



## **Dublin Gospel Choir gala concert - ringing in the New Year at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin**

The Christ Church Cathedral New Year's Eve Gala Concert is the perfect way to see out an old year and welcome in the new with a very special evening of cracking gospel music by one of Ireland's finest choirs.

The critically acclaimed Dublin Gospel Choir have become a household name in Ireland, playing numerous concerts each year to sell out audiences both young and old. Their annual performance at Ireland's internationally-acclaimed boutique festival Electric Picnic is now legendary and the choir are no stranger to large outdoor venues either, having performed to a sell-out 82,000 crowd at Croke Park. They have shared the stage with music industry heavyweights such as Stevie Wonder, Rod Stewart, John Legend, Damien Rice and The Chieftains. The choir also featured along with Chris de Burgh on a special New Year's Day BBC Songs of Praise programme which was broadcast to over 35 million viewers worldwide.

They last performed at Christ Church Cathedral in January as part of The Dubliners' 50th Anniversary celebrations which sold out both dates in a number of days.

The bells of Christ Church Cathedral attract people from all over the world on New Year's Eve. With the record breaking largest number of bells in the world rung full circle, this yearly event is much loved and sacred throughout Dublin and Ireland, bringing large crowds flocking to Dublin 8.

Ringling Master, Leslie Taylor, who rings the Great Bells of Christ Church Cathedral, maintains a tradition going back centuries. The cathedral's deployment of 19 bells, ranging in weight from a quarter of a ton to two and a quarter tons, represents a world record in number of bells available for full-circle ringing. Every bell as it sounds out has been swiftly swung through 360 degrees, to combine with the others in the music of the changes. The oldest bells still in use here date from 1738 while the first notice of bells in Christ Church tower is an entry in the records for the death of John Kyrcham, 'maker of our bells', in 1423.

Doors open at 8.30pm and the concert begins at 9pm. Tickets cost includes a post-concert champagne reception followed by a private gathering on the Cathedral grounds to ring in the New Year by the world famous Cathedral Bells.

<http://entertainment.ticketsolve.com/>

## Anglicans will 'evaluate situation' before Lambeth call - Archbishop Clarke of Armagh



Archbishop of Armagh Richard Clarke has said he believes Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby will think carefully before confirming a date for the next Lambeth Conference which brings together Anglican leaders from across the globe.

Debate around the conference, the ten-yearly gathering of more than 600 Anglican bishops, has provoked controversy because of the row over homosexuality that is dividing Anglicans.

The Anglican Communion is split by the battle between its conservative and liberal wings over gay relationships and gay ordination.

Archbishop of Armagh Richard Clarke said he believes that Dr Welby will “evaluate the situation” before confirming a date for the next Lambeth Conference which is due to be held in 2018.

Dr Clarke told *The Irish Catholic* that Archbishop Welby is still a relatively short time in office and that he needed some time to hear the views of the different Provinces about “what kind of Lambeth do we want, what would be appropriate.”

He said: “I think Archbishop Welby, like the good hard-headed businessman that he was, is taking a step back, trying to survey the scene, and seeing what is the best way for us to take counsel together and in what format.

“He is not a man who is going to be wrong-footed, nor is he going to be frog-marched,” Dr Clarke said.

Archbishop Clarke, who attended two Lambeth Conferences in 1998 and 2008 as Bishop of

Meath and Kildare, said he saw the conference as “an opportunity to go further into our roots of friendship and into our common heritage and should not be seen as the definitive magisterium of the Anglican Communion.”

The last meeting in Canterbury in 2008 was marred by boycotts by African and other global south bishops who objected to the consecration of the openly gay bishop Gene Robinson in the United States.

Other bishops and archbishops who did attend, however, were incensed that Bishop Robinson was not himself invited out of an attempt to appease the conservative wing.

## **Conserving some of Ireland's most historical houses and churches cost €15m this year**

A total of €15 million has been spent repairing and conserving some of Ireland's most historic structures this year.

TheJournal.ie - St Ann's Church on Dawson Street and the The Royal Irish Academy Of Music on Westland Row in Dublin are just two of the

540 projects that benefited from funding this year.



***St Ann's Church on Dawson Street , Dublin***

While in Kilkenny, St Mary's Cathedral, as well as Roethe House both received funding.

Meanwhile in Clare, the former Moyasta Railway Station received funding from their local authority.

Under the Built Heritage Job Leverage Scheme, works that are of a special interest to the structure and those that match the historical detailing of a building were granted funding.

Routine maintenance works does not fall within the schemes' remit.

The scheme, which is administered by local authorities, is under the condition that taxpayer funds are at least matched by private funding.

The €5 million supplied by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has allowed at least €10 million in private funding for these projects.

The new scheme has also encouraged job creation, supporting 175 jobs, particularly in the specialist craft and construction sector.

## **Celtic worship fills needs and pews in US Anglican church**

'I think we're on to something,' says the Rev. Tim Boggs of a welcoming, nondenominational Celtic Eventide service at St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Portland, Maine USA.

Portland Herald - The prayers alone call to mind the seaside cliffs of Ireland, the grassy moors of England or the wild Scottish highlands.



Invocations are filled with earthy and evocative references to the rhythms of the ocean, the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. Add the plaintive wail of cello, the uplifting lilt of flute and the calming glow of candlelight, and St. Alban's Episcopal Church is transformed into a modern outpost of the Celtic spiritual tradition on the coast of Maine.

"It's about experiencing God and Christ in our hearts, in each other and in all creation, which seems particularly appropriate in coastal Maine," said the Rev. Tim Boggs, pastor of St. Alban's.

This month, Boggs started offering a weekly Celtic service at 5:30 p.m. Sundays. It's the latest effort by a Maine faith community – in this case one of Maine's most active Episcopal congregations – to attract new members and promote understanding across diverse beliefs and traditions. Response in the first three weeks has been strong. An evening service that sometimes drew fewer than 10 people now attracts 80 to 100 participants.

"I think we're on to something," Boggs said.

Boggs calls the welcoming, nondenominational service "Celtic Eventide," using the Old English

word for evening. He's hoping to attract faithful Christians, fallen-away believers and those who've never attended church from across Greater Portland.

"Our common notion of church involves a fair amount of teaching and preaching. It's informational," Boggs said. "This is more about experiencing God's presence in a quieter, more spiritual way."

Boggs launched Celtic Eventide at an opportune time, during the Christmas season, when both the spirit of celebration and the yearning for connection are strong.

"We're offering a quiet and contemplative experience in a hectic season that's been taken over by the secular world," said Boggs, who was a senior vice president at Time Warner Inc. before he became an Episcopal priest.

St. Alban's has grown at a time when other Episcopal congregations in Maine have struggled. Churches in Waterboro, Richmond, Mars Hill and Caribou have closed in recent years, while the Episcopal church in Biddeford is now a community center.

Bishop Stephen Lane, head of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine, praised St. Alban's Eventide service as a creative way to reach a modern audience by delving into the church's heritage, which is rooted in the Church of England.

"We're having to learn to be 'church' in a new way," Lane said. "Gone are the days when we could sit back and wait for people to come to us. The church still has a great and important message. We're stepping out in faith to see where it leads us."

More at -

<http://www.pressherald.com/2014/12/28/celtic-eventide-uplifts-many-at-cape-elizabeth-church/>

<http://www.stalbansmaine.org/worship-more/4183-2/>

## **Moderator says religious education holds the key to defeating extremism**

Rt Rev John Chalmers, Moderator of the Church of Scotland has used his New Year's message to call for a renewed role for religious education in schools -

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“As we enter a new year there is probably no issue of any greater concern around the world than the rise of religious fundamentalism. Nothing is more dangerous than the radicalised mind and there is nothing worse than the indoctrinated child. We will not, however, defeat such extremism simply by confronting it across battle lines. The frontline for winning this battle is education and the school is the place where young minds need to be introduced to the power of critical enquiry. How else will a young person ever grow to be able to make wise choices unless they are allowed access to the widest possible range of knowledge and how else will they learn tolerance unless they are introduced to the wide ranging menu of different ideas that populate the world.

“Peace in our time will only come when we find the means to respect those with whom we disagree and when we have matured to the point that we can discuss our deepest held views on religion, philosophy and politics without seeking to impose ours on others. Such tolerance, however, will not come by removing, as some desire, religious observance from the school curriculum; on the contrary what we should be doing is building on the strong tradition of religious reflection which is currently a part of the Scottish school environment.

“The Scottish education system is amongst the best in the world. It produces free thinking, independent and creative minds and it does so by opening up the world ideas as they are practised across the world and across every major discipline. One of the most important of these disciplines is that of properly understanding the faiths that motivate most of the world's population. I am not advocating any measure of proselytising within our schools, but I am saying that knowledge of the substance and practise of religion must be part of any rounded education. Intolerance would, in my view, be the

resultant outcome of turning Time for Reflection in schools into a choice.

“There is a theory prevalent in western society that secularism is an unstoppable bandwagon. Sociologists in the 1960's were sure that secularism and modernity went hand in hand and it was only a matter of time before religious views of the world would be passé. It is clear, however, that such theories have been proved wrong. Peter Berger, of Boston University reassessing the place of religion in society writes, "I think that what I and most other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960's about secularisation was a mistake. Our underlying argument was that secularisation and modernity go hand in hand. It wasn't a crazy theory. There was some evidence for it. But I think it's basically wrong. Most of the world is certainly not secular. Religion continues to be important to people in many countries. The one exception is Western Europe. One of the most interesting questions in the sociology of religion today is not 'How do you explain fundamentalism in Iran? but, 'Why is Western Europe different?"

“If this is true, and I believe it is, then it has never been more important than it is now to maintain a

proper, temperate and inclusive approach to the practise of religious observance. Every child needs to know about religious practice and it has to be shared in a context of open-mindedness and mutual respect. So, I'll be doing all that I can to see that religious observance or time for reflection stays in the curriculum.

“I am comfortable with such an approach to religious freedom not least because God's encounter with each one of us depends on God's gracious meeting with us rather than our zealous encounter with others on God's behalf.”

## **'We get a good reception from regulars' – Hitchin church uses pub as new hub**

Members of a Hitchin church have been sitting on a different kind of pew for their meetings in a bid to attract new blood.

The Hub Church was set up in 2011 as an informal forum for open debate and discussion. The congregation has regular meetings and hosted a Christmas jumper Sunday event at the town's Sun Hotel.



***Dan Drew (front row, second from the left), and Bishop Alan Smith (middle row, second from the right) alongside the congregation of Hub Church in their Christmas jumpers.***

Church leader Dan Drew, who is training to become a priest in the Church of England, said: “We just noticed some of our friends in their 20s started asking questions about faith. We are a fresh expression of faith for people in their 20s and 30s and meet in pubs to debate various topics.

“We act for people who want a bridge between church and faith.



“In the past we have had a James Bond-themed life questions special on 007 and philosophy, pool nights in Osinsky’s and had a welfare tent at Rhythms of the World.

“We are not too preachy or judgmental and tend to get a good reception from pub regulars.

“We also embrace social media. We have even had Bishop Alan Smith of the Diocese of St Albans attend, with people tweeting questions to him. He was great and really bought into it.”

For more information visit

[www.thehubchurch.co.uk](http://www.thehubchurch.co.uk).

## **Salisbury Dean in line for bishopric**

The wait for the Dean of Salisbury Rev June Osborne to become a bishop continues after the Church of England named Rev Libby Lane as the first woman bishop.

Salisbury Journal - She will take up the role of Bishop of Stockport, however the position that she will oversee is just that of a suffragan or assistant bishop in the diocese of Chester.

There are greater prizes available in the church with Oxford, Nottingham, Gloucester and

Newcastle all expected to name their diocesan bishops in the coming months.



Commentators have speculated that Rev Osborne is one of the leading candidates for one

of these roles having been one of the country's leading female clergy for the past two decades.

Rev Osborne, 61, became the Church of England's first Dean of a medieval cathedral in 2004 and has spent her whole life in the church breaking down gender barriers.

Under the current Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, the church has continually looked to break down the gender barrier that his predecessor Rowan Williams seemed unable to fix.

Rev Osborne has previously been critical of Williams' leadership telling The Times over the summer that she felt the church was travelling in the wrong direction.

She said: "I think Rowan's desire to be an agent of unity meant that he gave an enormous amount of comfort to people whose theological position on women was at times incoherent."

Competition for one of the major dioceses is expected to come from a number of other woman bishops who also currently have high profile positions in the church:

- Vivienne Faull, Dean of York Minster, was one of the first 1,000 women to be ordained and in 2000 she

became the first woman to run an English cathedral as the provost of Leicester Cathedral.

- Philippa Boardman, Canon Treasurer of St Paul's Cathedral, presided over the national service to mark the 20th anniversary of women's ordination in the church, with the Archbishop of Canterbury acting as her deacon. When the legislation for women bishops was defeated in 2012 she pledged to wear something purple - the colour of bishops - every day in protest.

- Jane Hedges, Dean of Norwich, is the former Canon Steward of Westminster Abbey and in her previous role she was frequently seen at high-profile services accompanying members of the Royal Family. She became the first clergywoman to shake hands with Pope Benedict XVI in 2010.

- Rose Hudson-Wilkin, chaplain to the House of Commons, was the first black female chaplain to parliament.

## **Maryland's first female Episcopal bishop in gruesome hit-and-run**

ABC2 - A spokesperson from the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland confirmed that a bishop was involved in [a deadly hit-and-run](#) of a bicyclist in Roland Park Saturday afternoon. 58-year-old Heather Elizabeth Cook, Bishop Suffragan of

Maryland, was driving a Subaru that struck and killed the bicyclist, 41-year-old Thomas Palermo.



In an email sent to the clergy of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, the Right Rev. Eugene Taylor Sutton told members that Cook "has been placed on administrative leave, effective immediately."

Sutton also said that Cook first drove off after striking Palermo's bike, but then returned to the scene approximately 20 minutes later "to take responsibility for her actions."

According to the email, Sutton also asked for members from the clergy to pray for Palermo and his family as well as Cook.

According to the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland's website, Cook was elected as bishop

suffragan on May 2, 2014. She is the first woman bishop in the diocese. The website said Cook was born in Syracuse, NY and raised in Baltimore.

Baltimore City police have not said if Cook faces any charges.

## Media digest

### ITV

Online article about the female NHS volunteer who has been diagnosed with Ebola quotes the Archbishop of Canterbury as asking people to pray for her and of the "courage of those serving in S Leone".

<http://www.itv.com/news/update/2014-12-29/archbishop-of-canterbury-calls-for-prayers-for-ebola-victim/>

### Mail/Guard/BBC

Various reports on the death of the "right-to-die" campaigner Debbie Purdy who was 51. They state she won a landmark ruling in 2009 to have guidelines on assisted suicide published by the Government. Ms Purdy had suffered from multiple sclerosis for more than 20 years. Many of the articles mention a letter sent to the Daily Telegraph and signed, among others, by the former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey, calling on the Government to allow time to resolve the issue.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2890340/Right-die-campaigner-MS-sufferer-Debbie-Purdy-dies-aged-51.html>

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/dec/29/assisted-suicide-campaigner-debbie-purdy-dies>  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-25741005>

### **Tel/Mirror/Metro**

Further reports about the letter to the Daily Telegraph about assisted dying. They quote the letter as saying that an "overwhelming majority" of people support the idea of changing the law.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/11315294/Parliament-needs-to-decide-on-assisted-dying.html>

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/actors-comedians-top-public-figures-4889972>

<http://metro.co.uk/2014/12/29/coalition-of-famous-names-urges-politicians-to-legalise-assisted-dying-5002167/>

### **Mail**

Article about a group of Christians in China who have celebrated Christmas in secret in a 12<sup>th</sup> storey apartment above a Beijing dental surgery. Despite an increase in the numbers of Christians in the country, it discusses the problems faced by many who are detained because of their faith. One of the worshippers says: "But Christmas is still a happy time. No matter what happens, God is with us,"

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2889679/No-season-goodwill-Chinas-underground-Christians.html?](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2889679/No-season-goodwill-Chinas-underground-Christians.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

[ITO=1490&ns\\_mchannel=rss&ns\\_campaign=1490](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2889679/No-season-goodwill-Chinas-underground-Christians.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

## **Guard**

Report about schools in Lancashire that are teaching their children about finances. It mentions All Saints Church of England Primary in Chorley where every pupil has a savings account with a credit union. The headteacher is quoted as saying: "We need people to know how to borrow from somewhere sensible."

<http://www.theguardian.com/money/2014/dec/29/lancashire-st-georges-primary-pupils-spending-lesson-debt>

## **Guard**

Article asks if you got engaged over Christmas, can you afford to get married? Includes details on the cost of a Church of England wedding.

<http://www.theguardian.com/money/2014/dec/21/engaged-when-afford-get-married>

## **BBC**

A selection of photos showing how Christians around the world have celebrated Christmas.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/in-pictures-30601526>

## **Metro**

Article about the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Magna Carta in 2015 discusses its importance.

<http://metro.co.uk/2014/12/29/what-is-magna-carta-and-why-are-we-celebrating-its-800th-anniversary-in-2015-5002510/>

## **Sun**

An article about what your "selfie" says about you mentions a bridegroom who took a photo of himself as his wife was walking up the aisle of the church they

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were married in. He describes it as his favourite photo of the day.

<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/woman/health/health/6221331/Psychologist-reveals-what-your-selfies-say-about-you.html>