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**Image of  
the day  
Belfast City  
Hall tree**

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## People and places



## Artists celebrate Columba's 1500th anniversary

**Knock Parish Art Club recently staged a special exhibition to mark the 1500th anniversary of the birth of their patronal saint, Columba.**

Columba's anniversary is today, 7th December, but on Sunday 5th, parishioners enjoyed an inspirational exhibition set up in the west end of the church.

The Rector, Canon John Auchmuty, said:

“I am very grateful to the parish Art Club for allowing our parishioners to reflect on Columba's life and ministry through art. Each one of the beautiful paintings reflected on a specific aspect of Columba's life. There were many paintings depicting his faith, the importance he gave to



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study and the journey to Iona. There were also paintings reflecting his courage and strength during difficult times.

“Columba through his life, work and ministry gives us a timely reminder that despite all the challenges we face new beginnings are possible. Columba’s attentiveness to Almighty God provides focus and encouragement to us as we mark this significant anniversary”.

## **Popular Tullamore carol service is back next Sunday**

The carol service will take place at St Catherine's Church, Hophill, Tullamore. The service will include what Canon Isaac Delamere promises will be some beautiful music from the Le Cheile Singers, Andrius Kozlovskis, conductor and piano, Patrick Maher, organ and piano, along with Prof Dermot Hehir and Ciaran Whelan on guitars.

The service can also be enjoyed online at [www.tullamorechurchofireland.com](http://www.tullamorechurchofireland.com)

Proceeds from the carol service will be given to Offaly Hospice. Those attending in the church are reminded that social distancing guidelines will be observed and those people present are asked to wear a mask.

The service can also be enjoyed online at [www.tullamorechurchofireland.com](http://www.tullamorechurchofireland.com)

## **Polar Express comes to Sydenham**

The community around St. Brendan’s, Sydenham got their very own ‘Polar Express’ train ride for the day as part of their annual Christmas tree lights event last weekend.

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The train was one of a number of attractions that included the light switch–on (complete with snow), hot waffles, chocolate fountain, snow cones, Santa letters and the fantastic Ormeau Concert Band leading us with Christmas classics.

Santa also made an appearance and was very patient with the over 200 children that made their way through the grotto!

Everyone who came was given a copy of 'The Impossible Promise' Christmas story book and a Christmas card highlighting a series of events in December including a children's Christingle Service.

Photo gallery at -

[[] <https://www.downanddromore.org/news/2021/12/polar-express-comes-to-sydenham> ]

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## **Christmas Praise Drive In at Ballymena Livestock Yard**

Christmas is coming and NSConcerts are excited to announce the Christmas Praise Drive In at the Ballymena Livestock Yard, Woodside Road, Ballymena on Friday 10 December 2021 at 7.30pm. Guest singers are Second Chance, Judith Beattie and Nigel Davidson. Tickets are £15 per person including a voucher for a free burger or chip from the on site food village. Tickets available from the Sunday Night Gospel Drive In, the Faith Mission outlets in Ballymena, Banbridge, Lisburn, Lurgan and Portadown, Country Furnishings, Ballymena or on line from this link <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/christmas-praise-drive-in-tickets-203753802107>.

## **Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts and books**

### **Disability and vocations**

- series of short films from Diocese of Manchester to mark International Day of People with Disabilities

To mark International Day of People with Disabilities, on 3 December 2021, Christians in the Church of England in Greater Manchester and Rossendale who live with different disabilities shared very personal stories on video about how they have found a welcome in the Church of England and been encouraged to fulfil their Christian calling.

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In a series of short films a diverse group of Christians who are training for ministry in the Church of England, or who already serve as clergy, tell their stories in moving and honest accounts.

In the five films we hear from ordinands, who are studying at theological colleges, a serving member of clergy and a retired minister who lost his sight as an adult. Each contributor has something to say about how people who have experience of living with a disability, either personally or within their family, can flourish in the Church.

Helen Tyler, who was diagnosed with dyslexia just as she started discerning her calling to ordained ministry and was worried about the training, said: "I realized 'I can't fix this. This is all part of me – it's who I am – and I've got to learn to try and embrace it. I am still on that journey.'"



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Helen had this advice for someone in a similar situation: “Know your strengths, but also, be aware of what you struggle with and don’t be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help because there are people out there who are willing to help you.”

Canon Nick Smeeton, Director of Vocations in the Diocese of Manchester, commissioned the films. He said: “As part of our ongoing work to encourage and enable everyone to fulfill their vocation in the Church, we wanted to hear from individuals who have experience of living with any type of disability, either themselves or within their family, as they pursue their calling. We are very grateful to the men and women at various stages in the discernment process who have volunteered to tell their stories on camera.

“We are challenged and will continue to do more to encourage vocations from as diverse a group of people as possible.”

The five films are published to mark International Day of People with Disabilities on 3 December 2021. Further films will be added to the series in the coming weeks.

View the videos at -

[ [www.manchester.anglican.org/disability-and-vocations](http://www.manchester.anglican.org/disability-and-vocations) ]

## **Canterbury Advent Carol Service recording online**

Missed Sunday’s Advent Carol Service from Canterbury with Archbishop Justin and their amazing Cathedral choir?



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Watch the recording online – and discover many other upcoming Christmas services and events - at <http://ow.ly/QxhG50GY2e6>

## News Reports

### Andy John is next Archbishop of Wales

**The Church in Wales has chosen a new Archbishop. It is to be the Rt Revd Andy John, Bishop of Bangor, and the most senior bishop in the Church.**

The Welsh electoral college met in Holy Trinity Church, Llandrindod Wells, on Monday. The meeting could have lasted three days, but Bishop John quickly secured a two-thirds majority, and his election was confirmed by the other five bishops.

Bishop John will continue to serve as Bishop of Bangor, as he has for the past 13 years. He will be enthroned at St Deiniol's Cathedral, Bangor, at a date yet to be fixed.

He succeeds John Davies, who retired in May after four years as Archbishop. Because of his seniority, Bishop John has already been taking a lead. He gave the presidential address at the last meeting of the Church in Wales Governing Body, and was one of the 52 faith leaders who signed the Glasgow Multi-Faith Declaration for COP26 in September.

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Andrew Thomas Griffith John was born in Aberystwyth on 9 January 1964. He graduated in law in Cardiff, before moving to St John's Theological College, Nottingham, to study theology, graduating in 1988. He was ordained in 1989, serving as assistant curate of St Mary's, Cardigan, with Mwnt and Y Ferwig until 1991. He returned to Aberystwyth to be curate in the Aberystwyth Team, becoming Team Vicar in 1992.

In 1999, he became Vicar of St David's, Henfynyw, with Aberaeron and Llanddewi Aberarth with Llanbadarn Trefeglwys. He then spent two years, 2006-08, as Archdeacon of Cardigan (as well as Vicar of Pencarreg and Llanycrwys), before being consecrated Bishop of Bangor on 29 November 2008. He is a Welsh speaker.

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The Archbishop-elect spoke on Monday of the “enormous privilege” of serving the Church. “As we look forward to the future, I’m very conscious that we’re not yet out of those restrictions that have inhibited our lives for so long.

“We face many challenges, but we do so not alone — we do so with God’s grace and with one another, because together we are so much stronger, so much better, and I’m confident that the Church in Wales will be able to respond with energy, with vision and with vigour to all the challenges which lie ahead of us.”

Although from an Evangelical background, Bishop John has moved with the times. (In past decades his marital status — he is in his second marriage after a divorce — would have been a bar to preferment.) He supported the latest move to allow same-sex couples to have their marriages blessed in church, telling *The National*, a Welsh newspaper, in July: “I think this will make us . . . a Church that provides space for people who demonstrate by their lives that they can be wonderful disciples of Jesus Christ when they want to live in love with a person of the same sex.”

Addressing the Governing Body in September, Bishop John encouraged them to embrace novelty, as the Church in Wales faced up to the size of the challenge before it and the relative modesty of its resources.

“The ‘authority of the eternal yesterday’ must not be a millstone around our necks, but provide a basis for a courageous embrace of what God is doing in the world around us. Mission always lies at the heart of faith, and being alive to God, to what might happen next, is part of



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remaining curious and open to new opportunity.” And he concluded: “What is significant has never been the size of the challenge, but the scale of the faithful response.”



## **First female Bishop in Japan and South East Asia elected**

**Maria Grace Tazu Sasamori, priest of the Diocese of Tokyo, has been elected as the first female Bishop in Japan and South East Asia.**

Maria Grace Tazu Sasamori, priest of the Diocese of Tokyo, has been elected as the first female Bishop in Japan and South East Asia. She was elected as the Bishop of

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Hokkaido at the 80th electoral Synod of the Diocese of Hokkaido.

She was elected on the 10th ballot with two-thirds of the votes of the houses of clergy and laity on 3 November. She accepted the result on 26 November and became Bishop-elect of the Diocese of Hokkaido on the same day.

Mandy Marshall, Director for Gender Justice at the Anglican Communion Office, said: "I'm excited and pleased to hear the news of the first female Bishop. This is a real breakthrough for Japan and will be an encouragement to ordained women everywhere but especially in Japan. Bishop-elect Tazu will need our prayers as she steps into a very male space and has the pressure and holds the hopes of Anglican Women in Japan."

She will succeed Bishop Nathaniel Makoto Uematsu, former Primate of the Nippon Sei Ko Kei (The Anglican Communion in Japan).

The date of her consecration and installation is yet to be determined.

## **Pope: EU language curbs like a dictatorship**

**Vatican warns against 'ideological colonisation' after advice to avoid referring to Christmas, Nick Squires writes in Rome.**

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Pope Francis has compared the European Union to a dictatorship in its attempt to impose “woke” rules on language.

The Pope, 84, said the bloc risked falling apart if it became a vehicle for “ideological colonisation” as he rounded off a four-day trip to Greece.

Brussels last week withdrew a 32-page guide on inclusive language that advised staff to say “human-induced” instead of “man-made” and to avoid reference to Christmas during the holiday season. Facing an outcry, Helena Dalli, the European commissioner for equality, said the guidebook “clearly needed more work”.

Trying to ban such Christian terms amounted to “a fad, watered-down secularism”, Francis said. “It is something that throughout history has not worked. In history, many dictatorships have tried to do these things. I’m thinking of Napoleon, the Nazi dictatorship, the Communist one.”

The Pope said that while he believed the EU was “necessary”, it should not try to erase the different identities of countries within the bloc. “The European Union ... must be careful not to take the path of ideological colonisation. This could end up dividing countries and causing the EU to fail,” he said.

Francis, who was speaking on board the papal plane taking him back to Rome, said mandarins in Brussels “must respect ... the variety of countries and not want to make them uniform. I don’t think it will do that ... but be careful,





because sometimes they come and throw projects like this one out there.”

The Pope has earned a reputation for speaking his mind during these on-board press conferences with journalists who accompany him on his apostolic visits.

On his way back from Brazil, in 2013, he famously said “who am I to judge?” when asked about the role of homosexuals in the Catholic Church.

The Vatican was critical of the European Commission document when it emerged last week.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who as secretary of state is the Vatican’s de facto prime minister, condemned any attempt to

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cancel “our roots, the Christian dimension of our Europe, especially with regard to Christian festivals.

“We know that Europe owes its existence and its identity to many influences, but we certainly cannot forget that one of the main influences, if not the main one, was Christianity itself,” the cardinal said.

In a wide-ranging exchange with journalists, Francis also urged caution in the “interpretation” of a damning report into child sexual abuse by French Catholic clergy, saying a “historical situation” must be viewed in context.

In October, a landmark inquiry, overseen by an independent commission, confirmed extensive sexual abuse of minors by priests in France dating from the 1950s to 2020.

“When we do this kind of study, we must be attentive to the interpretation we make of it,” he said. He added that the “historical situation” must be interpreted by the standards of the time.

Courtesy the Daily Telegraph 07/12/2021

## Press review

### **The Irish Times view on future of the Catholic Church**

The Irish Times

In his first pastoral letter for Advent as Catholic Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell does not hold back. “We are living through dark days. We ...

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/editorial/the-irish-times-view-on-future-of-the-catholic-church-1.4741884> ]

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## **Youth leaving Northern Ireland due to sectarian divide**

The Irish Times

Among the more than 300 students surveyed, poor community relations and the political and religious divide were the main reasons given for leaving ...

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/youth-leaving-northern-ireland-due-to-sectarian-divide-1.4747354> ]

## **Lisburn's fundraising dinner ladies: the charity cooks**

inspired by a Telegraph story ...

Belfast Telegraph

“Over the years we attracted a wide range of volunteers and supporters from different denominations and also people with no church background at ...

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/lisburns-fundraising-dinner-ladies-the-charity-cooks-inspired-by-a-telegraph-story-41113628.html> ]

## **Sunflowers in Shillelagh fundraiser raises over €25,000 for six charities -**

Independent.ie

Some people brought sunflowers home with them. The Irish Cancer Society, the Church of Ireland in Shillelagh, BUMBLEance, the Church of the Immaculate ...

[[] <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wicklow/news/sunflowers-in-shillelagh-fundraiser-raises-over-25000-for-six-charities-41105259.html> ]

## **Synod opens up 'new way of being church'**

The Tablet

Dr Nicola Brady, chair of the Irish synodal process, emphasised that the Synod was a “long term process of transformation”. Synod opens up 'new ...

[churchnewsireland@gmail.org](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.org)



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[[] <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/14756/synod-opens-up-new-way-of-being-church-> ]

## Perspective

### Irish nationalists are forgetting their history by Vernon Bogdanor

**Ireland's intransigence on the Protocol today mimics the behaviour of Unionist politicians a century ago**

‘War and war within three days.’ So Lloyd George threatened Irish leaders on December 5 1921 if they would not accept a partitioned, independent Ireland as a dominion within the British Empire. The Irish did not want to be a dominion and stay within the British orbit. They had had enough of Britain. But in the early hours of December 6, one hundred years ago today, they acquiesced and the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed, leading to the creation of the Irish Free State a year later. Given the row over the Northern Ireland Protocol, the lessons are still relevant.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty was meant to end centuries of enmity, but misunderstandings were inherent from the start. Dominion status was said to be voluntary, yet the Irish were coerced into accepting it.

Many in Britain also wanted Ireland outside the British orbit. They had had enough of Ireland, north and south. In 1920 the Government of Ireland Act had enacted partition but had made Irish unity easy to achieve by giving Northern Ireland a parliament she did not want and a Council of Ireland which

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could facilitate reunification. In 1921 Lloyd George sought to coerce Northern Ireland into joining the new Irish Free State, but was frustrated by Conservative opposition. He then proposed a boundary commission which, he hinted, might make Northern Ireland unviable. The other dominions except for New Zealand – Canada, Australia, South Africa – had all begun with partition and then been unified.

Irish nationalists resented partition. It wasn't until the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement that they acknowledged reunification depended on the consent of the majority in Northern Ireland. But the grievance which led to civil war in the Free State after the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed was not partition, but the oath to the King which legislators were required to take. For Ireland, unlike the other dominions, was not a colony of settlement, indeed not a colony at all, but a mother country which had herself peopled foreign diasporas.

Irish nationalists had sought a republic in 1921. But Eamon de Valera, who opposed the Treaty, had suggested a compromise. He would accept the King as externally associated with Ireland and, as such, head of the association. This was the formula by which, in 1949, republican status for India and other ex-colonies, of which Barbados is the latest, was made compatible with Commonwealth membership, with the Queen as head of the association. De Valera, regarded by many in Britain as a nationalist fanatic, was in a sense the founder of the modern Commonwealth. He would not have taken Ireland out of it as a Fine Gael government did in 1949.

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However, the Anglo-Irish Treaty could not last. Few in Ireland regarded it as a final settlement but rather, in the words of Michael Collins, as giving the freedom to achieve freedom. In Britain, suspicion of Ireland grew as De Valera proved Collins right by progressively whittling away provisions of the Treaty and declaring Ireland neutral in the war against Hitler.

Irish membership of the EU, which she joined with Britain in 1973, gave her the chance to carve a future independently of her overbearing neighbour. But distrust of Britain remains deep in the Irish subconscious, as brilliantly described in Conor Cruise O'Brien's book *Ancestral Voices*, and it surfaces at sensitive times such as Brexit. Some in Ireland now feel schadenfreude at Britain's post-Brexit discomfiture and the loosening of ties between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. They regard this as just punishment for Brexit. They are wrong to do so.

For, just as intransigent Unionism could not reconcile Ireland to the British connection, so also intransigent nationalism cannot resolve the problems of Northern Ireland and the Protocol. Ireland, happy to whittle away the Anglo-Irish Treaty as unsuitable to her needs, now presses the EU to maintain the Protocol by appealing to eternal and immutable principles of the EU, principles which the EU has been happy to discard left, right and centre during the euro and Covid crises.

The post-Brexit problem of the relationship between Britain and Ireland cannot be resolved by the EU, but only by a realisation in both countries of the essential truth of Gladstone's perception that amity depends upon

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recognising the distinctive identities within these islands but also their essential unity.

Vernon Bogdanor is professor of government, King's College, London. His books include 'Britain and Europe in a Troubled World'. Courtesy The Daily Telegraph 06/12/2021

## Poem for today

### Desert Places by Robert Frost

Snow falling and night falling fast, oh, fast  
In a field I looked into going past,  
And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,  
But a few weeds and stubble showing last.

The woods around it have it - it is theirs.  
All animals are smothered in their lairs.  
I am too absent-spirited to count;  
The loneliness includes me unawares.

And lonely as it is, that loneliness  
Will be more lonely ere it will be less -  
A blanker whiteness of benighted snow  
With no expression, nothing to express.

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces  
Between stars - on stars where no human race is.  
I have it in me so much nearer home  
To scare myself with my own desert places.



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