

December 3, 2021



**Image of
the day**

**Early
winter
evening**

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News Reports

C of E to release first ever Christmas single



The Church of England is to release a Christmas single as part of a campaign to encourage more people to hear the real Christmas story through their local church.

The single, a new carol version of In the Bleak Midwinter by one of the country's top young composers, Rebecca Dale, will form the soundtrack to this year's Church of England Christmas campaign.

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The single was released on all streaming platforms from Wednesday 1st December onwards. It can now be streamed or downloaded online

'#AtTheHeartOfChristmas' is the Church of England's theme for Advent and Christmas 2021.

Local churches all over the country will be welcoming their communities – onsite and online – to celebrate and share the good news of Christ's birth with special services and events, supported by a wide range of national resources.

The new carol's composer Rebecca Dale is one of the country's most exciting young composers who has been hailed as "a household name in years to come".

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Her 2015 debut self-release for choir and orchestra, I'll Sing, reached No.1 in the iTunes Classical Single Charts and was Classic FM's Choral Classic of the Week. She made history as the first female composer to sign to Universal Music's Decca Classics label, with her debut album, Requiem For My Mother, going to No.1 in the specialist Classical charts. She has written works for numerous classic artists and ensembles and has contributed music for various well known TV programmes and Films. Born in 1985, she was composing from a very young age and has fond memories of singing in church choirs while at school.

She said: "It's so exciting to have been invited to write this new Carol for the Church of England's Christmas theme #AtTheHeartOfChristmas.

"Although In the Bleak Midwinter is a poem which was written nearly 150 years ago, it has a timeless mystery and is wonderfully evocative of a journey from the wintry landscape to the stable and the heart of the nativity story.

"I have long wanted to set this text, and so when the Church of England asked me to be involved in this project, this was my very first thought. I hope people will enjoy the setting and that it helps connect them with the amazing story which is at the heart of Christmas."

The Carol has been recorded by St Martin's Voices, under the direction of Andrew Earis, in the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, London.

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World leaders urged to halt escalating hunger crisis as 17% more people expected to need life-saving aid in 2022

World leaders are being urged by NGOs, including Christian Aid, to take urgent action to halt a devastating global hunger crisis as new analysis shows the number of people likely to be in need of humanitarian aid in 2022 could rise by 17%.

In an open letter, released today, signed by a group of 120 NGOs, world leaders are being called on to fully fund a \$41 billion package to prevent famine globally and address the emergencies fueling global hunger: conflict, the climate crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Global Humanitarian Overview 2022, released today [2 December] by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), warned that 274 million people could be in need of humanitarian assistance next year, with the world currently battling the worst hunger crisis this century. This is up from 235 million people in 2021 and 168 million in 2020.

In South Sudan alone, recently hit by the worst flooding in 60 years, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) estimates 2.4 million people are at risk of falling into famine with famine already thought to be likely in areas of western Pibor.

Christian Aid's Country Director in South Sudan, James Wani, said: "The scale of the flooding is unprecedented. The

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flooding destroys everything. People have lost their crops and their livestock. When the water does finally recede, people will return to nothing. We are only going to see the hunger crisis escalate over the next few months.”

Christian Aid, together with their local partner African Aid Development (ADA), is providing emergency life-saving support including blankets, mosquito nets, water purification tablets and cash to flood-affected families in Fangak County in Jonglei state.

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, Christian Aid’s Chief Executive and signatory to the letter, said:

“For any person who hasn’t experienced it, it is hard to imagine what living with catastrophic starvation must be like. To wake up each day in desperate need of food and clean water to survive.

“As world leaders have talked these last six months, inaction is causing an escalating hunger crisis. More and more people are suffering malnutrition, disproportionately affecting women and girls already at risk of gender-based violence.

“If these worrying trends are to be stopped, real action and humanitarian intervention is needed urgently.”



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People and places



Celebrating 100th Baby Basics delivery in Ballyclare

The United Parish of Christ Church and St John in Ballyclare hosted a special celebration on November 25 to mark the 100th delivery in its Baby Basics ministry.

All the agencies which partner with the parish for Baby Basics were invited to attend

The rector, the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, said: “We began two and a half years ago as we considered as a parish how we might reach out in love to our community.

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“We now have established our Compassion Ministries. This includes Baby Basics, a school uniform scheme, a Foodshare programme with the Co-Op where perishable items are given to us for free to distribute to those in need, a CAP Lifeskills programme, and most recently, a heating and lighting scheme for those in our society who cannot afford oil, gas or electricity for their homes.”

Jonny said that the parish had identified need in the greater Ballyclare area, but since Covid-19, these issues have multiplied. “As a Church family we simply cannot exist within our community and not be active in our practical demonstration of the Gospel, bringing hope to the most needy,” he said.

At the Baby Basics 100 celebration, Frances Wilson, Compassion Co-ordinator, handed over a Moses basket and baby bath with all the essentials to Mindwise, a local mental health charity.

“I’d like to thank especially the Northern Health and Social Care Trust for their willingness to begin a pilot with us back in 2019 which has flourished into the ministry we have today,” Jonny said. “I’d also like to thank our parishioners, in particular the Mothers’ Union who help to run the Baby Basics ministry.”

Saturday Night Live this weekend!

Don’t miss the first in–person Saturday Night Live since February 2020!

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Join us in Willowfield Parish Church for worship, prayer, food and Bible teaching with Laurence Bellew. Laurence is the pioneer evangelist with Newry Centre of Mission.

Bring your youth fellowship along!

When: Saturday 4 December, 7.30–9.30 pm

Where: Willowfield Parish Church, 149 My Ladys Road, Belfast, BT6 8FE

Opening of St Simon's Parish Church, Belfast, following refurbishment

St Simon's Parish Church in Donegall Road, South Belfast, formally reopened for worship on Sunday November 21 following work to reorder the inside of the church.

Special guest at the service was the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison.

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Although the works to the building took six months, the church had been closed for the best part of two years due to the pandemic – it opened briefly for worship last Easter – before the builders moved in in mid-April.

Priest-in-Charge, the Rev Raymond Moore, said work took longer than the estimated 13 weeks because pipes damaged in a fire in the church back in 1973 needed to be replaced.

The parish has an interesting history. A site for St Simon's Parish Church and school was purchased in 1900 for £829. St Simon's School opened first, under principal Robert Jefferson, later to become Bishop of Ottawa and Chaplain to HM Governor General of Canada.

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The school was used for Sunday School and worship, but an Iron Church, formerly used in St Donard's Parish, was erected on the site and opened for worship in August 1911.

Despite high unemployment, a decision was made to go ahead with the building of a new church, which was then joined to the Iron Church. This was consecrated in June 1924.

When the 1928 General Synod passed the Belfast Additional Church Act, St Simon's was the first to benefit with grants totalling £10,481. A nave was built, and the Iron Church was reconstructed on a nearby site to serve as a parish hall. The renovated church could accommodate 500. A little prayer desk and organ originally belonged to the Chapel of the Resurrection at Belfast Castle.

Funds for this latest refurbishment of the church were raised from the sale of the parish hall, which had served uniformed organisations including the Church Lads' Brigade and Girls'

Pray with us...

Lord, you always come when the time is right,
neither too soon nor too late.

Help us to live through the mean-times of life,
becoming attuned to the whisper of your word,
growing accustomed
to the sense of your presence
and being attentive
to the signs of your coming
into our homes and our communities.

Amen



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Friendly Society, Sunday School along with adult organisations such as Mothers' Union and Ladies Guild, Bowling and Badminton Clubs since the start of World War Two.

The sale took a number of years to complete, and the hall was finally transferred to its new owner in 2019 for use as a local community hub.

“We had discussed what to do with the money,” said Raymond. “We no longer had our own social space, so we took six pews from each side of the aisle at the back of the church, and two from each side at the front to create space.

“The baptistery was in an alcove at the back of the church, and was never used, so we had the font refurbished and moved to the front where the pews had been removed. We now have a liturgical area with the font, lectern, rector's prayer desk and communion table all together at the front.”

The project included erecting glass panels behind the pews to the rear of the church, and the addition of cupboards and workspaces, along with a small kitchen in the alcove which once housed the font, means the parish has a new social space. The building also has a new disabled toilet, and access to the church has been remodelled.

While the church has been closed to parishioners, Raymond has been live-streaming services from the building each week. The first service inside the renovated church was held on Remembrance Sunday, followed by the official opening with Bishop George on November 21.

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Raymond said St Simon's hoped to hold a community event in its new space later this year or early in the new year.

Worship and prayer in Dromore Cathedral



Sixty or so folk who joined the Down & Dromore Diocesan Prayer Service in-person and online on Tuesday night.

The format was 'Worship Rooms' in the context of Late Evening Office, that is, extended contemporary worship interspersed with times of prayer.

Bishop David McClay led the service and guided participants to pray in smaller groups, especially for all aspects of ministry within the Diocese of Down and Dromore.

Thanks were expressed to Dean Geoff Wilson for hosting the service and to members of the Dromore Cathedral team who led in worship.

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This was the third and final diocesan autumn prayer event and follows an Agape Prayer Gathering in Down Cathedral on 21 September and a Prayer Breakfast in Bangor Abbey on 23 October.

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Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts and books



Compline by Candlelight from Wall Street

Compline by Candlelight, which features The Choir of Trinity Wall Street improvising 30 minutes of mantra-like, chant-based music, has resumed in-person performances at Trinity Church in Manhattan. It's also distributed every Sunday evening as a podcast on Trinity's website, Facebook, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and other apps. On December 12, Compline features Trinity's semiprofessional choir, Downtown Voices, singing Arvo

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Pärt's 7 Magnificat-Antiphonen. On December 19, Compline features the Trinity Youth Chorus singing Benjamin Britten's A Ceremony of Carols.

Listen to the podcasts

[[] https://trinitywallstreet.org/music/compline-candlelight?utm_]

Learn about attending Compline by Candlelight in person

[[] https://trinitywallstreet.org/worship/reopening?utm_]

Want more music? Follow Trinity on Facebook for Christmas music from Trinity's ensembles all December long.

Newcomer to Radio 3's Choral Evensong



This programme will be available shortly after broadcast

Her Majesty's Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace

From Her Majesty's Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace, with music by Andrew Smith, Weelkes and Byrd.

01 December 2021
🕒 59 minutes

[Show more](#)

On radio



Wednesday
16:00
BBC RADIO 3

More episodes

PREVIOUS

[A Service for Advent with Carols](#)



NEXT

[Buckfast Abbey](#)

[See all episodes from Choral Evensong](#)

The choir made its debut appearance on Radio 3's Choral Evensong, this Wednesday, December 1 at 4pm. You can hear it here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00120zh>

CHURCHES *beyond* BORDERS



Churches Beyond Borders' Joint Devotions for 2021

More excellent resources for use during Advent is Churches Beyond Borders' Joint Devotions for 2021. This booklet features reflections on the Magnificat, from writers from The Episcopal Church, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada. It is timed with and

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inspired by the commemoration of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, running from November 25 to December 10. Read more at iam.ec/cbb16days.

The December issue of the C of I Gazette is online



“We are delighted to announce the winner of our cover competition as Harry Teggarty from Kilhorne Parish. The churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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runner up was Rev'd David White from Carlow Union of Parishes and you will find selection of the wonderful entries inside our special Christmas issue.”

Perspective

Deep human love and committed Christian faithfulness by Elaine Storkey

Amongst the many daily demands on time, I am struggling to fulfil a task, which I see as my chief calling at present. For the last twelve years, I have been writing a biography of someone whose life is the best illustration I know of deep human love and committed Christian faithfulness.

I met British born Lyn Lusi some years ago in D R Congo, when I stayed in her home in Goma, in the North Kivu Province. As President of Tearfund, I was visiting the hospital founded by Lyn and her husband, Kasareka ('Jo') the only Congolese orthopaedic surgeon for ten million people. Their deep love for each other was reflected in mutual Christian commitment, and their longing for peace and justice for their fellow Congolese. It shaped their journey through life and their work together. I was enthralled at the story of how God had led them to set up the Goma hospital to train young Congolese doctors and bring healing to the community.

Jo completed his orthopaedic training in Europe, but he returned home to Congo with his young wife, to serve a population constantly battered by war and brutality. Disease, sickness and disability was endemic in the community, as

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well as the ravages of war. Lyn trained in HIV/AIDS prevention, and travelled across Kenya and Rwanda as well as Congo to encourage people into a safer life-style. Characteristically, they drew on the goodwill of international Christian surgical specialists, who travelled voluntarily to Africa to help Jo deliver the training to young interns and enjoy the hospitality of their home. Nothing seemed to deter them. Even when a volcano destroyed the hospital building in 2002, they rebuilt and refurbished, and developed the work. Surrounded by volcanic ash 'Heal Africa' was born.

Lyn found strength in the very word 'HEAL'. It spoke to her of integration of 'Health, Education, Action, and Love.' HEAL AFRICA quickly became far more than a traditional hospital. Advocacy against injustice was part of healing. On any day, people might be attending skills workshops, HIV/AIDS prevention training, counselling sessions, family planning, even singing or dancing. In the midst of bloodshed and turmoil, rape and sexual violence, the hospital became a landmark for holistic care and compassion. It attracted doctors and donors. People like the UN Secretary-General, Hilary Clinton and George Clooney came to see for themselves what could be achieved. More importantly, it became home, a refuge, a place of recovery, a beacon of hope for thousands of broken and warring people.

On my very first visit, I could see Lyn's vision. Her heart had been broken by the pain of the Congo, by the injustice heaped upon those who were most at risk. I saw for myself women who were raped, brutalized, blinded, disfigured and needing emergency surgery. I spoke to survivors recovering from fistula operations and being gently helped into new life by Christian therapy. Lyn oversaw administration as Jo and

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his team performed dozens of routine operations each day, sometimes working through the night if the militia had raided. One night, when I was in the UK, she contacted us all asking for urgent prayer. Jo was 'putting the liver and intestines back' for the one surviving son of a family mutilated by soldiers. His injuries were appalling. 'Such cruelty is incomprehensible,' she wrote.

I was keen that Lyn's story should be told and offered to co-author her biography. She accepted and we began the task. However, I really had no idea what I was taking on. I knew little then about the history of Congo, and about the way Jo and Lyn's lives had inter-meshed with the complex geopolitics of that country. The barbarism of the Belgian colonialists, the oppression of the Congolese under succeeding tyrants, the constant re-emergence of tribal conflict, genocide, massive refugee camps, cholera epidemics, looting of minerals and the Great War of Africa, were all yet to confront my research. So was the full impact of British missionaries, not least Helen Roseveare who had been a close friend and mentor of Kasereka's (Jo's) father. Lyn's personal biography has slowly turned into an account of a country's history and the lives of two faithful Christians who have served God through some of the most appalling conditions that any human being has had to face.

My writing task has sadly been made more difficult by Lyn's premature death from cancer. Her funeral was an occasion of enormous mourning, yet celebration, as thousands of people paid homage to her love. Over these last years, I have had to write the story without Lyn. I have missed her warmth, wit, accuracy, her Christian perseverance and the poignancy of her emails. Jo keeps in touch answering my

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many questions and filling in the gaps in my knowledge of Congolese affairs. He updates me on the progress and growth of the hospital and how Lyn's vision continues to be etched into the history of that country, especially in the North and South Kivu provinces. Lyn's loss remains palpable for everyone who loved her, but the work of healing and Christian witness goes on.

It has been an enormous privilege to be entrusted with the story of such special people. It has been deeply encouraging to follow through lives that are so totally confronted by the twin realities of God's love and human sin. Lyn never hesitated to use the word 'darkness' for what she saw in the Congo, and never underestimated what they were up against. Yet both she and Jo retained unfailing faith in the power of God's healing love. I remain only the storyteller, yet as I struggle to meet my deadline, I am very aware that their story must be told. In a world of cynicism and unbelief where people doubt that such integrity is possible, we need to hear of the faithful work and witness of people who truly love God and their neighbour.

ELAINE STORKEY, is a theologian, lecturer, author and broadcaster. Two of Elaine's most recent books are ... Scars across Humanity... and ...Women in a Patriarchal World.

Poem for today

Exposure by Seamus Heaney

It is December in Wicklow:
Alders dripping, birches

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Inheriting the last light,
The ash tree cold to look at.

A comet that was lost
Should be visible at sunset,
Those million tons of light
Like a glimmer of haws and rose-hips,

And I sometimes see a falling star.
If I could come on meteorite!
Instead I walk through damp leaves,
Husks, the spent flukes of autumn,

Imagining a hero
On some muddy compound,
His gift like a slingstone
Whirled for the desperate.

How did I end up like this?
I often think of my friends'
Beautiful prismatic counselling
And the anvil brains of some who hate me

As I sit weighing and weighing
My responsible tristia.
For what? For the ear? For the people?
For what is said behind-backs?

Rain comes down through the alders,
Its low conductive voices
Mutter about let-downs and erosions
And yet each drop recalls

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The diamond absolutes.

I am neither interneer nor informer;
An inner йmigrй, grown long-haired
And thoughtful; a wood-kerne

Escaped from the massacre,
Taking protective colouring
From bole and bark, feeling
Every wind that blows;

Who, blowing up these sparks
For their meagre heat, have missed
The once-in-a-lifetime portent,
The comet's pulsing rose.

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