visit caid.ie/Christmas or call 01 496 7040 to make a telephone donation.

Courtesy Myles Buchanan, The Independent.ie 15/12/2021/

New youth officer in Down & Dromore

The diocese has announced the appointment of Joshua Thornbury as the new Diocesan Youth Development Officer. He will take up the post on 1 February 2022.

Josh is currently the Centre Coordinator with Dromore Youth for Christ and will bring, not only a range of experience to his new role, but a passion for youth work and youth ministry.

He will join the diocese’s parish development team whose role it is to support, encourage and resource parish ministry, including youth and children’s ministry.

A Lurgan man, Josh went from Lurgan College to Queen’s University Belfast where he gained a BA (Hons) in Theology. He also has a BSc (Hons) in Community Youth Work from the University of Ulster.



Josh has worked with young people in numerous contexts throughout his career including the Simon Community, Seagoe Youth Group and now Youth for Christ, where he is also Chaplain to Dromore High School. His roles have involved bible teaching, event organisation, running summer programmes for young people, working with volunteers, training and networking with local churches.

On a personal note, he is engaged to Rebecca and they are planning to get married in December 2022

Josh says: “I am very excited to be joining the team in Down and Dromore and can’t wait to get out and about meeting with youth workers and their teams all across the diocese.”

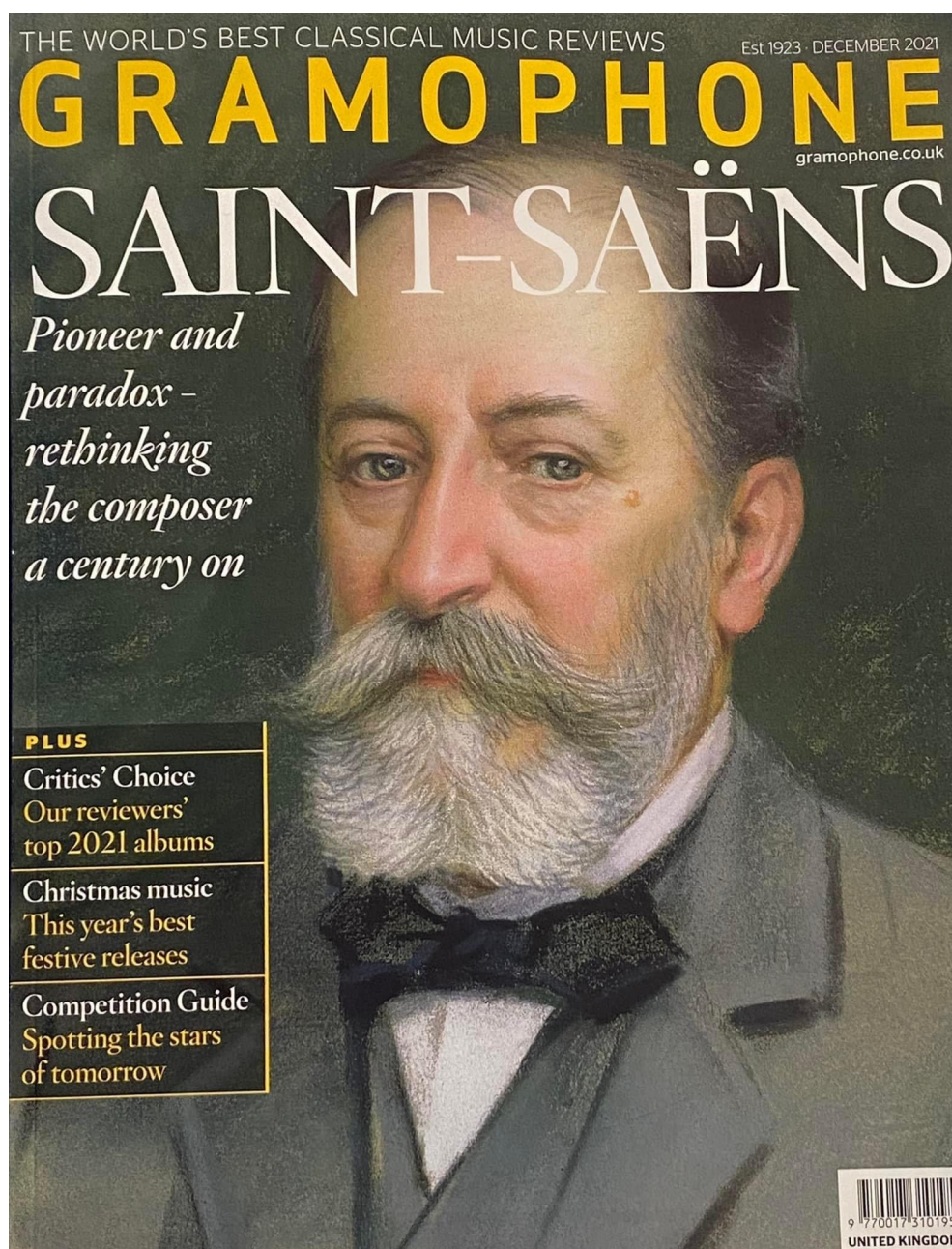
High praise for Choir of Belfast Cathedral

There his high praise for the Choir of Belfast Cathedral in the latest review of their debut Resonus Classics recording. |

n this month’s Gramophone magazine, the reviewer praises the choir’s quality of singing: “Matthew Owens, late of Wells
churchnewsireland@gmail.org

December 17, 2021

Cathedral, has re-established the choir at St Anne's Cathedral as a professional adult ensemble and it could well be the finest all-adult standing choir of its kind anywhere, with near-perfect vowel harmony, blend, enunciation, nuanced awareness of phrase and an exceptional, bright and pure soprano group." Well done, team!



You can keep up to date with all music news by following Music on the Belfast Cathedral web site.

79th Anniversary of Cork Harbour Tragedy

On 11th December, the Rector of Cobh and Glanmire Union of Parishes, the Rev. Canon Paul Arbuthnot, led the act of worship at the 79th anniversary of the Cork

December 17, 2021

Harbour Tragedy.

On the 12th December 1942, five men from the Marine Service died during a storm in the harbour.

This annual commemoration, which takes place in Cobh, was also attended by members of the Defence Forces, the RNLI, Cork Port Authority,

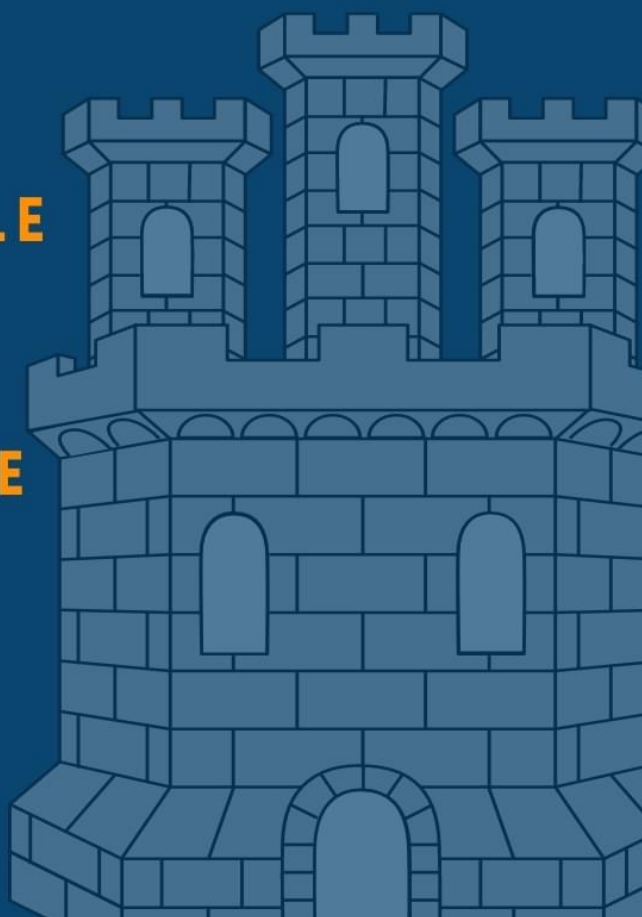
the Organisation of Ex-Service Personnel - Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hEireann, and family members of those who died in the tragedy. Also in attendance were David Stanton TD, and Councillor Cathal Rasmussen.



The Rev. Canon Paul Arbuthnot commented: “This commemoration reminds us starkly of the dangers which those who work on the sea encounter and the sacrifices which they make. We commend the lives of those who died in this tragedy to the gracious keeping of God. We also give thanks to God for all who maintain the maritime life of our country”.

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LASER TAG
TUG OF WAR
& LOADS MORE
ACTIVITIES**



Connor takes the Castle

It may not be a weekend at Castlewellan but Connor Youth are still going to Take The Castle! Shane's Castle this year and just for a day but they hope young folk can join them.

More details and to sign up:

<https://forms.gle/KCYT2G XKwDZBXfAK6>

December 17, 2021



Lisbellaw Parish in Clogher “Ready to deliver bags of goodies to some of our parishioners earlier today ! It was great to see some faces that we hadn’t seen for a while.”

Bishop of Connor to be installed in St Anne’s on January 9

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, pictured after his Consecration in St Patrick’s Cathedral, Armagh, in September 2020.

Almost two years after he was elected Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison has a date for his installation as Bishop in the Cathedral Church of St Anne, Belfast.

December 17, 2021

The service, which due to Covid-19 restrictions will be by invitation only, will take place in Belfast Cathedral on Sunday January 9 at 3.30pm.

The service is hosted by the Dean and Chapter of Belfast Cathedral.

Bishop George, former rector of St Nicholas', Carrickfergus, and Archdeacon of Belfast, was appointed Bishop by the Episcopal Electoral College for the Diocese of Connor on February 17 2020.

After some delay due to the pandemic, his Service of Consecration took place in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, on September 4 2020 in the presence of a very reduced congregation.

Bishop George will be installed in Christ Church Cathedral, Lisburn, on a date to be advised.

In Memoriam: Rev Dr R J Gordon Gray

The death took place earlier this week of Rev Dr R J. Gordon Gray, Minister Emeritus of First Lisburn Presbyterian Church.

The Minister, Staff, Kirk Session and Congregation of First Lisburn said Dr Gray was "A beloved pastor and friend" and extended sympathy to Gordon's wife Pat, his sons: Philip, Timothy and Jeremy and their families and his sister Marlene.

December 17, 2021

Dr Gray made a significant contribution to ecumenical relations in the Lisburn area, on all Ireland and UK church bodies. A graduate of Queen's University which he represented at rowing.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts and books



RTE Carols Show from Saint Patrick's Cathedral

Here's a beautiful treat from RTE. The amazing Tolu Makay performing in Saint Patrick's with the RTE Concert Orchestra for the RTE Carols Show. The full show airs on RTE One on Christmas Eve at 20:15.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-EL8W1tJ-0>



Cork nativity window in Bishop's Christmas Message to young people

Bishop Paul Colton visits Castletownshend County Cork to show everyone the beautiful nativity window in the parish church this Christmastime. He said, "For my Christmas Message to young people and the young at heart in CofIreland Cork this year, I went on a visit to see the Christmas story as told in a famous Harry Clarke stained glass window in Castletownshend, Co Cork. Do join me! It's here" - Click on the photo...

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's Christmas Message 2021

'In the name of these refugees, let us help all refugees' "The Christmas stories are reminders that this Jesus came to

December 17, 2021

show us how to love as God loves. And one of the ways we love as God loves is to help those who are refugees, those who seek asylum from political tyranny, poverty, famine, or other hardship.”

"In the name of these refugees, let us help all refugees."

<https://iam.ec/emm> or text 'EMM' to 41444. Thank you!

In need of a festive treat?

Join Kath Jenkins this Sunday for favourite carols in the stunning Westminster Abbey on BBCOne at 1.15pm and afterwards bbc.in/3GeRiXo

Very festive service recorded by the Mothers Union in their Mary Sumner Chapel

Featuring the beautiful sounds of St. Matthew's Westminster and readings from our Worldwide President Sheran Harper and a number of our Trustees, this is a timely and uplifting carol concert. For the programme please visit:

<https://www.mothersunion.org/sites/default/files/resources/public/Carol%20Concert%20Online.pdf>



News Reports

Archbishop of Wales apologises for hurt caused in retirement of former Bishop of Monmouth

The Archbishop of Wales has released a statement of apology following a review into the retirement of the former Bishop of Monmouth.

Rt Rev Richard Pain stepped back from his duties in 2018 after concerns were raised about his ministry and conduct.

He retired the following year.

Two inquiries were launched to investigate harassment and bullying policies and his responsibilities and relationships with his senior team.

Following these probes, it was concluded no further action should be taken.

An enquiry and review into the circumstances around Pain's retirement and how the investigations were handled was launched in May 2020.

Commissioners, newly appointed Archbishop of Wales, Most Rev Andy John and former chairman of the Church in Wales' representative body, James Turner, released a statement of apology alongside the reports publication on Monday.

December 17, 2021

"We wish to express our sorrow and regret that what could have been an opportunity to attend well to a challenging situation became ruinous and distressing and left numerous people vulnerable and damaged.

"This has not reflected well on the Church in Wales and for that we apologize unreservedly to all those wounded by our failures."

The overview highlights concerns over a lack of specialist legal advice, poor communication and inconsistency in processes across the two investigations and a failure to revisit and scrutinize each reports' conclusions and recommendations.

The review states that "in both cases the conclusions reached were that the evidentiary threshold for further action had not been met.

In a previous statement regarding the absence of the Bishop of Monmouth, the Church in Wales said: "In recent weeks there has been speculation regarding the Bishop of Monmouth and about relationships in his senior team. The Archbishop of Wales is aware of these issues and remains actively engaged, with all parties, in a formal process of mediation which seeks to resolve them."

The review acknowledges that this statement was "misleading and inappropriate" and that the publication of parts of the mediation process "gave substance to the rumour now embedded in the diocese that the Bishop's absence was entirely a matter of broken relationships."

December 17, 2021

Most Revd Andrew John and James Turner joint statement reads: "An organisation must have processes which are fit for purpose. Legitimate concerns must be treated seriously and expedited quickly and in a way that does not damage those who raise such concerns.

"The report with its recommendations that we are publishing today will, if acted upon, go some way towards improving our processes. They require changes not only to the regulations with which we operate but also to the quality of training provided.

"Changing a culture requires a concerted effort, combining preventative interventions and setting aspirational goals which foster new expectations in the ministerial workplace. These must have secure boundaries and require high levels of accountability.

"There are implications, too, for the way senior clergy are supported within a tighter framework of mentoring and review. We are also conscious that we must ensure that, even where investigations are not led by the safeguarding team, the team are enabled to contribute to ongoing processes and be kept up-to-date."

The Church in Wales says it is committed to implementing the reviews recommendations quickly and comprehensively.



Church leaders worldwide protest at growing threat to Christian presence in Holy Land

The Most Rev. Hosam E. Naoum, the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, joined other heads of churches and patriarchs in Jerusalem on Dec. 14 in issuing a statement on the current threat to the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

The full statement follows.

Throughout the Holy Land, Christians have become the target of frequent and sustained attacks by fringe radical groups. Since 2012 there have been countless incidents of physical and verbal assaults against priests and other clergy, attacks on Christian churches, with holy sites regularly vandalised and desecrated, and ongoing intimidation of local Christians who simply seek to worship freely and go about their daily lives. These tactics are being used by such radical groups in a systematic attempt to drive the Christian community out of Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land.

We acknowledge with gratitude the declared commitment of the Israeli government to uphold a safe and secure home for Christians in the Holy Land and to preserve the Christian community as an integral part of the tapestry of the local community. As evidence of this commitment we see the government's facilitation of the visit of millions of Christian pilgrims to the holy sites of the Holy Land. It is therefore a matter of grave concern when this national commitment is

December 17, 2021

betrayed by the failure of local politicians, officials and law enforcement agencies to curb the activities of radical groups who regularly intimidate local Christians, assault priests and clergy, and desecrate Holy Sites and church properties.

The principle that the spiritual and cultural character of Jerusalem's distinct and historic quarters should be protected is already recognised in Israeli law with respect to the Jewish Quarter. Yet radical groups continue to acquire strategic property in the Christian Quarter, with the aim of diminishing the Christian presence, often using underhanded dealings and intimidation tactics to evict residents from their homes, dramatically decreasing the Christian presence, and further disrupting the historic pilgrim routes between Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Christian pilgrimage, in addition to being the right of all the Christians around the world, brings great benefits to Israel's economy and society. In a recent report by the University of Birmingham, it was highlighted that Christian pilgrimage and tourism contributes \$3bn to the Israeli economy. The local Christian community, while small and decreasing in number, provides a disproportionate amount of educational, health and humanitarian services in communities throughout Israel, Palestine, and Jordan.

In accordance with the declared commitment to protect religious freedom by the local political authorities of Israel, Palestine, and Jordan, we are requesting an urgent dialogue with us the Church Leaders, so as to:

1. Deal with the challenges presented by radical groups in Jerusalem to both the Christian community and the rule of

December 17, 2021

law, so as to ensure that no citizen or institution has to live under threat of violence or intimidation.

2. Begin dialogue on the creation of a special Christian cultural and heritage zone to safeguard the integrity of the Christian Quarter in Old City Jerusalem and to ensure that its unique character and heritage are preserved for the sake of well-being of the local community, our national life, and the wider world.

The US-based Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), have issued their own statement endorsing the Church leaders in Jerusalem.

They say: 'Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) remains committed to supporting the sustainability of Christianity in the Middle East in general, and in particular to promoting a shared Jerusalem by Palestinians and Israelis.

CMEP recognises and opposes ongoing attempts to diminish the Christian presence in Israel/ Palestine. Christian communities are a vital source of the land's culture as well as stewards of sites Christians around the world call holy. As Christians prepare to celebrate Christmas, we keep in mind our siblings in the Holy Land who continue to carry the traditions in the place where our faith began.

Therefore, CMEP stands with the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem calling for urgent dialogue with political authorities in Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. We strongly oppose radical groups' opposition to Christian communities, manifesting itself now in Jerusalem. CMEP

December 17, 2021

promotes and advocates for the preservation of Christian heritage, especially in the Old City's Christian Quarter.'

CMEP Executive Director Mae Elise Cannon commented: "We are deeply grieved by the ongoing struggles of communities who follow Christ in the Holy Land. Their very presence is under threat and we must do everything we can to preserve the Christian presence in Jerusalem, Israel, and the occupied Palestinian territories."

CMEP invites US Christians to support the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches' recent statement by sharing it within their own communities. CMEP remains committed to raising the situation faced by Christian communities in the Holy Land with US policymakers as we advocate for the religious freedom of all in the region.

Poem for today

A Christmas Childhood by Patrick Kavanagh

I

One side of the potato-pits was white with frost –
How wonderful that was, how wonderful!
And when we put our ears to the paling-post
The music that came out was magical.

The light between the ricks of hay and straw
Was a hole in Heaven's gable. An apple tree
With its December-glinting fruit we saw –
O you, Eve, were the world that tempted me

December 17, 2021

To eat the knowledge that grew in clay
And death the germ within it! Now and then
I can remember something of the gay
Garden that was childhood's. Again

The tracks of cattle to a drinking-place,
A green stone lying sideways in a ditch,
Or any common sight, the transfigured face
Of a beauty that the world did not touch.

II

My father played the melodion
Outside at our gate;
There were stars in the morning east
And they danced to his music.

Across the wild bogs his melodion called
To Lennons and Callans.
As I pulled on my trousers in a hurry
I knew some strange thing had happened.

Outside in the cow-house my mother
Made the music of milking;
The light of her stable-lamp was a star
And the frost of Bethlehem made it twinkle.

A water-hen screeched in the bog,
Mass-going feet
Crunched the wafer-ice on the pot-holes,
Somebody wistfully twisted the bellows wheel.

My child poet picked out the letters
On the grey stone,

December 17, 2021

In silver the wonder of a Christmas townland,
The winking glitter of a frosty dawn.

Cassiopeia was over
Cassidy's hanging hill,
I looked and three whin bushes rode across
The horizon — the Three Wise Kings.

And old man passing said:
'Can't he make it talk —
The melodion.' I hid in the doorway
And tightened the belt of my box-pleated coat.

I nicked six nicks on the door-post
With my penknife's big blade —
There was a little one for cutting tobacco.
And I was six Christmases of age.

My father played the melodion,
My mother milked the cows,
And I had a prayer like a white rose pinned
On the Virgin Mary's blouse.

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December 17, 2021

