



Image of the day - Donegore Parish Church, Connor

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Donegore Parish Church, Connor

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People and places

Christmas spirit: St Fin Barre's choir has no truck with Covid as it brings carols to the streets

Never mind the boys of the NYPD choir — the members of Cork's famous St Fin Barre's Cathedral choir are taking their uplifting and traditional carol service on a citywide tour by truck, Eoin English writes in the Irish Examiner.

The truck parked outside the city's Mercy University Hospital (MUH) yesterday and broadcast the performance via a big screen and special sound projection to staff and patients, many of whom watched from inside their hospital windows.

MUH's operations director, Carol Hunter, said it was a welcome relief to hear carols in the air: "It's been a very challenging year for everyone in the health service — not least those on the frontline and especially patients, who have had to endure restrictions on visits," she said. "So we welcome anything that lifts our spirits, that adds a bit of Christmas spirit."

The choir's annual Christmas carols performance, a highlight of Christmas in the city, was recorded at the landmark cathedral recently, in line with public health guidelines.

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The choir of St Fin Barre's Cathedral in Cork have turned the tables on Covid and Omicron by bringing a carol service to the public via the latest mobile LED screen technology mounted on a truck. Picture courtesy Larry Cummins

It can now be broadcast on a big screen from the back of a truck which will call to specific sites between now and next Tuesday.

The mobile carol service was launched last year as the country faced a winter wave of Covid.

Amid rising concerns about the surge of Omicron, Dean of Cork, the Very Rev Nigel Dunne, said the 50% capacity restrictions would mean hundreds of people would again miss out on this year's cathedral performance.

So, using the latest mobile LED screen technology and sound projection, St Fin Barre's Cathedral will be turned "inside out" to bring the performance to the people at

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St Fin Barre's Cathedral director of music, Peter Stobart, assistant director, Robbie Carroll, and the Dean of Cork, the Very Rev Nigel Dunne seeing the carol-mobile truck off from the doors of the cathedral yesterday. Picture courtesy Larry Cummins

various locations over the coming days, including hospitals, nursing homes, and the hospice.

"We are delighted that once again the Christmas cheer from the cathedral is shared with frontline workers and patients," he said.

It's still not the same as gathering in the cathedral in huge numbers and all present being allowed to sing, but at least this project brings some additional Christmas cheer to the streets of our city and our front line workers in these difficult times.

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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He said the initiative has been made possible due to the stalwart efforts of the St Fin Barre's Quarter Development Group and the generous support of Cork City Council and additional support from the cathedral.

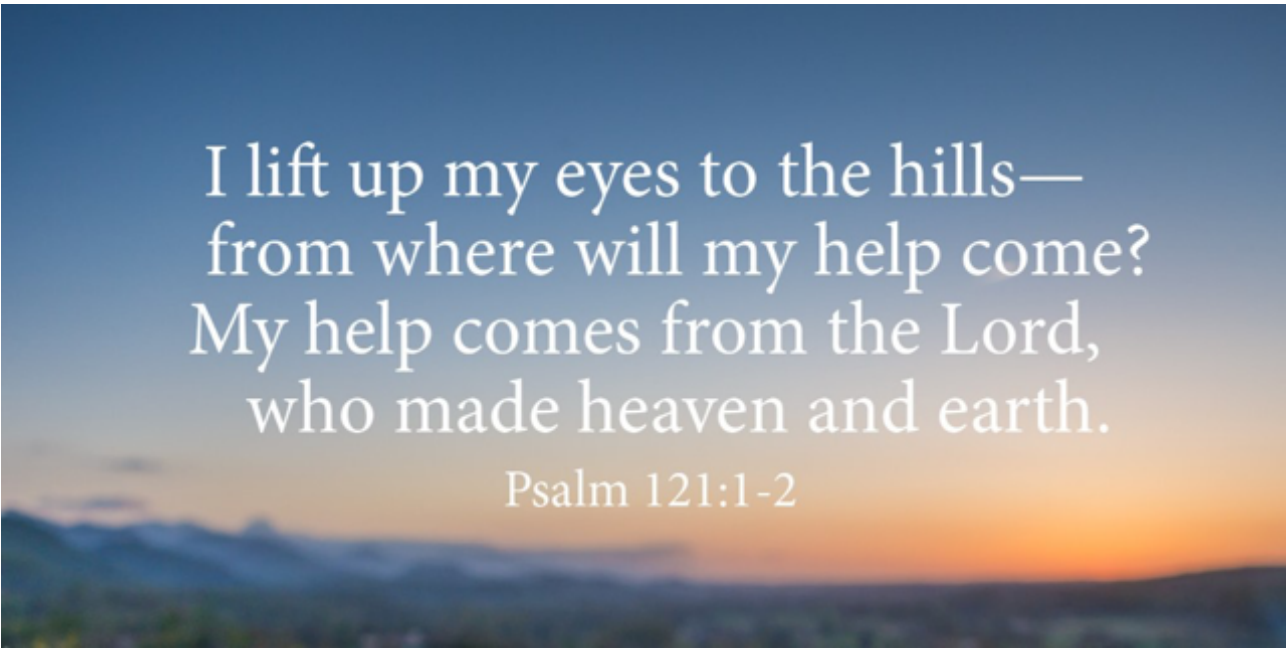
Chair of St Fin Barre's Quarter Development Committee, Eoin Murphy, welcomed the mobile carol service.

"The cathedral is at the heart of the historic St Fin Barre's Quarter and last year this hugely popular initiative demonstrated what a significant contribution it makes to Cork City especially at Christmas time," he said.

For me, the carol service has always symbolised the start of Christmas and now that tradition is expanded to include many people who cannot attend the performance in the cathedral.

This programme is sponsored by Cork City Council through their Reimagine GLOW Christmas programme.

Courtesy - Irish Examiner 17/12/2021



I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 121:1-2

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150 gifts or Christmas dinners delivered by caring parishioners of Ahoghill and Portglenone

Parishioners at St Colmanell's, Ahoghill and the Parish Church in Portglenone have gone out of their way to show love to some of the area's most vulnerable people in the run-up to Christmas.

Approximately 150 gifts or Christmas dinners were delivered by caring Christians from both Churches.

Their rector, Rev Dennis Christie, commented: "Well done to everyone who helped out in both our churches with Outreach in the run up to Christmas. At St Colmanell's we delivered over 90 outreach Christmas gifts to those in our communities who are elderly or unwell and aren't able to make it along to Church. Gifts were also given to all the residents of local care homes Gloonan Fold and Carnmoyne Nursing Home."

Dennis added: "At Portglenone Parish, given the usual Senior Citizen's Christmas Lunch was not possible this year, a team of volunteers decided to go ahead and make up the meals for delivery instead and distributed over 50 Christmas dinners to the doorsteps of some very grateful folk.

A massive thank you to all who helped with the preparations and deliveries. So good to see such teamwork", he smiled.

<https://www.thechurchpage.com/2021/12/17/ahoghill-and-portglenone-parishioners-show-christs-love-at-christmas/>

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A sandbag for Sudan in Kildare

A Kildare clergyman started a new festive tradition last week when he hung a sandbag on his mantelpiece instead of a Christmas stocking, to raise

awareness of the hunger crisis in flood-hit South Sudan.



Rev Philip McKinley is a newly ordained minister (a 'Deacon-Intern') serving in the Church of Ireland's Kildare and Newbridge Group of Parishes.

Normally deployed in flood prevention, the sandbag is being used as a reminder that extreme weather exacerbated by

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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 McKinley 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 churches and Rev McKinley 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.

Rev McKinley – who is originally from Whitechurch in Dublin – was ordained in St Brigid's Cathedral in Kildare in September. He made a number of visits to South Sudan between 2002 and 2012 and formed a lasting attachment to the country and its people:

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“South Sudan is a stunningly beautiful country with enormous potential so it’s heart-breaking to see such wonderful people suffer through famine and flooding. South Sudan’s plight has been largely ignored by the western world, therefore this Christmas we have an opportunity to collectively re-evaluate our priorities and help those in need, in South Sudan especially.”

Christian Aid Ireland Chief Executive Rosamond Bennett thanked Rev McKinley for highlighting the charity’s Christmas appeal:

“For many years, Rev McKinley has been standing in solidarity with the people of South Sudan. This Christmas, his ‘sandbag stocking’ is helping to raise awareness of the impact that the flooding has had on what was already a terrible hunger crisis there.”

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

Courtesy The Kildare Nationalist

No mince pies for two Wexford clergymen as they embark on four-day charity Christmas fast

There will be no mince pies or chocolate sweets for Wexford clergymen Canon Arthur Minion and Father Billy Swan as they embark on the annual four-day St Iberius Christmas Fast, which has raised upwards of €800,000 for charity over the past 30 years.



For Wexford parish administrator Father Swan, it will be his first fast while Reverend Minion is preparing for his 10th and final abstinence as he is transferring from Wexford and Kilsoran to the Birr Group of Parishes in the Diocese of Killaloe in February.

The pair are going without food from 6 p.m. on Monday, December 20 to Christmas Eve, December 24 at 6 p.m., and people can make donations directly to them, as they stand behind a screen on the steps of St. Iberius Church on the Main Street or online through www.idonate.ie/StIberiusChristmasFast.

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This year's event will be boosted by visits from Church of Ireland Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory, Michael Burrows and the Catholic Bishop of Ferns, Ger Nash.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts and books

Christmas Crackers - a review of broadcasts

Keep Christ in Christmas,

a Catholics Come Home special presentation EWTN
Saturday December 18, 7pm also Thursday (night)
December 23, 3.30am

A tour behind the scenes of the making of Santa's Priority, a Christmas evangomercial and discover what a small group of Catholics are doing to combat the secular war on Christmas and to glorify Jesus, the reason for the season.

In Concert: Christmas in Vienna EWTN Saturday December 18, 9.30pm

Celebrate Christ's birth with a special concert of international music by the Vienna Symphonic Orchestra, Singing Academy, and world-famous Vienna Boys' Choir performing Christmas songs from around the world.
Vox Nostra with Vlad Smishkewych RTÉ Lyric FM Sunday
December 19, 7.00am

[December 20, 2021](#)

The gift bag is full of early music this year – join Vlad for a pre-Christmas Vox Nostra with old favourites and new releases – yuletide carols and villancicos, Christmas sinfonias and concertos, and new early music releases for the festive season.

Sunday Morning Live BBC One Sunday December 19, 10.30am

Topical magazine show hosted by Sean Fletcher and Jacqui Joseph covering the week's talking points and exploring the ethical and religious issues of the day.

Mass RTÉ One Sunday December 19, 11.00am

Fr Bill O'Shaughnessy celebrates Mass on the Fourth Sunday of Advent with members of the Tallaght community. Music is led by Arabella Voices.

Heaven Made - BBC One

BBC One Sunday December 19, 11.30am also BBC Two Christmas Eve 8.20am

Following the nuns and monks at three Benedictine abbeys in England and Ireland as they craft traditional gifts for the upcoming Christmas festivities. Includes Kylemore Abbey (Ep. 2).

Give Up Yer Aul Sins

RTÉ One Sunday December 19, 11.50am also Christmas Day 8.55am

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The Birth Of Jesus: Give Up Yer Aul Sins is an Academy Award nominated short film, which humorously reenacts original recordings of Dublin schoolrooms in the 1960s.

Songs of Praise BBC One Sunday December 19, 1.15pm

Katherine Jenkins looks forward to Christmas with a host of festive favourite carols from Westminster Abbey, including Hark the Herald Angels Sing and O Come All Ye Faithful. There are special performances from the Abbey choir and from Gospel singer of the year Monique McKen with Tessera.

Christmas Concert from Knock

EWTN Sunday December 19, 8pm also Christmas Day 9.30pm and St Stephen's Day (night) 2am and Monday December 27, 10am

Experience the sights and sounds of Christmas from the Marian Shrine in Knock – concert of Christmas carols, sung by candlelight.

Have Yourself a Mary Little Christmas

RTÉ One Monday December 20, 10.30pm

For 27 years, Mary Kennedy presented the annual Carols show on RTÉ One. Here, she re-visits some of her favourites from those shows, including performances by Enya, Johnny Logan, Sinéad O'Connor, Mick Flannery and Susan O'Neill, Donal Lunny, Ralph McTell, Imelda May, Loah and Lisa Hannigan and Eimear Quinn.

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Reclaiming the carol

EWTN Monday (night) December 20, 4am also Tuesday December 21, 11am

The late Charles Dickens returns to find that A Christmas Carol, and the holiday it celebrates, has become overshadowed by glitz and commercialism in this touching story about the true meaning of Christmas.

Luke: Meek scribe of Christ

EWTN Tuesday December 21, 2.30pm also Christmas Eve (night) 2am

Dr Timothy O'Donnell explains St Luke's focus on God's mercy, his sensitivity toward women portrayed in the Gospel, the events in Jesus' life, the Holy Spirit and how he writes in a historical context.

Scotland's Sacred Islands

With Ben Fogle BBC Two Wednesday December 22, 6.20am

Ben Fogle explores the ancient sea roads of the Inner Hebrides. He visits Iona, the cradle of Christianity, and learns how Columba's legacy inspires people today.

The Universal Mass with the African Gospel Choir

RTÉ Lyric FM Thursday December 23, 11am

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A new sung Mass composed by J.J. O'Shea, who has invited various groups to perform it and give their own interpretation, drawing on their tradition, idiom and culture.

Heaven Made

BBC Two Thursday December 23, 8.15am

Following the nuns and monks at three Benedictine abbeys in England and Ireland as they craft traditional gifts for the upcoming Christmas festivities. (Ep. 1).

Amazing Grace

TG4 Thursday December 23, 10.30pm also BBC Two Christmas Eve 11pm

Aretha Franklin: A critically acclaimed must-see Gospel concert documentary recording a seminal performance in Aretha Franklin's career in 1972, with a local Baptist choir and the Revd James Cleveland – a huge inspiration in her early musical career.

Carols from King's

BBC Four Thursday (night) December 23, 12.30am

On the sixtieth anniversary of this Christmas institution, Juliet Stevenson narrates the story of Carols from King's, how it was first televised in 1954 and how each year the soloist is selected for the traditional opening of Once In Royal David's City.

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The Universal Mass with Emma Langford

RTÉ Lyric FM Christmas Eve 11am

A new sung Mass, composed by J.J. O'Shea. The second setting is an accompanied Mass sung by award-winning singer Emma Langford in a setting for string quartet composed and arranged by guitarist and composer Paul de Grae.

Carols from King's

BBC Two Christmas Eve 6.15pm and Christmas Day 8.45am and BBC Four Thurs (night) 12.30am

Directed by Daniel Hyde, the world-famous choir sings carols old and new including The Holly and the Ivy, In the Stillness and O Holy Night.

Solemn Mass of Christmas Eve

EWTN Christmas Eve 6.30 pm

Pope Francis presides over Christmas Eve Mass from St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican

Christmas Carols: Christmas In St Patrick's

RTÉ One Christmas Eve 8.15 pm and Christmas Day 9am

Dáithí Ó Sé hosts this festive show in St Patrick's Cathedral, newly restored in time for its 800th anniversary. Performers and guests include Andrea Corr, Declan O'Rourke, Lisa

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O'Neill, the Choir of St Patrick's Cathedral and the RTÉ Concert Orchestra.

Midnight Mass RTÉ One Christmas Eve 11pm

Mass of the Nativity presided over by Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin from the Church of St James, Grange, Co. Louth. Music led by Grange Parish Ensemble, with soloists Zoe Conway and John McIntyre.

Midnight Mass BBC One Christmas Eve 11.45pm

Celebrate the traditional first Mass of Christmas with a joyful service live from St Chad's Cathedral in the heart of Birmingham.

A Christmas Leap of Faith

RTÉ Radio One Christmas Day 8am

Michael Comyn offers a festive mix of warmth, music, inspiration and humour in the company of a variety of guests.

The Cork Nativity

RTÉ One Christmas Day 9.55am

The people of Cork bring the Gospel story of the nativity to life in a variety of settings across the rebel county in this charming, multi award-winning short film.

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Mass For Christmas Day

RTÉ One Christmas Day 10am

Fr Tom McCarthy OP offers commentary and translation for this Eurovision Mass from la Chapelle du Christ-Souverain-Prêtre (the Chapel of Christ, the Sovereign Priest), La Clarté-Dieu, in Orsay, Northern France.

Urbi et Orbi

RTÉ One Christmas Day 11am also EWTN 11am

Pope Francis delivers his traditional message and blessing “to the city and to the world” from St Peter’s Basilica, Vatican City.

Aifreann Lá Nollag

Raidio na Gaeltachta Lá Nollag 11.30am

Ó Séipéal Naomh Ainnín, An Cnoc, Indreabhán, Gaillimh.
An tAthair Clement Mac Mánuis is é an sagart.²

The Archbishops’ Christmas Message

RTÉ One Christmas Day 12.15pm

The Catholic and Church of Ireland Primates of All-Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin and Archbishop John McDowell, offer a Christmas message and blessing.

Angela’s Christmas

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RTÉ Two Christmas Day 6.15pm

Set in Ireland in the early 1900s, Angela's Christmas is a funny, heart-warming and poignant story about the power of family and the innocent desire of a child to ensure everyone is safe, warm and loved at Christmas time.

Angela's Christmas Wish

RTÉ One Christmas Day 7.25pm

Angela's Christmas Wish is a heart-warming story of a determined little girl who sets out on an adventure to reunite her family in time for Christmas. She and her family set out on a new Christmas adventure in their hometown of Limerick in the early 1900s.

Songs of Praise BBC One St Stephen's Day

BBC One 1.15pm

Daniel O'Donnel's faith journey: Claire McCollum is in Ireland to meet the ever-popular Daniel O'Donnell as he



Worry is interest paid on
trouble before it comes due. –
William Ralph

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celebrates his 60th birthday to find out how his strong Catholic faith motivates his life and his singing.

News Reports

Call for urgent solution to alleviate kosher food shortages in Northern Ireland

The UK Government and EU have been urged to find an “urgent solution” over the shortages of kosher food in Northern Ireland.

A prominent member of the Jewish community in the region has warned that cupboards are “nearly bare” due to trade restrictions under the post-Brexit Northern Ireland Protocol.

The Equality Commission and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission have joined the call for the shortages of kosher food to be addressed.

The shortages have been attributed to “practical difficulties of finding suppliers from Great Britain to undertake the complicated process of delivering these supplies to Northern Ireland”.

The protocol has led to additional checks on goods arriving into Northern Ireland from Great Britain in a bid to prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland.

Michael Black, chair of the Belfast Jewish Community, said they are facing “enormous difficulties in the practice of our faith”.



Chair of the Belfast Jewish Community Michael Black with Alyson Kilpatrick, NIHRC and Geraldine McGahey, ECNI

“Due to the new barriers, our cupboards are nearly bare of kosher foods,” he said.

“Our local community is facing enormous difficulties in the practice of our faith.

“If these shortages are not addressed soon, we will face real difficulty daily as well as in celebrating major events in our religious calendar such as the Jewish Passover in April.

“Ultimately these shortages may impact on the viability of our historic community in Belfast.

“We have had many promises, but we need action and would urge all parties to get involved to work constructively and quickly to find a solution.”

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In a joint statement Geraldine McGahey, chief commissioner of the Equality Commission, and Alyson Kilpatrick, chief commissioner of NIHRC, said minority faith groups must not be overlooked.

“It is really important that minority groups such as our local Jewish community are protected in post-Brexit Northern Ireland. The commissions have raised this matter with the House of Lords Sub Committee on the IrelandNorthern Ireland Protocol,” they said.

“Under Article 2 of the Northern IrelandIreland Protocol, the UK Government has committed to maintaining certain equality and human rights after Brexit.

“Both commissions have been given additional powers and responsibilities to ensure that the UK Government upholds this commitment and also have a role in considering and assessing the impact of Brexit on our faith-based communities.

“We will continue to monitor closely the negotiations in relation to the export of chilled meats from GB to NI and assess the potential impact on religious groups and their ability to access food and ritual products.

“As small communities, minority faith groups must not be overlooked in Northern Ireland.



Perspective

Singing multiplies the hope and meaning of Christmas

by Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York

We pray twice when we sing, but sadly outside church and football communal singing no longer has a place in our culture

When church buildings were able to reopen earlier this year and we came back to worship in person, to begin with, singing was not allowed. I don't think I was the only one who was left a bit nonplussed by some of the Government's guidelines at the time. In the summer, as England made their way to the final of the Euros, thousands sang lustily in the stands at Wembley Stadium, but small, socially distanced congregations on Sunday were instructed to remain silent.

St Augustine is supposed to have said that he who sings prays twice. Scholars can find no record of this, but it's a fascinating thought. Now that we are allowed to sing again, I've been thinking about the power of singing, how I've missed it, and how it intensifies speech and prayer. I'm thinking primarily of singing in worship, but I can't help also thinking of Strauss's Four Last Songs or Leonard Cohen's final album.

When we sing, we pray twice because, first of all, we pay greater attention to the words. We shape and taste each

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syllable within the ebb and flow of melody and metre. When there is harmony too, each word is broadened out. You hear and experience layers and even subterranean strata of meaning. I'm thinking of the resonant, deep bass in Rachmaninov's All-Night Vigil. We hear it in our gut as well as through our ears. In unison with other voices, we pray 100 times and become one voice.

One of the highlights of my Christmas used to be my mother singing in the Scratch Messiah at the Royal Albert Hall each year. Covid has got in the way of that. But it was a fabulous experience: hundreds gathered for the single purpose of singing Handel's wonderful music. Music changes us. It amplifies and expands our praise. It brings joy to our praying. Moreover, singing is good for you! Earlier this year, Opera North published 10 reasons why. Here are a few of them. Singing releases serotonin and dopamine, the "happy chemicals" that boost your mood. It increases lung capacity. And good deep breathing is one of the better and cheaper ways of beating stress. Oliver Rundell, the chorus master at Opera North, says: "Tune out the rest of the world. Enjoy the physical sensation of breathing in and creating a note with your body." Perhaps that is why we pray twice when we sing. Our whole body is involved.

On Christmas night, the Angels sang.

Just like the crowd at Wembley, song is the only language that will do the job. Sadly, outside of church and football, communal singing no longer has much of a place in our culture. But we still long for it. Isn't this one of the reasons that Christmas carol services continue to grow in popularity?

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They are the one repertoire of songs that many of us still know; and this makes it easier to join in.

But it's not just this. It is the particular song that we sing at Christmas, the song of the angels: peace on Earth, goodwill to everyone. This song speaks to the human heart, and lifts our hearts and voices to pray as well, draws us back to Bethlehem and the mystery of God among us, retuning our hearts to heaven's no-longer-elusive wavelength. And what do we long for this Christmas, if not peace on Earth? We pray for peace with the earth as we navigate our way through our climate crisis. We pray for peace with one another in our families and communities, but also for the fragile cargoes of human life that cross the Channel. This song is a song of hope out of hopelessness and, pointing to Christ, shows us how we need to change and where help is available. It beckons us to join in. It is a promise for the whole of life, for the whole earth, and for our whole being.

If I had been in the Royal Albert Hall this year listening to Messiah, I would be waiting for my favourite bit, that sudden gear change in the Hallelujah chorus where the choir in magnificent voice declares: "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." The text from the Book of Revelation is expanded. It is celebrated. It is the hope and meaning of Christmas multiplied by song. Courtesy the Daily Telegraph 18/12/2021



Poem for today

Winter Dusk by Walter De La Mere

Dark frost was in the air without,
The dusk was still with cold and gloom,
When less than even a shadow came
And stood within the room.

But the three around the fire,
None turned a questioning head to look,
Still read a clear voice, on and on,
Still stooped they o'er their book.

The children watched their mother's eyes
Moving on softly line to line;
It seemed to listen too -- that shade,
Yet made no outward sign.

The fire-flames crooned a tiny song,
No cold wind moved the wintry tree;
The children both in Faerie dreamed
Beside their mother's knee.

And nearer yet that spirit drew
Above that heedless one, intent
Only on what the simple words
Of her small story meant.

No voiceless sorrow grieved her mind,
No memory her bosom stirred,
Nor dreamed she, as she read to two,

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'Twas surely three who heard.

Yet when, the story done, she smiled
From face to face, serene and clear,
A love, half dead, sprang up, as she
Leaned close and drew them near

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