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People and places

Archbishop of Canterbury's Christmas message

Archbishop Justin Welby writes - I feel so privileged to be able to wish you a joy-filled Christmas and a hope-filled 2022.

Right across the Anglican Communion, we are facing the most enormous challenges. Outside the tragedies of war, this is the biggest time of global tension we have faced since the Communion began.

So many parts of the Communion already know what it is to suffer. Floods, wars, civil war, corruption, suffering, illness, pandemic, malaria, measles, cholera, typhoid, poverty, oppression, persecution. These continue to be the facts of life.

But we can still find joy, because that's the world that Jesus Christ came into.

All around the world, the Communion is meeting these needs. We can't do everything, but we can do everything that God gives us the resources to do. I know of a place in the middle of a civil war, which is nevertheless running a COVID clinic. I know of a province, where there is appalling terrorism, which is strengthening communities. I know of places that are speaking up for injustice, and saying 'this must stop'. I know of places that are welcoming refugees and internally displaced persons.



The Anglican Communion is called to the Five Marks of Mission – to tell, to teach, to tend, to transform and to treasure the world in which we live. We are God’s church for God’s world, as the Lambeth Conference title rightly says. That’s God’s mission to us. And we can give thanks at Christmas that all over the world people are carrying out that mission.

And the challenges that God has called us to face are indeed huge. At the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow in Scotland in November I saw the struggles that people are facing all over the world, calling us to recognise that unless climate change is tackled it is a threat to every single one of us. None of us can be a passenger in this challenge. It’s one we all have to face.

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As Christians we face this challenge because it is God's world that we are seeking to preserve and care for. It is God's church that has to look after refugees and face the issue of war, which will become worse if climate change just rages unchecked around the world over the next generation. We need to pray for that, act on that, speak about that, and take part in transformation. Let's work together on that.

And then we look forward in hope as well. Not just at the challenges but in the fact that in '22 we will meet online and physically. We will meet and we will celebrate that we belong to one another with all our differences. The bishops and their spouses will come from all over the world. To pray, to learn, to think, to commitment afresh to telling people of the hope that is found only and uniquely in Jesus Christ.

We will recommit to teaching people how to grow in love and in knowledge of Christ. To look afresh at how with changes in science and climate and so many ways we tend the needy. To talk about how we can transform unjust structures of society and bring reconciliation in places of conflict. And to campaign to treasure the earth in which we live.

I have learned so much about the Anglican Communion in the almost nine years that I have been Archbishop of Canterbury. I am not a pope. We are a fellowship, a Communion. Sisters and brothers in Christ of all ages and cultures. God has brought us together. Let us stay and walk together, to do God's work together and to be together in heaven through the salvation he offers us.

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Again, may God grant you Christ's joy this Christmas, and Christ's hope in this coming year.



**Over
€1,000
raised at
Mallow
Carol
Services**

A representative
of Irish
Community Air
Ambulance
receiving a
cheque from the
Rev. Meurig
Williams at the
carol service in
St James's
Church, Mallow.

Mallow Union of Parishes raised over €1,000 at their Carol services this year. Their Rector Meurig William writes:

The popular – but often unfair – perception is that the Church is always asking for money as a way of looking after our own and meeting our own internal needs. But throughout the world, including in our own Church of Ireland,

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the vast majority of parishes support local, national and international projects and this is a regular part of mission and outreach.

This year, even with around 50% capacity at our three carol services, the parishes of Mallow Union (Castletownroche, Doneraile and Mallow) were delighted to donate the collections from these services to three projects:

The Bishop of Cork's Pastoral Care Fund (initiated in 2021) supports community welfare, religious and racial harmony, the advancement of education and the relief of economic hardship.

The work of the Cork Simon Community has, for many years, been at the sharp end of responding to homelessness, as well as supporting personal development.

The Irish Community Air Ambulance, based at Rathcool, Co Cork, provides a vital lifesaving service. During the past year it has responded to 83 cardiac arrests, 46 farming accidents and 147 trauma calls (including serious road accidents), as well as falls from great heights and equestrian incidents.

The Rev. Meurig Williams thanked parishioners and all the visitors joining these services for their generosity. "We raised just over €1,000 between our three churches which means we are able to make a donation to each of the nominated projects", he said. "At this time of year, we proclaim how the incarnate Christ brings light into the darkness of the world, and I hope these donations can be a practical expression of our determination to celebrate this

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truth touching the lives of men and women beyond our churches."

Presbyterian Church Nursing home's Christmas surprise



Santa (Bobby Gilchrist) arrives at Harold McCauley House with his little helper (care assistant Caitlin McKernan)

Staff and residents at Harold McCauley House had an early Christmas present recently, when Santa made an early call on the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's nursing home in Omagh. Arriving with in his sleigh, pulled by Rudolph and Prancer, Santa completed the festive cheer by giving out presents, as the residents enjoyed their Christmas party.

Home manager, Michelle Murray said that all the staff worked hard to make this seasonal event one to remember. "The home was decorated beautifully for Christmas and the residents were able to enjoy 'Santa's Grotto' in our recently refurbished summer house. Then in the afternoon, our very



special guest arrived on his sleigh pulled by Dancer and Prancer, which was such a lovely surprise for everyone.

Harald McCauley resident Winifred Allen who celebrated her 99th birthday when Santa arrived, with Prancer

“The amazement on the faces of our residents was a sight to see, a real picture,

as many of them never imagined they would see a real reindeer, never mind two and pulling Santa’s sleigh at Harold McCauley. For Winifred, our resident who has been with us the longest, Santa made it a real red letter day as it was her 99th birthday.”

Michelle continued, “It goes without saying that no Christmas party is complete without a visit from Santa. But even he, along with all our staff, was tested for the last few weeks so he was able to carry out his Santa duties expertly.

“It really was such a special day, complete with a delicious homemade tea with scones, mince pies, tray bakes and

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Christmas cake, all delicately prepared by Ruth, our head cook, and her team. So a big thank you to them,” she said.

Michelle also thanked DJ Chris, who got everyone into the Christmas spirit with festive songs to suit all ages. “DJ Chris goes to many of the local nursing homes at this time of year and all for free. He also livestreams them on Facebook so family and friends can take part and send in requests for their loved ones. He will never know how much joy he has brought to the resident’s and staff of Harold McCauley House,” Michelle said. She also thanked Bobby Gilchrist, Harold McCauley’s Santa, who is long standing friend of the nursing home.

Opened in 1992, and run by PCI’s Council for Social Witness, Harold McCauley House provides nursing care and support primarily for older people within a Christian environment and welcomes residents from all denominations. Situated in a secluded, tranquil setting close to Omagh town centre, with views of the Camowen River, the home can accommodate 32 residents with nursing staff on call 24-hours per day.

Love that reaches across borders - President of the Methodist Church

Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu, writes -

We live in a divided world. We human beings are experts at dividing it even further, identifying reasons why we are not only different from, but better than, others.

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We are quick at devising ways of thinking about and relating with different others in support those reasons.

Yet our world is being impacted and shaped by issues that know no borders: climate change, global health, racial injustice, forced migration, and divide and rule politics, to name a few.

Addressing these concerns requires the inclusion, cooperation, and contribution of everyone.

You, Lord, are our hope and our strength;
Your grace permeates everything and everywhere;
the sound of Your handiwork resounds in all things;
Your mystery's breadth and depth exhausts our
understanding.



Christmas time presents us with a special opportunity to reflect on our relationships with others in the context of the message of 'good will to all peoples'.

As you prepare for Christmas, I pray that "...God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus...", that "you, being rooted and established in love... may grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Philippians 4:19).

I wish you well for Christmas and the New Year.

Ballinamallard ministers well-supported for 12-hour sit-out

The weather was favourable in Ballinamallard last week as two ministers in the village undertook a 12-hour Christmas sit-out, raising almost £5,000 for charity, Jessica Campbell writes.

The Archdeacon of Clogher, the Venerable Brian Harper, Rector of Magheracross Parish and the Reverend John Beacom, of Ballinamallard Methodist Church, were well wrapped up as they resumed their annual charity sit-out on Wednesday, December 15 from 8am to 8pm, after being unable to undertake the fundraising venture last year due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Situated outside Magheracross Parish Church, on the edge of the Main Street in the village, Archdeacon Harper and Rev. Beacom were this year raising money for Bishops'

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Appeal and Aware NI, collecting a total of £4,852.20 on the day.

Talking about the success of this year's sit-out, Archdeacon Harper said: "It was extremely well-supported; it was a very busy day and it was very pleasant, weather-wise – it stayed dry all day.

"We missed it last year but the generosity of the people through Ballinamallard has not diminished at all."

'Steady all day'

Rev. Beacom seconded this, adding: "It was very, very good; it was steady all day.

"I thought with Covid, the street wouldn't be as busy, that there wouldn't be as many people coming out, but it was first-class.

"It was great that people were willing to come, and willing to talk and engage.

"I found it very beneficial [chatting to people], because due to the [pandemic], we can't have these meetings the way we used to," he said.

When asked why they chose to support Aware NI as one of their charities this year, Rev. Beacom explained: "For me, the pressures of Covid, and with coming out of Covid and all that comes with that, both for adults and children alike, mental health is going to be a huge concern."

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There was a constant flow of wellwishers and supporters walking along the street or passing by in vehicles, honking car horns and having a quick chat with both men, at the same time, dropping donations into the drum.

Courtesy - The Impartial Reporter

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts and books

Kate's tribute to pandemic heroes in TV carol service

The Duchess of Cambridge has paid tribute to the “inspirational” people who have served their communities during the “bleak time” of the pandemic as she introduced a community carol service at Westminster Abbey.

In a recorded introduction to the service, which took place at Westminster Abbey on December 8 and will air as Royal Carols: Together At Christmas at 7.30pm on Christmas Eve on ITV, the duchess said she and her husband wanted to recognise those whose struggles may have been “less visible” during the pandemic.

Kate, who helped decorate the Abbey's tree, said: “We wanted to say a huge thank you to all those amazing people out there who have supported their communities.

“We also wanted to recognise those whose struggles perhaps have been less visible too.”



The duchess said the country had been through “such a bleak time” and had faced “many challenges”, including the loss of loved ones, while front line workers had been under “immense pressure”.

She added that while people had been “more emotionally and socially distanced and isolated from each other”, this separation had helped people to realise “how much we need each other” and the importance of acts of kindness.

The service will showcase music from the Westminster Abbey choir, as well as featuring performances from Leona Lewis, Ellie Goulding and Tom Walker, who performed his Christmas single For Those Who Can't Be Here.

It also features readings from the Duke of Cambridge, British Paralympian and junior doctor Kim Daybell, actor Tom Felton and presenter Kate Garraway, in addition to a performance of To The Day, a composition written for the service by poet and writer Lemn Sissay.

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Westminster Abbey on television and online

Westminster Abbey invites everyone to join us this Christmas to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with traditional carols, festive readings and some very special performances on television and online.

Find out more: westminster-abbey.org/abbey-news/joi...

Daniel O'Donnell on Songs of Praise

Irish singer Daniel O'Donnell has sold more than 10 million records in a remarkable career. This week he shares his faith journey with Claire McCollum and picks his favourite hymns and carols. Boxing Day 1315 on BBCOne and afterwards bbc.in/31uo9YP #SongsOfPraise

Rekindle: Taking stock and edging forward in children's ministry

Presbyterian Church Congregational Life, Youth & Children, Webinar

- 25.1.2022 from 7:45 PM - 9:00 PM online Free

Gather those involved in working with children in your church hall to join this digitally facilitated session on regrouping for children's ministry.

Where do you find yourself just now in your congregation's ministry to children? You may have some ministry going

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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again, even if it looks a bit different; you may be struggling to get start or sustain what you are doing; you may feel you are nearly back to where you were in March 2020; you may feel there is an opportunity for something different as you engage with children and their families in your congregation and community.

Get your leaders together and join the session to be envisioned with some practical pointers and encouraged as you discuss your next steps in regrouping for children's ministry.

The session will be broadcast live on Tuesday 25 January from 7.45–9.00pm and will be hosted by Ruth Bromley, PCI Children's Development Officer.

Please register below. Registration will close on Thursday 20 January at 4pm.

[[] <https://www.presbyterianireland.org/Events/Rekindle-Taking-stock-and-edging-forward-in-child.aspx>]

News Reports

Pope Francis urges humility as he chides cardinals and bishops in Christmas address

As he has before, the pontiff used his annual Christmas address to take Vatican administrators to task for their perceived moral and personal failings.



Pope Francis has urged Vatican cardinals, bishops and bureaucrats to embrace humility this Christmas, saying their pride, self-interest and the “glitter of our armour” was perverting their spiritual lives and corrupting the church’s mission.

As he has in the past, Francis used his annual Christmas address to take Vatican administrators to task for their perceived moral and personal failings, denouncing, in particular, those who “rigidly” hide behind Catholic Church traditions rather than seek out the neediest with humility.

As they have in the past, cardinals and bishops sat stone-faced as they listened to Francis lecture them in the Hall of Blessings, which was otherwise decked out in jolly twinkling Christmas trees and poinsettias.

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“The humble are those who are concerned not simply with the past but also with the future, since they know how to look ahead, to spread their branches, remembering the past with gratitude,” Francis told them.

“The proud, on the other hand, simply repeat, grow rigid and enclose themselves in that repetition, feeling certain about what they know and fearful of anything new because they cannot control it.”

The proud who are so inward-looking are consumed with their own interests, the pontiff said.

“As a consequence, they neither learn from their sins nor are they genuinely open to forgiveness. This is a tremendous corruption disguised as a good. We need to avoid it,” he added.

Since becoming pope in 2013, Francis has used his Christmas address to rail against the Curia, as the Holy See’s bureaucracy is known, denouncing the “spiritual Alzheimer’s” that some members suffer and the resistance he had encountered to his efforts to reform and revitalise the institution and the Catholic Church at large.

Poem for today

Advent 1955 by John Betjeman

The Advent wind begins to stir
With sea-like sounds in our Scotch fir,
It's dark at breakfast, dark at tea,

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And in between we only see
Clouds hurrying across the sky
And rain-wet roads the wind blows dry
And branches bending to the gale
Against great skies all silver pale
The world seems travelling into space,
And travelling at a faster pace
Than in the leisured summer weather
When we and it sit out together,
For now we feel the world spin round
On some momentous journey bound -
Journey to what? to whom? to where?
The Advent bells call out 'Prepare,
Your world is journeying to the birth
Of God made Man for us on earth.'

And how, in fact, do we prepare
The great day that waits us there -
For the twenty-fifth day of December,
The birth of Christ? For some it means
An interchange of hunting scenes
On coloured cards, And I remember
Last year I sent out twenty yards,
Laid end to end, of Christmas cards
To people that I scarcely know -
They'd sent a card to me, and so
I had to send one back. Oh dear!
Is this a form of Christmas cheer?
Or is it, which is less surprising,
My pride gone in for advertising?
The only cards that really count
Are that extremely small amount
From real friends who keep in touch

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And are not rich but love us much
Some ways indeed are very odd
By which we hail the birth of God.

We raise the price of things in shops,
We give plain boxes fancy tops
And lines which traders cannot sell
Thus parcell'd go extremely well
We dole out bribes we call a present
To those to whom we must be pleasant
For business reasons. Our defence is
These bribes are charged against expenses
And bring relief in Income Tax
Enough of these unworthy cracks!
'The time draws near the birth of Christ'.
A present that cannot be priced
Given two thousand years ago
Yet if God had not given so
He still would be a distant stranger
And not the Baby in the manger.

Please commend CNI to your friends
www.churchnewsireland.org



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