



A Largs pensioner's wish came true when a carol she had written was performed for the first time at Paisley Abbey.

Choir makes pensioner's Christmas wish come true

Catherine Murray, 82, and her daughter Fiona White were at the historic Paisley Abbey to hear her new carol performed by the Abbey Choristers in front of hundreds of people at a Christmas

carol service for the ACCORD Hospice.

The surprise performance came after Mrs Murray wrote to the Church of Scotland with a Christmas wish. Tucked inside the envelope, along with her letter, were the words and music for 'Christmas Morning', a new carol she had written herself.

Mrs Murray wrote: "I thought perhaps the children might like to hear a carol meant especially for them...I will be 83 soon and would love to hear this Carol being sung by a wee group of children."

The minister at Paisley Abbey, Rev Alan Birss, agreed to help make Catherine's wish come true.

Mrs Murray said she could not have asked for a more perfect place or occasion to hear her carol sung for the first time.

"I honestly feel like I'm in a dream. This is almost unreal," she said. "I can't put into words what it means to me to hear my carol sung in Paisley Abbey by such a wonderful group of singers.

"I love children and I love music so this couldn't have been more perfect. The children's voices

were amazing,”

After the service Mr Birss said: “We were delighted to be able to make it possible for Mrs Murray to hear her carol sung by the choristers in the Abbey.

“It is a very lovely tune, very easy to listen to and it fitted beautifully into the carol service.”

Mrs Murray ran a bed and breakfast in Crieff with her husband James for 10 years after his retirement from Glasgow police. Mr Murray died in 2002 and Mrs Murray then moved to Largs, where she attends St Johns Church. She enjoys writing poems and creating music on her keyboard but this was the first time one of her songs has been performed in public.

The Abbey's Musical Director, Professor George McPhee, who put together the arrangement of ‘Christmas Morning’ sung today, said the choir would be happy to perform Mrs Murray’s carol again.

“The choristers immediately took to it and they found it very singable and very appealing,” he said. “Obviously Mrs Murray has an intuitive gift for writing melodies and I hope that others will take it up.”

Moderator's tribute to humanitarian work of Irish Naval Service

The Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar, was in County Cork last weekend to visit the Irish Naval Service at its base at Haulbowline in Cork Harbour and to visit local congregations.

During his visit Dr. Sellar met officers, NCO's and ratings on L.É James Joyce (P62), one of the Service's three Offshore Patrol Vessels. It returned to the Naval Base in September after being deployed in the Mediterranean for three months.

“My visit on Saturday was an opportunity to strengthen the links that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has with all branches of the Irish Defence Forces. It was also an occasion when I could pay tribute to the Naval Service for its sterling humanitarian work in the Mediterranean, where its members have rescued 15,000 migrants in the last two years.

“As recently as the start of this month, the LÉ Samuel Beckett, sister ship of LÉ James Joyce which returned to port on Friday, assisted in an

operation that rescued around 140 migrants attempting to make the dangerous journey from north Africa."



The Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar, (second left) on board the L.É James Joyce at the Naval Base, Haulbowline, County Cork, with Sub Lieutenant Aaron Nutley, Lieutenant Commander Dave Memery and Colin Jenkins, of the Seamen's Christian Friend Society.

During his weekend visit to County Cork, Dr. Sellar also spent Sunday speaking and taking part in the carol services at Aghada Presbyterian and Trinity Presbyterian Church in Cork city on Sunday.

Dr. Sellar explained that he first met members of the Irish Defence Forces in 1999 in the Middle East. "I was with one of my predecessors as Moderator who was on a pastoral visit to the Irish Army in Lebanon, who were there as part of the United Nations peace keeping force. It was a privilege to meet their counterparts in the Navy this weekend," Dr. Sellar said.

Father John Coughlan appointed Director of Formation at the Pontifical Irish College, Rome

Father John Coughlan, Curate at Saint Joseph's Parish, Boyle, in the Diocese of Elphin, has been appointed Director of Formation at the Pontifical Irish College, Rome, commencing next Summer. Father Coughlan will remain in Saint Joseph's Parish, Boyle in the interim, before going to Rome to take up his new responsibilities.

Father Coughlan is 36 years of age and is a native of Riverstown Parish in Elphin Diocese. He was ordained to the priesthood in 2008 following seven years of formation at Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth. He has previously

served as chaplain at Sligo IT and as Curate in Athlone and is currently a member of the Diocesan Vocations Team. He completed his License in Theology (a third-level teaching qualification) with First Class Honours in 2015.

Earlier this month, the Trustees of the Pontifical Irish College asked Bishop Kevin to release Father Coughlan for his new mission, which will see him take a share in the responsibility of helping young men from all over Ireland to prepare themselves for the priesthood. He takes up his role at a very interesting time, because the Congregation for the Clergy (the Vatican Department responsible for seminaries) has just published *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, a new set of guidelines for the formation of priests.

Announcing the appointment today, Bishop Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin said, “The Pontifical Irish College has played a very significant role in the history of the Irish Church, and has provided priests for Ireland for almost four hundred years.

Father Coughlan’s appointment is our way of saying that the Diocese of Elphin believes in the future of the priesthood. We hope that, in the coming years, we will be able to send seminarians both to the Irish College and to

Maynooth. I will be happy to meet any single man from the age of eighteen upwards who is on a journey of faith and who is open to considering the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood in the Diocese of Elphin. It is a decision I made myself almost fifty years ago and one which I have never regretted.”

Many Elphin priests have studied at the Irish College over the years. Bishop Dominic Conway was Rector of the College in the 1960's and Bishop Doran served as Spiritual Director there from 1990 to 1995.

US Episcopal Church plans Revivals for 2017-18

The Episcopal Church has announced that it will be holding a series of six Revivals in 2017 and 2018. It stated:

The [Episcopal Church](#) is working with diocesan teams to organize a series of Episcopal Revivals in 2017 and 2018, six major events that promise to stir and renew hearts for Jesus, to equip Episcopalians as evangelists, and to welcome

people who aren't part of a church to join the Jesus Movement.

"I love the surprised response when people hear we're organizing Episcopal Revivals," said the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, the Presiding Bishop's Canon for Evangelism, Reconciliation and Stewardship of Creation. "Why wouldn't we? A revival is a movement of the Spirit among the people of God, a concrete sign that we want to share God's love out loud with each other and with new people. That sounds like the Jesus Movement."

The six Episcopal Revivals will vary in design, but most will be multi-day events that feature dynamic worship and preaching, offerings from local artists and musicians, personal testimony and storytelling, topical speakers, invitation to local social action, engagement with young leaders, and intentional outreach with people who aren't active in a faith community.

The Revivals rise from partnerships of diocesan leadership and the Presiding Bishop's Office for [Evangelism Initiatives](#). Neighbouring dioceses are welcomed and encouraged to join.

Revivals are multi-day events filled with such elements as energizing worship and prayers

services, dynamic preachers, mesmerizing music, personal testimony and storytelling, topical speakers, and a call to action.

“These ‘Jesus Movement’ Revivals will motivate, equip, and mobilize dioceses to love and follow Jesus and to engage in his work of evangelism and reconciliation,” said Carrie Boren Headington, the church’s Consulting Evangelist for Revivals, who also serves as Missioner for Evangelism in the Diocese of Dallas. “We’re beginning months beforehand with research and training for leaders to learn about the locations where God has placed them and to build faithful relationship with their neighbors and communities. Then we work with local teams to shape an inspiring gathering that shares the good news in word and deed.”

Spellers explained that the Revivals serve as a foundation for continued service to the Jesus Movement. “Every Revival will have a clear plan for follow-up, to continue to water seeds the Spirit has planted. There might be a new church plant or new Mission Enterprise Zone,” she explained. “It might be a Jubilee Ministry born of new, reconciling relationships in the community. Most of all, we hope these Revivals help Episcopalians

and our neighbors everywhere to fall more deeply in love with Jesus – a loving, liberating, life-giving God they might never have met before.”

Revival Dates

Six Episcopal Church Revivals have been scheduled for 2017 and 2018, and more will be planned in the years ahead:

February 3 – 5: Diocese of Pittsburgh (pilot)

May 5 – 7: Diocese of West Missouri

September 23-24: Diocese of Georgia

November 17-19: Diocese of San Joaquin

April 6 – 8, 2018: Diocese of Honduras

July 2018: Joint Evangelism Mission with the Church of England

The first Revival will be held in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, called *The Presiding Bishop's Pilgrimage for Reconciliation, Healing and Evangelism in Southwestern Pennsylvania*. It will feature a worship service celebrating Absalom Jones and other gatherings that invite people across boundaries and into reconciling relationship with each other and with God. Many of the events will be live-streamed or available on demand here. www.episcopalchurch.org/evangelism.

Pope Francis to visit Fatima in May 2017

The Vatican has confirmed that Pope Francis will visit Portugal in 2017 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Marian apparitions of Fatima.

The Pope, who accepted the invitation made by President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and the bishops of Portugal, “will go on a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima from May 12-13,” the Vatican announced recently.

The pilgrimage will mark the anniversary of the Marian apparitions, which first began on May 13, 1917, when three shepherd children reported seeing the Virgin Mary.

The apparitions continued once a month until October 13, 1917, and later were declared worthy of belief by the Catholic Church.

Following the announcement, Fr Carlos Cabecinhas, rector of the Fatima shrine told Agencia Ecclesia, the news agency of the Portuguese bishops’ conference, that the visit was a “cause for joy” for the shrine.

“For the shrine of Fatima, it is a great joy to receive this confirmation of Pope Francis’s visit,” he said.

“We know that those days will be a pilgrimage marked by this festivity that, on the one hand is for the centennial of the apparitions and, on the other hand, marks the presence of the Pope in our midst and a pope as beloved as Pope Francis,” Fr Cabecin has said.

While the Vatican confirmed the dates of the visit, the Pope had already said that he intended to go.

“Certainly, as things presently stand, I will go to Portugal, and only to Fatima,” he told journalists during his return flight to Rome from Azerbaijan on October 2.

Pope Francis will be the fourth pontiff to visit the Marian shrine, following the footsteps of Blessed Paul VI, St John Paul II and Benedict XVI, who each paid homage different years to Mary on the anniversary of the first apparition on May 13.

News briefs

+++ Irish Language Christmas Midnight Mass

- in St Patrick's Church on Barnfield Road in Derriaghry Parish, Lisburn BT28. December 24, 2016 @ 11:00 pm. the church is very small with a maximum capacity of approx. 60 and mass will be celebrated by Fr Alan McGuckien SJ.

+++ Anglican Church of Burundi to plant 10 million trees in five years

- The planting of trees to mark special occasions like confirmations, baptisms and weddings is an increasingly popular practice in many areas of southern and central Africa, after it was suggested and promoted [by young Green Anglicans](#). But the Province of Burundi is going a step further and is looking to plant one tree for every one of the 10 million-strong population of the country. The church hopes to reach its "One Person, One Tree" goal within the next five years.

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Rabbi Lionel Blue dies aged 86

BBC News

Rabbi Lionel Blue, a regular on BBC Radio 4's Thought for the Day and the first openly gay British rabbi, dies.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-38365805>

Just 1% of students 'opt out' of religion classes in Catholic schools

Irish Times

Just 1 per cent of pupils in Catholic schools are opting out of **religious** classes, ... While the Church of **Ireland** General Synod's board of education ...

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/just-1-of-students-opt-out-of-religion-classes-in-catholic-schools-1.2910814>



Journalist Una Mullally is the government's new youth LGBT czar

The Journal

The activist will lead a group to develop a strategy for young LGBT people.

<http://www.thejournal.ie/una-mullally-chair-3148287-Dec2016/>

CCEA apologises over wrong scores in maths tests

BBC News

A Northern Ireland education body has apologised after primary school children received the wrong scores in maths tests.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-38369866>

Sun

Reports on the fourth and final C of E

#JoyToTheWorld film featuring Revd Kate Bottley who shares her moments of Christmas joy (see above). *The Sun* quotes her words from the film:

"My perfect Christmas Eve would be me sat in my pyjamas on a sofa, roaring fire in the grate, great big mug of tea, watching a lovely Christmas film. The reality is somewhat different...I've been asked to do some really strange things on Christmas and as a vicar you just can't say no." The film shows her helping someone put up their Christmas tree, heading to the shops and getting ready for midnight mass.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/tvandshowbiz/2433049/goggleboxs-reverend-kate-bottley-reveals-she-wears-her-pyjamas-under-her-robos-for-midnight-mass-in-sweet-festive-video/>

Christian Today

Article on baptisms at St Mark's, part of the Hanley team ministry in Shelton, Stoke on Trent, focusing on a photograph of a nativity tableau where every person bar one is spending their first Christmas as a Christian.

Christian Today

Reports on the publication of the timetable for the next General

Synod in February. The article notes that the Synod is due to hear an introduction to the work of the bishops' reflection group on sexuality before a take note debate on a report from the House of Bishops later the same day.

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/church.of.england.to.debate.suggestions.on.sexuality/103146.htm>

Premier

Profile and interview with vicar and broadcaster, Revd Richard Coles.

<http://www.premier.org.uk/Topics/Culture/Film-TV/Rev-Richard-Coles-How-I-unbecame-a-pop-star>

Mail

Diary item that Ronnie Corbett, who died this year, will be honoured with a memorial service at Westminster Abbey next June.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-4050128/Little-Ronnie-BIG-Westminster-Abbey-bash-2-000-people-bid-final-farewell-King-Comedy.html>

Comment

There are still 1,000 children from Calais in refugee centres. They need sanctuary

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/19/1000-children-calais-refugee-centres-need-families-guardian-appeal>

Sun Express

Comment by Nicky Gumbel, Vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton, on truth and grace

<http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/744796/truth-political-talk-god-religion-speech>