



Archbishop Michael Jackson, Cllr Rebecca Moynihan and Canon David Gillespie with the choir of Kildare Place National School at the launch of Black Santa 2016 at St Ann's Church, Dawson Street.

Luis works a challenge to Dublin's Black Santa supporters

The 2016 Black Santa Sit Out at St Ann's Church, Dawson Street, Dublin, was launched on Friday afternoon (September 16) by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson and the Deputy Mayor of Dublin, Cllr Rebecca Moynihan. They were joined by the Choir of Kildare Place National School who provided festive songs for the occasion.

The appeal is going ahead this year despite the adversity of the ongoing Luas Cross City works right outside the front of the church. The Vicar of St Ann's, Canon David Gillespie, thanked Luas for accommodating Black Santa, which raises in the region of €40,000 each year for good causes. He also urged people to make the extra effort to traverse the construction works to reach the Black Santa collection buckets.

"I'd like to thank Luas Cross City for their help in ensuring that the Black Santa Sit Out can proceed this year," Canon Gillespie stated. But he appealed to people in the city centre: "Footfall on Dawson Street is definitely reduced so please don't be deterred by the barriers. We are hemmed in but please make the extra effort to get to us. It's not ideal. We are working in a building site but you can get to us."



People in the city centre are being urged to make the extra effort to support the Black Santa Sit Out this year as they are hemmed in by Luas works.

“This is a very difficult time for charities. All the charities supported by Black Santa do invaluable work and we can assure those donating that every cent given to the appeal is divided among the charities. We do not take any administration charges and all our collectors are volunteers. The choirs which join us every lunchtime provide their festive cheer free of charge,” he added.

The annual sit out will continue right up until Christmas Eve. Canon Gillespie, joined by clerical colleagues from around the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough and teams churchnewsireland@gmail.com

of volunteers, will remain outside the city centre church from 10.00 am until 6.00 pm each day collecting money for a number of charities.

This year they will be joined by a huge number of choirs who will sing festive songs and carols each lunchtime. These include Castleknock National School, St James Primary School, Francis Street CBS, St Stephens Church Choir, Catholic University School, Taney Parish Junior School, Alexandra College, Kildare Place National School, Cornucopia Brass Group, Irish Life Choir, Revenue Choir, AIB Choral Society, Permanent TSB Staff Choir, John Scottus School, Loretto College, Seafield Singers, Dublin Male Voice Choir, the Line Up Choir, Steadfast Band and the Brook Singers

The Black Santa sit out is modeled on a similar appeal, which has been run by successive Deans of St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast for many years. It became known as the Black Santa appeal because of the long heavy black cloaks worn by the clergy to keep out the cold. This is the 16th year that the appeal has been held in Dublin and in that time well over €500,000 has been raised for local good causes.

Among the charities to benefit from the appeal are Trust, The Salvation Army, The Simon Community and the Peter McVerry Trust all of which work with the homeless. Other charities supported include Protestant Aid, Barnardos, St Vincent De Paul, the Laura Lynn Foundation and Solas Project.

Irish Times report at -

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/church-fears-luas-works-will-decimate-black-santa-appeal-1.2909019>

Christmas Cracker respite event hosted by Hillsborough Presbyterian Church

Festive fun was all around at Hillsborough Presbyterian Church last weekend for 'Christmas Cracker', when it held its first respite event for adults with a learning disability.

Co-ordinated by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's (PCI) [Council for Social Witness](#) Christmas Cracker is based around the Christmas story. Hillsborough's minister, Rev. Dr. Allen Sleith, gave a short talk on the Nativity after guests had enjoyed participating various arts,



craft, sporting activities and decorating cakes. Hand massages, refreshments, and carols were all part of the fun afternoon.

Around 1 in 50 people in Northern Ireland have a learning disability. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland provide residential respite care, day care and supported living for adults with a learning in a number of locations in Northern Ireland.

“I probably enjoyed it as much as our guests did,” Dr. Sleith said. “We had a great time together and we were actually surprised that over 20 people came, so there is obviously a need out there and we were more than happy to respond to that need.



“A lot of hard work went into planning and putting it on by our Hillsborough Outreach and Support Team, or HOST, so a big ‘thank you’ to them as it is one of the ways we can show the practical outworking of our faith and the congregation’s desire to be Christ in the community,” he said.

Carson McMullan explained that HOST had grown out of the support the church had given to a project in northern Malawi. “A number of us had gone to help build a pre-school facility there in 2008. When we came back we began to look at what more we could do to help in our own community.

Christmas Cracker, along with assisting people do their shopping, or taking people to doctor or hospital appointments, are just a few of the things that we can do when we see the need,” Mr. McMullan said.

“Christmas Cracker went exceptionally well and next year we will certainly think about running the event over two Saturdays, as it was a good opportunity to provide a fun afternoon for those who came and some respite time for their parents and carers.”

Mighty oak linked to Narnia named Northern Ireland's Tree of the Year

A mighty oak said to have inspired a vision of Narnia has been named Northern Ireland's Tree of the Year.

The holm oak at Kilbroney Park in Rostrevor, Co Down has been crowned as part of a search for the UK's best-loved tree.

Organised by the Woodland Trust, the competition saw six “splendid specimens” across the country compete for public favour, with the champion securing 1,192 votes.



The winning oak

Northern Ireland's winner - along with the winning tree in England, Scotland and Wales - was recently revealed in a Channel 4 documentary Tree of the Year with Ardal O'Hanlon.

Affectionately known as 'Old Homer', the evergreen oak was planted some 200 years ago by the Ross family on, at that time, their private estate. The Ross' legacy, a mix of native and exotic specimens from all over the world, lives on in Kilbroney Park - now Council-owned and open to the public.



Alistair Livingstone of LIGHT 2000 (front left) with Patrick Clegg of the Woodland Trust along with (back left to right) Paul Clerkin, William Graham, and Csilla Toldy and Councillor Gillian Fitzpatrick, Chair of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Almost two centuries on, this tree will represent Northern Ireland in the European Tree of the Year contest, which - run by the Environmental Partnership Association 3 - will take place in February next year.

The winning tree was nominated by Alistair Livingstone on behalf of the LIGHT 2000 community group.

Alistair said: “We’re absolutely delighted with the result. This oak has been loved by countless generations of local people, and it’s the tree that crowds continue to gather under during the Fiddler’s Green Festival – an international celebration of music and culture.

“It’s a breathtaking spot, attracting its fair share of famous residents and visitors over the years 4, including great writers. It certainly inspired the Belfast-born CS Lewis, who said the view from Kilbroney Park (then known as the Meadow) overlooking Carlingford Lough was his idea of Narnia.”

Today, as a tribute, the park has its own Narnia trail, tucked away in the arboretum. Patrick Cregg, director of the Woodland Trust, added: “We’re truly grateful to those who nominated trees, and indeed to each and every person who took the time to vote. Thanks to the public vote, we’re now delighted to announce and congratulate our winner.

“I recently visited Kilbroney Park and was overwhelmed by this much-loved oak, which guards the enchanting Fairy Glen entrance. I was equally taken with the beauty of the park as a

whole, and by the enthusiasm of the LIGHT 2000 group. They've campaigned tirelessly and, between them, have an absolute wealth of knowledge, including when each tree in the park was planted and by whom."

The Woodland Trust's aim is to highlight and celebrate our country's remarkable trees, and to ultimately ensure they are given the recognition and protection they deserve.

The charity's V.I.Trees campaign seeks to create a register of Trees of National Special Interest throughout the UK and over 9,000 people have so far supported the call for action. For more information visit www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/campaigning .

Ministry of Bishop Freeman in Ossory celebrated

St Mary's Cathedral in Kilkenny was suitably packed when it hosted on November 20 a concelebrated Mass of Thanksgiving to mark the recent retirement of Bishop Séamus Freeman, S.A.C., who served as Bishop of Ossory for almost nine years.



Celebrating the end of an era

The celebration coincided with the Feast of Christ the King and the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy which saw the bishop emeritus formally close the cathedral's Holy Door of Mercy which he had opened on the First Sunday of Advent last year.

The chief celebrant and homilist at the Mass was the diocesan administrator Msgr Michael Ryan, with the Mass concelebrated by members of the bishop's Pallottine Community and by priests and religious of the diocese where Dr Freeman was bishop from 2007 until this summer.

Others present included Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare and Leighlin, Bishop Denis Brennan of Ferns, Bishop Phonsie Cullinan of Waterford and Lismore, and Auxiliary Bishop Ray Field of Dublin.

Members of Bishop Freemans family and his many friends were present, while parishioners from the cathedral parish, diocesan staff, and other members of the lay faithful from around the diocese read Prayers of the Faithful, presented the Offertory gifts and delivered the Communion Reflection, which referred to Dr Freeman's comments on the canonisation of St Teresa of Calcutta and cited a prayer for perseverance written on the walls of her Home for Children in Calcutta.

After Communion the Dean of Ossory, Fr Seamus McEvoy spoke of the bishop emeritus' many qualities and made a presentation to him on behalf of the priests of the diocese. Bishop Freeman thanked the congregation and all those who had organised, participated in, and attended the Mass.

After Mass and the closing of the Holy Door, refreshments were served in the local Presentation Primary School, including a

commemorative cake given to Bishop Freeman by fellow Callan man, Billy Keogh.

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Buddhism is Ireland's third biggest religion. How do Irish Buddhists live?

The Journal

<http://www.thejournal.ie/how-irish-buddhists-live-3130287-Dec2016/>

King's Hospital private school faces bullying allegations

Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/king-s-hospital-private-school-faces-bullying-allegations-1.2908810>

Church fears Luas works will decimate 'Black Santa' appeal

Irish Times

Members of the **Church of Ireland** in Dublin are angered that a barrier linked to Luas on Dawson Street remains outside St Ann's Church despite ...

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/church-fears-luas-works-will-decimate-black-santa-appeal-1.2909019>

Clare schoolkids close in on solving mystery of Irish soldier who died in WW1

The Journal

The sixth class at Parteen National School in Clare are trying to track down the soldier's family.

<http://www.thejournal.ie/cork-soldier-medal-3137096-Dec2016/>

Images of the Week

Irish Times

Photograph: Cyril Byrne/The **Irish** Times ... RTÉ Concert Orchestra help launch the Black Santa sit-out fundraising appeal at St Ann's **church** in Dublin.

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/images-of-the-week-1.2909076>

Tel/Times/BBC/Mail

Reports on response to the publication of the internal review into the workings of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, IICSA, published yesterday. Reports note that the first public hearing for the Anglican Church in England and Wales will be looking at the diocese of Chichester and this will be held in March 2018.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/child-abuse-inquiry-will-hold-just-four-hearings-to-cut-costs-j8d7fq029>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/16/government-child-sex-abuse-inquiry-interview-paedophiles-victims/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38344435>
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4041104/National-child-sexual-abuse-inquiry-retain-investigations-internal-review-concluded-not-scaled-back.html>

Tel/Times/BBC/Mail

Report on [statement released by York Minster](#) yesterday saying that bellringers from elsewhere volunteering to ring at the Minster this Christmas, have been subject to “intimidation” by supporters of the group who were asked to leave earlier this year. The statement notes that earlier this summer, it was necessary for the Chapter to take action relating to a member of the bell ringing band on safeguarding grounds and the decision was not accepted by the bellringing team which was then disbanded.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/volunteer-bellringers-facing-intimidation-at-york-minster-jpktfbn7k>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/16/york-minster-bell-ringers-sacked-stance-ongoing-abuse-risk-children/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-38343211>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-4041844/Silence-York-Minster-Christmas-bell-ringing-row.html>

Ind

A look at the role of the Christian Coptic Church in Egypt saying that that the president has failed to deliver on the promise of equality he made three years ago.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/how-egypts-copts-fell-out-of-love-with-president-sisi-a7470256.html>

Times

Ruth Gledhill takes a look at the modern nativity play. Article features a church-run nativity in Portsmouth (working with the community) and in Stoke on Trent (featuring asylum seekers from Iran and Iraq). Includes comment from CofE clergy linked with the plays and with ref to research by the Bible Society.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/no-room-for-the-new-as-nativities-stay-firmly-in-the-manger-0qbk9gvqb>

Tel

Report that rural families with poor broadband will be given cash vouchers worth hundreds of

pounds to spend on their own internet providers under plans being drawn up by Number 10. Article notes that WiSpire, a broadband provider part-owned by the Church of England, is one innovative firm that has impressed government. The company connects church towers with WiFi to bring broadband to areas too remote to get internet through more routine means.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/16/rural-families-poor-broadband-may-given-vouchers-spend-getting/>