

Archbishop Suheil Dawani of Jerusalem with DCU Chaplain Philip McKinley, in the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem

Gift from Dublin and Glendalough delivered on Christmas Eve in Bethlehem

A donation collected at the recent Diocesan 'Discovery' International Carol Service was hand-delivered by DCU Chaplain, Philip McKinley to Archbishop Suheil Dawani in the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem where Anglicans had gathered for a Service of Nine Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve.

The gift was part of the Diocesan 'Jerusalem Link' partnership and had been collected for the Diocese of Jerusalem's Women's Empowerment Project.

Anglicans are granted special permission to worship in Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity once a year on Christmas Eve by the Greek Orthodox custodians of the Church.

The Service of Nine Lessons and Carols included readings from Dr Alistair McPhail, H.M. Consul General and Archbishop Theophylektos of Jordan.

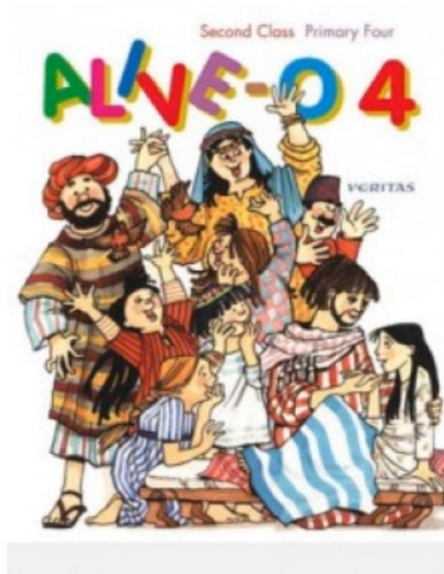
After the service, the Archbishop received the gift from Philip McKinley and thanked the United Dioceses for their generosity and ongoing support.

The Archbishop and his Chaplain, Canon David Longe had only recently returned from their trip to Dublin and Glendalough, as part of the 'Jerusalem Link'. During their visit, a donation was also made to the Women's Empowerment Project by Rev Prof Anne Lodge on behalf of DCU's Church of Ireland Centre.

'Jerusalem Link' was formally signed at the beginning of 2016, when Archbishop Michael Jackson led a delegation to Jerusalem. The year also saw a return visit to Dublin and Glendalough in early December. A number of initiatives are now in planning to further strengthen the link in 2017.

Irish Catholic bishops pump millions into the publisher behind Alive-O! school books

Journal .ie reports - The publisher behind several religious school books, including the well-known Alive-O! series, has slipped further into the red and continues to rely on Church funding to keep afloat.



Veritas publishes the Alive-O! school books

Religious publisher Veritas made a loss of just under half a million euro in the year to the end of 2015, according to recently filed accounts.

The company is being supported by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, which pumped millions in funding into the firm during the year.

Dublin-based Veritas is a Catholic publisher and retail group which publishes several different Christian books, including a range of bibles and the Alive-O! series, a widely used religious education series for primary school children.

According to accounts just filed by the firm, its turnover rose from €5.7 million in 2014 to €6.2 million in 2015.

Once the cost of sales were accounted for, the company made a gross profit of €3.5 million, up from €3.2 million the year before.

Loss

However, once additional costs, primarily ‘administrative expenses’, were factored in, the publisher made an operating loss of just under €400,000. Overall, when all costs were counted, the company made a net loss of €496,580.

Although this was an improvement on the previous year, when the company made a net loss of €1.8 million, the company is loaded with high debts.

The company owed €4.4 million to its creditors within the next year, while the firm was sitting on stocks worth more than €3 million. The accounts noted that a charge has been made to reflect the possibility of “stocks being sold at less than cost”.

Veritas’s accumulated losses stood at almost €5 million at the end of 2014 and would have been

pushed higher still were it not for a €4 million cash injection.

The business received a €4 million 'capital contribution' from Veritas Communications, the publisher's parent company. The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference is the ultimate controlling party and arranged for the money to be put into Veritas.

The conference is the official assembly of the Roman Catholic bishops of Ireland, who together oversee various Church functions like education and pastoral care.

More at -

<http://www.thejournal.ie/veritas-publisher-bishops-alive-o-2-3144031-Dec2016/?utm>

Donegal Church Damaged in Christmas Day Lightning Strike

The Archdeacon of Raphoe, Ven. David Huss, has said Donegal Parish Church – which was damaged in a lightning strike on Christmas evening – could remain closed for a number of weeks while repair work is carried out.

The lightning strike, which happened during a violent thunderstorm, blew out a number of electrical sockets and left the church without heat or light. The ESB has shut off the church's power supply as a precaution and it won't be restored until repair work has been completed. The Parish's Select Vestry will meet on Wednesday evening to decide how to proceed in the interim.

The local Rector, Archdeacon Huss, said it was fortunate the lightning strike happened while the church was unoccupied. "There is a lot of damage to the electrics," he said, "but thankfully it didn't start a fire and more importantly still no one was hurt.

"Looking at it from a scientific point of view, it was an extremely powerful strike," the Rector said. "Many people commented on the unusually bright flash and extremely loud clap of thunder. The church is the tallest structure in town so it became the focal point of the strike.

Archdeacon Huss said he had received many expressions of support from across the community for which he was extremely grateful. "Thankfully we have a great team in the parish and we will work together to get back on our feet as quickly as possible."

‘Remembering The Child’ concert in Dublin Cathedral recalls 40 young lives lost in Easter Week 1916

Carlow’s Aspiro Choirs and Liam Lawton are commemorating 40 young lives lost in Easter Week 1916 in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, on Wednesday 28 December.

The ‘Remembering The Child’ concert included music that Aspiro commissioned Liam Lawton to write. The music was premiered in Carlow at a concert, ‘Requiem For A Child’, in November.

Liam Lawton said at the time: “As part of the 1916 Celebrations I was privileged to be invited by Mary Amond O’Brien (Aspiro) to write some music for this special commemoration of this centenary year. What emerged is ‘Requiem for a Child’ in which I have taken various elements of the Requiem in the Latin, English and Irish languages to reflect the immensity of what happened to our children and what sadly is still happening throughout the world today.”

This concert marked the suffering of both the children of 1916 and the children and young

people who are today caught up as victims of war and violence in our world.

In an effort to describe the significance of the event, organisers quoted Leonard Bernstein who said: “This will be our reply to violence ... to make music more intensely, more beautifully and more devotedly than ever before.”

Four Aspiro ensembles involving more than 100 singers and musicians, ranging in age from 7 to 80+ years of age, performed Liam Lawton’s ‘Requiem For A Child’ as well as music from various composers around the world, including two Irish composers – Shaun Davey and Sue Furlong.

Excerpts from Joe Duffy’s *Children of the Rising* were narrated throughout the evening. Aspiro was inspired to create this performance event because of Joe Duffy’s stories about the young lives lost in the Easter Rising.

“He humanised the most vulnerable casualties of the Easter Rising through his research and written work,” stated Aspiro. “Remembering, reflecting and reimagining are the themes in this magnificent performance with Liam’s new work being the centrepiece in the ‘reflecting’ section.”

Organisers were hopeful that through the power of the original commission, and through venerable and established music, Aspiro would evoke the memory of the 40 children aged 16 and under who were killed in the 1916 Rising.

Aspiro was formed in September 1997 by Mary Amond O'Brien to promote what she called "a world class model" for choral music education practice in Ireland. Aspiro now involves children and youth and adult choirs.

Mary Amond O'Brien is a native of Co. Carlow and a former international athlete. She was appointed Choral Director of RTÉ Cór na nÓg in September 2011. She has studied with world-renowned choral specialist and founder of Choral Music Experience (CME), Dr Doreen Rao.

In July 2016 she co-directed 'Celtic Voices' international festival with Dr Rao in Carlow, Maynooth and Dublin. She has composed and arranged works for Aspiro and was commissioned to write for the Veritas 'Alive O' primary school programme.

Liam Lawton has been composing music for over 20 years, carving his own niche with music spanning the Sacred/Classical style. He released

LUMINA Volume II in November – an instrumental collection as a follow-up to LUMINA Volume 1.

It includes tracks such as ‘The Glendalough Theme’, ‘Benedictus’, ‘Journey of a Soul’, ‘Heal us Lord’, ‘Labyrinth’ and many more.

Five day family festival will mark St Patrick’s Day in Belfast Cathedral

Connor Children’s Council has big plans for the period surrounding St Patrick’s Day 2017, with members busy organising a five-day event to take place in March in St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast.

Patrick’s Mysterious Adventure is a family friendly event aimed at helping people of all ages to discover first-hand the adventurous life story of St Patrick through an exhibition and interactive story trail.

Live actors will re-enact the tale from Patrick’s capture by Irish pirates to his return to serve the people of Ireland who he loved so much.

Exhibition Event Details



15th -16th March
PATRICK'S MYSTERIOUS SCHOOLS ADVENTURE

Invited schools experience the interactive story trail and see first-hand what it was like to be a slave in Ireland over 1500 years ago.

Includes:

- Live theatre telling Patrick's life story
- Art workshop
- Dig into history workshop
- Snake making competition
- Take away goodie bags

17th March PATRICK'S MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURE

Open to the public from 12-4pm

Includes:

- Full access to the exhibition
- Timed performances of the scripted story trail
- Craft workshops
- Premier Circus walkabout entertainers

18th March PATRICK'S MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURE - BIG FAMILY DAY

Open to the public from 12-4pm

Includes:

- Full access to the exhibition
- Timed performances of the scripted story trail
- Craft workshops
- Delve into history workshop with local St. Patrick expert
- Premier Circus walkabout entertainers
- Ardglass Vikings - battle re-enactments with opportunities to join in if you are brave enough!
- Irish dancing
- Irish harpist
- Puppet show

19th March ST. PATRICK'S THEMED ALL AGE SERVICE

Time: 3:30 - 4:30pm

Come and join us at our family friendly, informal service to celebrate the life of our patron saint and find out more about his influence and lasting legacy in Ireland. All welcome!

If you would like any more information about this event please contact:

Connor Diocese's Children's Development Officer
Jill Hamilton
jjill@connor.anglican.org



The event will include workshops, Irish dancers,

circus performers, Viking battle re-enactments and much more!

It will run in St Anne's from March 15-19. Primary schools from inner city Belfast have been invited to participate on the first two days, and the Children's Council is working in partnership with the St Patrick's Centre in Downpatrick which is providing an education officer to host a workshop. A local artist based on the Shankill Road who will lead another workshop.

All visitors will be welcomed on March 17-19 and this event will finish with a special intercommunity St Patrick's themed service beginning at 3.30pm on March 19.

Further details below. Anyone wanting more information should contact Connor Diocesan Children's Development Officer Jill Hamilton on jill@connor.anglican.org

Even complaining to God is a form of prayer, Pope says

To complain to God in moments of doubt and fear like Abraham is not something bad, but rather is a form of prayer that requires the

courage to hope beyond all hope, Pope Francis has said.

While in life there may be times of frustration and darkness, “hope is still there and it moves us forward,” the Pope said during his weekly general audience.

“I won’t say that Abraham loses patience, but he complains to the Lord. This is what we learn from our father Abraham: complaining to the Lord is a form of prayer. Sometimes I hear confessions where people say, ‘I complained to the Lord.’ But no. [Continue] to complain; he is a father and this is a form of prayer. Complain to the Lord, this is good,” he said.

Entering the Paul VI audience hall, the Pope greeted thousands of pilgrims from all over the world. Among those present was a group of performers from Italy’s Golden Circus, who performed several acrobatic feats and entertaining performances at the end of the general audience.

The Pope even participated in one of the performances. As he and an illusionist grabbed the ends of a tablecloth, they seemingly made a

small nightstand levitate to the amazement and applause of the pilgrims.

New Year Will See Norway Church And State 'Divorce'

Norway's Lutheran Church and the state of Norway are to "divorce" on January 1 after nearly 500 years together.

The moment marks a formal separation of Church and state following a parliamentary vote eight years ago. It means the Church's 1,250 priests and bishops will no longer be government officials and the Church will cease to be an agency of the state.

The head of the Church's National Council, Jens-Petter Johnsen, told Norway's Dagsavisen newspaper: "We are facing the biggest organisational change of the Church since the Reformation."

The change recreates the Church as an independent legal entity. However, some argue that it does not go far enough. The previous description of the Church as "the state's public religion" has been ditched, but the new

formulation says that ""the Church of Norway, an Evangelical-Lutheran Church, will remain Norway's national Church and will be supported as such by the state".

Kristin Mile, the secretary general of the Norwegian Humanist Association, told Dagsavisen: "As long as the Constitution says that the Norwegian Church is Norway's national Church, and that it should be supported by the state, we still have a state Church."

She said the new formulation was worse than the old because it connected the state to a particular denomination, not just to a particular religion.

The churchgoing rate in Norway is one of the lowest in the world at only around five per cent, though most Norwegians identify with the state Church. The Church of Norway has lost around 40,000 members this year after it became possible to opt out online.

Churches are funded by the state according to the number of members they have, an incentive for Churches to inflate their membership. In November the Catholic Church in Norway was fined for fraud and ordered to reimburse money it

had claimed after using the names of immigrants from Catholic countries without their permission.