



Bishops Bid to Break Christmas Jumpers Record

Bishop Ken Good and Bishop Donal McKeown swapped their customary clerical garb for garish Christmas jumpers for a couple of hours on Sunday afternoon. The church leaders were part of the throng hoping to set a new Guinness world record in the centre of Londonderry for the

largest number of people wearing Christmas jumpers in one place.

Among those taking part in the world record attempt were the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Alderman Hilary McClintock, Deputy Mayor Councillor Jim McKeever and the Foyle MP Mark Durkan

Participants gathered in Guildhall Square, beneath the iconic City Walls, before passing through Magazine Gate where they were checked and counted. The first person through the gate was a 92 year old man wearing the number 92.

The current record of 3,473 had been set in Kansas City in the United States, and officials from the Guinness Book of Records were in Londonderry to verify whether the latest attempt had been successful. The result won't be known until later in the week.

The event was organised to raise money for a number of local charities including the Foyle Hospice, Children in Crossfire, Concern and Tearfund.

Poignant service in Derry for US Naval Personnel

Around 250 crew members from the American guided missile destroyer, USS Mason, took part in a commemoration event in the grounds of the Beech Hill Country House Hotel on the outskirts of Londonderry, on Sunday afternoon.

The event, which included an inter-denominational service at nearby St Mary's Church in Ardmore, was organised in remembrance of the 75th anniversary of the opening of US naval base, 'Base One Europe', at Beechill Camp in 1941. The ship's company lined up in uniform as a wreath was laid in front of a Celtic Cross in the hotel grounds in honour of sailors and marines from Base One Europe who had lost their lives in World War II.

The Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Ken Good, and the Bishop of Derry, Dr Donal McKeown, led prayers at the church service, where they were joined by the minister of First Derry Presbyterian Church, Dr David Latimer, the Parish Priest of Waterside Fr Michael Canny and the Parish Priest of Ardmore Fr Neil Farren.



One of Ireland's best-known pianists and composers, Phil Coulter, performed at the service, accompanied by the distinguished arranger and musician Frank Gallagher. Music was also provided by the Colmcille Ladies Choir.

Among those who attended the event were the Nobel Laureate, John Hume, and ex-servicemen from the Royal British Legion and the Irish armed forces. The commemoration was organised jointly by the author and filmmaker Dr Mary Pat Kelly and the owner of the Beech Hill Hotel Patsy O'Kane

Bishop Good was accompanied by his wife, Mary, who is an American by birth and whose father served in the US Navy.

The original USS Mason was the first ship in the US Navy to have an all African-American crew, and its sailors were among the thousands of allied servicemen and women who were stationed in Londonderry during the Second World War. The city was the headquarters for the Allied fleet during the Battle of the Atlantic.

Tipperary Peace Convention now accepting nominations

The Tipperary Peace Convention has announced that it is now accepting nominations for the 2016 Tipperary International Peace Award.

Speaking this week, the secretary of the Convention, Martin Quinn, said that “The nomination process is open to members of the public and to representatives of organisations and associations. A shortlist of nominees will be announced on January 1st, 2017 and the Award winner will be announced soon afterwards. The Award will be presented in Tipperary on a date to be confirmed in 2017.”

The Tipperary Peace Award was founded in 1984, with the first recipient being the late Seán McBride, a former TD and one of the founders of Amnesty International.

The decision to found a peace prize was sparked when a group of locals realised that the World War I song, 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary', written by Jack Judge, had left Tipperary internationally associated with conflict. For the past 32 years, the Tipperary Peace Convention has worked to honour those who devote their lives to ending conflict and promoting human rights.

Past recipients include former South African President, the late Nelson Mandela; former President of Ireland, Mary McAleese and her husband, Martin McAleese; the late Senator Edward Kennedy and former US Ambassador to Ireland, Jean Kennedy Smith; and Pakistani school girl, Malala Yousafzai.

The 2015 award recipient was US Secretary of State, John Kerry, who received his award at a presentation ceremony in the Glen of Aherlow, Tipperary, on 30 October last.

Mr Quinn said that the "Tipperary Peace Convention now welcomes nominations for the

2016 Award. Nominations must be submitted in writing and should include a brief resumé of the person/s work for peace and why you consider that the person/s should receive the Tipperary International Peace Award. Nominations should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Tipperary Peace Convention, 18 Father Matthew Street, Tipperary Town, Co. Tipperary and the closing date for receipt of nominations is Wednesday December 28th 2016. Nominations can be submitted by E-Mail to: martinquinns@eircom.net."

Christian Aid's supporters in Wales walk from Bethlehem to Egypt

With just ten days to go before Christmas, Christian Aid Wales staff and supporters successfully completed their 140-mile journey across Wales to help Light The Way for the millions of people fleeing conflict and violence, raising an amazing £20,000 along the way.

The walkers reached their destination, the hamlet of Yr Aifft (Egypt) in Denbighshire, on Thursday (15th) afternoon and were welcomed later that evening by the Gregory Cameron, Bishop of St



Asaph, for a service at St Asaph Cathedral to mark the journey's completion.

The 12 day #EscapeToEgypt walk (Sunday 4th December – Thursday 15th December) was organised to mimic the Biblical Christmas story of Jesus' family's journey from Bethlehem to Egypt, travelling from Bethlehem in Carmarthenshire to the hamlet of Yr Aifft (Egypt) in Denbighshire, holding events in towns and villages along the way. The walk saw hundreds of supporters donning their walking boots to join the core group of five – Huw Thomas (Cardiff), Anna Jane Evans (Caernarfon), Peredur Owen Griffiths (Caerphilly), Nan Powell-Davies (Mold) and Aled Edwards (Pontypridd).

Huw Thomas, Head of Christian Aid Wales, said: “We planned this journey to walk in solidarity with those who are suffering and to raise support for Christian Aid’s work that offers a brighter future for many lives worldwide. Along the way we have shared stories with communities, churches and schools that offer a glimpse into the desperate situations faced by so many and had the privilege to share about the transformational work Christian Aid does to bring light and hope. The humbling reality for us is that the experiences of refugees are worlds away from the experiences of our journey this December. We may never be touched by the same fear of violence. But the response of Welsh communities to the appeal and the hospitality shown truly reflects a welcome for all and a strong desire to play our part in bringing light to some of the darkest places in the world today.”

The completion of the walk comes alongside the welcome news that all councils in Wales will have housed Syrian refugees by the end of the year.

The walkers visited many schools to share and collect Christmas cards by pupils with messages for the Prime Minister. The Christmas cards call on Teresa May to ensure the words she uses

reflect the proud tradition in the UK of welcome to those in need and ask that her policies offer hope to those looking for a safe place to call home.

Just £5 could give an essential set of clothes to a person fleeing violence, £11 could supply a week's worth of hygiene essentials to a family of five in Serbia, and £50 could provide seeds and tools to help a family forced out of their home in the DRC to grow food to feed themselves.

For information, or to donate to the Christmas Appeal, visit www.christianaid.org.uk/Christmas
To sponsor the walkers: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Cymorth-Cristnogol-Cymru or text FFOI60 £2/£5/£10 to 70070 to donate now

Evangelical protestant's birthday wishes on Pope's 80th birthday

Pope Francis was 80 on Saturday. At his general audience today the crowds sang 'happy birthday' to him in advance, prompting him to remark: "Thank you very much for your greetings for my upcoming birthday. But I'll tell you something that will make you laugh. In my country, expressing

greetings ahead of time brings bad luck and those who do it are jinxers."

The Vatican set up special email addresses for anyone wanting to wish him many happy returns.

Here's what one evangelical Protestant hopes for the Pope's remaining years.

1. I hope he stands up to bullies. His encyclical *Amoris Laetitia* ("The Joy of Love") is a moving reflection on what love means in today's world. He's tried to put grace first, without budging on the Church's teaching about marriage. Lots of conservatives say it's confusing and they're pushing back. I hope they can learn to live with confusion; life is messier than theology would like it to be.

2. I hope he carries on enjoying life. Pope Francis has lived by his faith for decades. It isn't exactly mine, but it's clear that he knows and loves Christ and is known and loved by him. In the evening of his life, I hope he's able to look back with some satisfaction and a sense that it was well spent.

3. I hope he learns from his predecessor.

Pope Benedict XVI retired when he felt he couldn't carry on effectively any longer, and that sets a good precedent. Queen Elizabeth has vowed never to do so, but that's a bit different: the Pope is the chief executive of a vast organisation, and it needs someone at the helm who can manage it. John Paul II went on far too long, and it was just sad. If Francis were to retire in a few years it might be good for the Church as well as for him.

4. I hope he carries on provoking

people. Francis is very well-read theologically, but he isn't – as Benedict was – primarily a theologian, but a pastor. He speaks from the heart about real people, and being Pope hasn't detached him from their real-life experience. What he says sometimes isn't what you'd expect a Pope to say, but it comes from a heart full of grace.

5. I hope he carries on reaching out to people

like me. The besetting temptation of the Roman Catholic Church has always been pride – the sense that it, and it alone, is the true Church and that everyone else is just wrong. Formally, it has to keep on believing that. But in practice, Francis'

behaviour has set a different tone in relationships with Protestant and Orthodox Churches. It has not always been reciprocated, but that hasn't stopped him.

Pope Francis has been a great ambassador not just for the Roman Catholic Church, but for the whole Church.

Felicem diem natalem.

News briefs

+++ Leighton Carols by Candlelight - Carols

By Candlelight services will be held in St Lasarian's Cathedral on Tuesday, December 20th @ 8 p.m. and at Grange Sylvae, Goresbridge on Wednesday, December 20th @ 8 p.m. Both services will be followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

+++ New Mothers' Union branch - a new branch of the Mothers' Union was inaugurated in St Lasarian's Cathedral, Old Leighlin, on Sunday at the main Eucharist by the Revd Margaret Sykes, Diocesan President. The Mothers' Union is open to women and men and the 2017

enrolment in Leighlin will reflect this membership. The Leighlin branch will be the newest branch of the Mothers' Union in the diocese of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory and in the wider Church of Ireland.

+++ Glenavy Festive Night - In keeping with its motto 'Your community working together,' Glenavy Community Partnership hosted a great evening of festive fun at 'Glenavy Festive Light Night' on December 14. The special guests were the Mayor and Mayoress of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Councillor Brian Bloomfield MBE and Mrs Rosalind Bloomfield, who are members of Lambeg Parish. A 'Lantern Parade' along Main Street was followed by the switch-on of the Christmas tree lights by the Mayor, at the entrance to Glenaidan Youth project. Refreshments were served afterwards in the nearby St Aidan's Church Hall. The Rev John Rutter (rector of Glenavy Parish) and the Rev John Farr (rector of Stoneyford Parish) took part.

+++ Australian Archbishop retires early on safeguarding issues - The Archbishop of Perth, Roger Herft, is to take early retirement, he said last week. The announcement comes two months after [he voluntarily stood aside](#) from his

duties after admitting that he failed to act on repeated reports that some priests in his former diocese of Newcastle, in the Anglican Church of Australia, were sexually abusing children. Archbishop Roger told his diocesan Council that he would continue to take accrued leave until he retires on 7 July 2017, a year ahead of schedule. The Diocesan Council thanked the Archbishop for “his significant contribution to the Anglican Church of Australia and the wider Anglican Communion over 43 years of faithful ministry, and particularly as Archbishop of Perth since 2005.” A Royal Commission in Australia is currently investigating how child abuse claims were handled by a number of institutions. The Church of England and the Church in Wales are the subjects of a similar investigation in the UK. In August, Archbishop Roger admitted that he had given “incorrect” evidence under oath to the Commission when he denied knowledge of accusations against a priest.

+++ New Zealand cathedral open for Christmas - The congregation of St Paul's Cathedral in Wellington will return to their building for Christmas services after a safety cordon around it was lifted. Much of the cathedral building was within the cordon, which was

imposed after last month's earthquake amid fears that a neighbouring nine-storey building might collapse on top of it. Demolition experts have reduced the height of that building to a safe level and last week the city's engineers reduced the size of the cordon, opening up the cathedral for use once again.

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

York Press

Reports that thousands of children have been making a difference in their local community over the past year as part of a programme run by The Archbishop of York Youth Trust. The York-based charity has recently published its 2016 Year in Review, celebrating the work of the Trust and the achievements of young people completing the Young Leaders Awards at Key Stage 2, 3 and 4. This year, 7,784 children and young people took part in 973 days of social action and volunteering work to achieve their award.

<http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/14973989.York-charity-hails-its-busiest-year-yet/>

Yorkshire Post

Q and A with the Archbishop of York for the paper's *My Yorkshire* feature. Archbishop Sentamu speaks about his favourite people and places.

<http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/analysis/my-yorkshire-the-archbishop-of-york-dr-john-sentamu-on-his-favourite-people-and-places-1-8295033>

Tel

Report that Muslims in London have donated 10 tonnes of food to feed the homeless in a charity drive organised by Muslim Aid and the East London Mosque in Whitechapel. The food will be given to the homeless charity Crisis. The article quotes Rev Bernadette Hegarty, of St Paul's Church, Bow Common, in east London.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/18/muslims-donate-10-tonnes-food-charity-drive-homeless-christmas/>

BBC

Report that bell-ringers at York Minster, who were dismissed in the autumn for not accepting a safeguarding decision made by the Chapter, have denied intimidating other ringers who might replace them. This follows a statement made by

the Chapter of York Minster on Friday which said that some ringers approached to help out over Christmas had been subject to intimidation.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-38356925>

Premier

Report on yesterday's Mail on Sunday (MoS) article, which quoted church sources, on a proposal being drawn up by bishops for General Synod which suggests gay clergy should no longer have to assure their bishops they will abstain from sex. The MoS article noted they will be expected to follow the CofE guidelines which state that clergy in a same sex relationship should be celibate.

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Questions-over-Church-of-England-celibacy-vows-for-gay-clergy>

Premier

Report on a comment piece in the Mail on Sunday (MoS) yesterday by Lord Carey, in which he asked 'Why don't we teach migrants we are a Christian country?' In the MoS article, Lord Carey propose more questions about Christianity in the British citizenship test.

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Former-archbishop-get-more-Christianity-in-citizenship-tests>

Mail on Sun

Report, quoting church sources, on a proposal being drawn up by bishops for General Synod which suggests gay clergy should no longer have to assure their bishops they will abstain from sex.

But article notes they will be expected to follow the CofE guidelines which state that clergy in a same sex relationship should be celibate. Article adds that many bishops now felt it was unfair for one group of clerics to face intrusive questioning about their sex lives while heterosexuals did not, and that all clergy should be trusted equally to conform to the Church's guidelines.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4044588/Church-England-leaders-set-spark-fresh-homosexuality-row-ending-celibacy-vows-gay-vicars.html#ixzz4TAmQpZAn>

BBC/Exp

Interview with Prince Harry for an ITV documentary about his charity work in Lesotho, where he says it is important 'to just do good'.

"Whether it's in your local community, your village, your local church, walking down the

street, opening a door for an old lady, helping them cross the road."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38355368>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/744719/Prince-Harry-in-Africa-opens-up-struggles-royal-duties-Lesotho-ITV>

BBC/Mail

Report that donkeys have been taken away from a Vale of Glamorgan church nativity after a child was bitten. A spokeswoman for the Church in Wales apologised and said the Church had acted swiftly after Thursday's bite.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-38351378>

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4044324/Two-donkeys-banished-church-s-nativity-play-one-BIT-excited-toddler-leaving-boy-tears.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490

Comment Mail

Former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey asks why don't we teach migrants we are a Christian country?

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-4044714/Why-don-t-teach-migrants->

December 20

[CHRISTIAN-country-asks-former-archbishop-
Canterbury-LORD-CAREY.html](#)