



**Image of the day**  
**St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin**

January 29, 2021

## Connor organist features in Burns Night broadcast



**Emma Colgan (right), organist at St Saviour's Parish Church, Connor, Co Antrim, featured in a BBC Burns Night TV broadcast playing the piano accordion.**

With the pandemic preventing any form in-person celebrations to mark Burns Night and celebrate the legacy of poet Robert Burns on January 25, BBC NI shared the concert from 2018 on BBC2 this week. You can watch the broadcast on iPlayer.

Emma took on the role of organist in St Saviour's when she was just 11-years-old, and on February 2 this year, she will have been playing the organ for services for 29 years!

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The concert 'Burns an' Mair,' is presented by singer Sylvia Burnside and Waringstown man Mark Wilson, who was also the Musical Director. It was recorded in the historic First Presbyterian Church in Rosemary Street, Belfast. Read more at <https://bit.ly/3iLBjFw>

## **A new space to reflect planned for Greenisland**

A new community project providing an outdoor space for people to reflect and to remember those who have died is being planned in Greenisland.

Κάλλος – the Greek spelling of KALLOS, meaning beauty and wellbeing – aims to provide a space for reflection – created by the local community.

The Rev Isy Hawthorne-Steele, priest-in-charge of the Church of the Holy Name, Greenisland, said: "The idea is to create an area where we could possibly have picnic tables and benches where people can come and have a cup of tea and chat.

"Another idea is to use this space as a garden of reflection and remembering loved ones who have passed away. We could do this perhaps, by having a shrub or flower planted in their memory, and have name plates made and displayed."

The project envisages planting the area with native plants, flowers and colourful shrubs. There will also be a leaf composting area.



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“The key thing is to make this a community project that is created by the community for the community,” said Isy. “We hope that all groups and community



representatives will be involved in the practical end, for example, making the benches, tables, planting, creating leaf compost, etc, and of course looking after it! This way we believe people will have a sense of ownership.”

Isy described this as an ‘outside’ initiative that can help with mental health issues – getting people to re-engage with others. It will also serve as a mission outreach.

Κάλλος – A space to reflect on life – has already attracted interest from a number of groups, including the local Presbyterian Church, football club, community group, council representatives, youth club, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, horticultural consultants and local allotment keepers.

“It’s an intergenerational group that is obviously adhering to current restrictions, and will hopefully grow,” said Isy.



## **Stainer's Crucifixion for All**

### **– Call for Singers to Join Virtual Choir for Easter**

Following the success of the Christmas collaboration, when singers and choirs in Dublin and Glendalough and beyond recorded a carol service to a high standard without ever meeting, a similar project is planned with John Stainer's well-known 'The Crucifixion'.

Tom Maxwell of St Brigid's Church, Stillorgan, Kevin O'Sullivan of Kiltarnan Parish Church and Church Music Dublin will lead the collaboration. This is an exciting opportunity to learn and sing a much-loved work while all of us are obliged to remain at home.

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As before, singers will record on their phones and send the recordings to Tom. You are invited to contact Tom at [dgchristmascollaboration@gmail.com](mailto:dgchristmascollaboration@gmail.com) by Saturday 6 February. An initial Zoom meeting to discuss the project will take place on Monday 8 February, with a first rehearsal taking place on Monday 15 February.

Much of the material recorded is suitable for services during Holy Week and will be available to download from the Church Music Dublin website in due course.

## What a Giveaway!

It's never too late to hear a good news story! Back in December, the team from The Gathering church plant was at the heart of a generous Christmas giveaway to over 400 people impacted by homelessness.

Parishioner, Andrew Brown, an entrepreneur (and soon to be trainee diocesan evangelist) is the founder of Boxed Off Belfast. The company partnered with local businesses and the Simon Community to offer a Christmas movie night experience in the Simon Community's 21 hostels.





Using St Martin's in Ballymacarrett as a packing and distribution centre, volunteers filled a stack of boxes with goodies which were then delivered to hostels across Northern Ireland.

Each box also contained a pocket-sized copy of John's Gospel as part of the Gospel Giveaway project. Over 60,000 pocket-sized copies, personalised for each parish, have been distributed in Down and Dromore in the past two months.

## **Church of Scotland makes good progress on presbytery reform**

The Church of Scotland is making good progress in streamlining its presbytery structures to ensure it operates more effectively and efficiently.

Three new groupings – Aberdeen and Shetland, Clyde and Fife – are already up and running as part of a radical reform agenda to ensure that the Church is lean and fit for growth.

The General Assembly of 2019 approved a plan which will see the number of presbyteries in Scotland reduced from 43 to around 12.

Presbytery reform is a major undertaking for the Church as it requires change on many levels – from congregations and kirk sessions through presbytery committees and often involves people finding new ways to work closely together across large distances.



## New beginnings

Rev Dr George Whyte, Principal Clerk of the General Assembly, said work is continuing apace across Scotland to unite presbyteries based on existing geographical or cultural connections.

“Presbytery reform is a middle-distance race not a sprint, and it needs to be shaped by those on the ground,” he said.

“It will happen in stages with the first ‘new’ presbyteries having already started while others will seek approval to unite at the 2021 and 2022 General Assemblies.

“We hope the new pattern of presbyteries will be in place from January 2023.



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“This, of course, is more of a beginning than end as people work together to reshape and renew the life of the Church.”

The changes will be made as part of a major programme of work to reform church governance structures and to devolve resources to presbyteries to support the local church in carrying out its mission.

They are set against the backdrop of financial pressures exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to reduction of £11.3 million in Ministry and Mission contributions and investment income in the 2021 budget.

### **Affordable and sustainable**

Accounting for 75% of national expenditure in 2021, the cost of ministry is £40.6 million for the coming year, an increase of almost £1 million on the previous year largely due to the recruitment of ministries development staff (MDS) posts.

The Assembly Trustees say that future presbytery plans, which currently suggest that the number of ministers and other roles in ministry could increase, must be affordable and sustainable and based on the reality of the Church's financial situation.

In light of financial pressures, the operating model of the Church must be reviewed before bringing new target numbers for future ministry posts to the 2021 General Assembly.

They are considering putting a hold on recruitment of any further MDS staff beyond those agreed in December 2020 until commissioners approve the plan.



### *General Assembly 2019 commissioners*

The Assembly Trustees acknowledge that many ministers who retire could not be replaced like for like even if this was an affordable aspiration due to a shortfall in the number candidates to fill the emerging vacancies.

The provision of training will be reviewed with the view of providing enhanced opportunities for ministry from a broader population including elders and worship leaders.

The Church is also taking careful stock of its land and buildings with a view to disposing of properties that no longer serve the mission of the church.

### **Joint working and learning**

The Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland was formed on 1 June, 2020 and discussions are underway which could bring [churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com)

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in the other north-east presbyteries, including part of Moray, Gordon, Buchan and Kincardine and Deeside next year.

Talks are ongoing to pave the way for the Presbytery of Orkney to also join the new presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland.

Rev Dr John Ferguson, clerk to the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland, said the merger has so far been a success.

“We had already invested in technology prior to the pandemic to allow for much greater use of video conferencing in light of the geography of the new presbytery,” he added.

“The number of meetings was set at just four a year but the outbreak of the pandemic meant that the use of Zoom and Teams to conduct business came into its own and this has been very successful.

“Members of the new Presbytery have learned a great deal from one another about being the Church at local level and members of the former presbyteries now have a greater insight into the challenges of city centre ministry and ministry on an island.”

## **Energy and optimism**

Rev Dr David Coulter, clerk- designate to the Presbytery of Fife, said plans are firmly in place for the first business meeting on the sixth of February.



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“Thanks to the excellent work of the transition group made up of members of Dunfermline; Kirkcaldy and St Andrew’s Presbytery, Rev Jane Barron has been nominated as the Moderator-elect,” he revealed.

“Conveners and members of the Business; Management and Mission Committees have been appointed subject to Presbytery approval.

“Thanks to Zoom and Teams there has been early contact and close collaboration with the offices of the Principal Clerk and the General Trustees as well as with the Presbyteries of Clyde and Aberdeen.

“Overall, there is a real spirit of renewal, energy and optimism towards building the new Fife Presbytery.”

The new Mission Director, Neil Campbell, takes up his post next month and Dr Coulter will join after Easter.

Rev Dr Peter McEnhill, clerk to Clyde Presbytery, said: “Clyde Presbytery is still very much a work in progress and the focus is mission in response to the challenges of an increasingly secular society.

“Reform is paradoxically about getting bigger to get closer to the ground, big enough for resources to be devolved so that meaningful decisions can be taken closer to the local context.

“Resourcing the local church so that worshipping communities are freed to focus on witnessing and serving their communities in the name of Christ is the goal.

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“Presbyteries will be more fleet of foot and supple in their response, fashioning the new shape of the Church for the 21st century by letting go of some of the old patterns that have served us so faithfully in the past.

“The work will require wisdom and discernment and not a little pastoral insight, but there is much enthusiasm for the task and a great sense that God is doing a new thing in our midst.”

## **Holocaust victims remembered at new memorial site**

The Polish Consul General in NI has said it is a “moral duty” to remember those who died in the Holocaust as he laid wreaths at a new memorial site in memory of the millions of people who lost their lives.

Pawel Majewski joined Antrim and Newtownabbey Mayor Jim Montgomery at Monkstown Jubilee Community Centre yesterday, Holocaust Memorial Day.

There, they commemorated the 6m Jewish people murdered during the Holocaust, alongside the millions of other people killed under Nazi persecution and in genocides that followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

Mr Montgomery said: “The Holocaust was a defining period of the 20th century, which undoubtedly changed the course of history. I hope the Holocaust Memorial site will offer solace to our Jewish community. We must all ‘Stand

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Together' to promote and enjoy a peaceful and stable society where diversity is embraced and celebrated.”

Mr Majewski thanked the council for its “strong commitment to remembering the victims of the Holocaust, alongside the millions of others killed under Nazi Persecution”.

“It is our moral duty to acknowledge and remember all those who suffered and we have to make sure that it must never happen again” he said.

## **Pope Francis on Holocaust Remembrance Day: Memory and Vigilance**

Pope Francis on Wednesday condemned the systematic murder of six million Jews in the Holocaust, calling on the Catholic faithful worldwide and all persons of good will to protect the memory of the dark chapter in human history.

“Remembering is an expression of humanity,” Pope Francis said. “Remembering is a sign of civilization,” he continued. “Remembering is a condition for a better future of peace and fraternity.”

The Holy Father made his remarks during his weekly General Audience on Wednesday, 27 January, which is International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The United Nations officially declared the Day in the year 2005, to ensure the memory of the six million Jewish victims of Nazi terror is never extinguished and teach future generations of the horror.





Five years before, in January 2000, representatives of forty-six governments worldwide met in Stockholm and issued a declaration establishing the day in their respective countries.

“The magnitude of the Holocaust, planned and carried out by the Nazis, must be forever seared in our collective memory,” the Stockholm Declaration proclaims. “The selfless sacrifices of those who defied the Nazis, and sometimes gave their own lives to protect or rescue the Holocaust’s victims, must also be inscribed in our hearts.”

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“The depths of that horror,” the Declaration goes on to say, “and the heights of their heroism, can be touchstones in our understanding of the human capacity for evil and for good.”

The date of 27 January marks the anniversary of the Red Army’s liberation of Nazis’ Auschwitz-Birkenau camp complex.

“Remembering also means being careful,” said Pope Francis on Wednesday, “because these things could happen again, beginning with ideological proposals intended to save a people and ending by destroying a people and humanity.”

Anti-Semitic violence and harassment has been on the rise in recent years, including a mass murder at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018. One of the rioters who stormed the US Capitol was wearing a “Camp Auschwitz” t-shirt. A similar article was being sold on e-commerce site Etsy until the company pulled the offering in the wake of outrage.

In Germany in October of 2019, a man armed with firearms and explosives and equipped with a camera attempted to carry out a massacre on a synagogue in Halle during services on Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar.

“If I fail and die but kill a single Jew, it was worth it,” the 27-year-old attacker wrote in a manifesto. “After all, if every White Man kills just one, we win.”

Unable to gain entry to the house of worship, he shot and killed a woman on the street near the synagogue door, then

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drove to a nearby kebab shop and killed another man. He shot and wounded two other people.

In his remarks on Wednesday, Pope Francis urged vigilance, saying we must be attentive “to how this path of death, of extermination, and brutality begin.”

## Pointers for prayer

Urgent Prayer Request from the Province of Alexandria: The Anglican Church of Ethiopia have asked for our prayers as they see the results of the Tigray crisis unfold. One church leader has described “thousands of people internally displaced just living in empty fields.”

[[] <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/01/1082492> ]

Today we pray for Mozambique. A cholera outbreak combined with a growing humanitarian crisis after fighting in a northern province displaced more than 500,000 people last year has led to the UN calling for help in the region.

Today we give thanks for those raising awareness of leprosy around the world. It's World Leprosy Day next week, when advocates challenge myths and spread awareness about leprosy, which is totally curable, globally.

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.



Almighty God our heavenly Father, guide the nations of the world into the way of justice and truth, and establish among them that peace which is the fruit of righteousness, that they may become the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. ~ *The Book of Common Prayer*



Lord Jesus, you prayed that we would all be united together so the world would believe and experience your love. Help us to put aside that which keeps us apart and work together to share your love through our actions and our lives.

Let's remember and thank God today for friends and connections with different church traditions, and pray that we'll fully embrace and enjoy the richness of diversity that we all bring to worship and service.

We pray today for God's help as we unite across denominations to bring hope and practical care to those in need, and ask that any differences and misunderstandings will be overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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Today we pray for those facing food insecurity globally. Coronavirus, conflict and cuts to UN funding are increasing the risks of food insecurity and malnutrition in 2021, in particular in South Sudan.

Prolonged restrictions and times of isolation can lead to a loss of confidence in venturing out and interacting with others. We pray for all who are experiencing this and ask God to help us gently reach out with encouragement and understanding.

## Speaking to the Soul

God uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume. Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing.

2 Corinthians 2:14-15 NLT

Smells are powerful aren't they? I can still remember some of the smells from my childhood. Many of them are associated with summer holidays when we went to the Isle of Wight and smelt the sea, the wild flowers and the beautiful fresh bread. Most of the smells that I recall were sweet although I can't quite get over the boyhood memory of the smell of a French fish market! I love the idea that as we speak about Jesus we are spreading around sweet perfume.

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When a Roman general won a military victory there would be a triumphal procession through the city. The general wore a crown of laurel and a specially embroidered purple and gold toga. He rode in a four-horse chariot through the streets in a procession with his army, prisoners and spoils of war. Along the route of the triumphal procession perfumes were sprinkled, which were a sweet smell of victory for those on the general's side and a smell of death and defeat for those he had beaten. Paul uses this powerful picture to remind his readers that as Jesus leads us in triumph his fragrance can be smelled. A smell of triumph and joy for those who found salvation in him, and a smell of death for those who rejected him.

As we live for God today our prayer must be that there will be many who will smell the fragrance of Jesus through our kindness, understanding and compassion. We ourselves have no lovely fragrances to share but as we live closer and closer to Jesus people will not fail to pick up the sweet smell of Jesus.

## QUESTION

What are you going to smell like today?

## PRAYER

Lord God our Father, in a world which so often smells badly, help us today to share the fragrance of Jesus. Amen.





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