



**Image of the day -
Bell-ringers at St Patrick's Cathedral,
Dublin**

Bell-ringers are “badly needed” in church towers right around the country

There are more than 35 church towers in Ireland with bells that are manually operated every week and people are being encouraged to come forward and learn how it's done.

There are five manual towers in Dublin alone and on Lunchtime Live this afternoon, Michael Ryan from Taney Parish in Dundrum said bell-ringers are “badly needed” right around the country, Michael Staines writes in Newstalk.

“We are looking for bell-ringers in Taney and all around the country would you believe,” he said.

“It is an art form that is dying really around the country. We don’t have many bell-ringers and we are trying to recruit as many people as we can.”

He said bell-ringing is a “great hobby” to get involved in.

“Most people think if you are ringing bells you are sort of flying up and down the ropes but it is far from it,” he said.

“It is not musical. It is basically following numbers really. In Taney, we have eight bells and we start off with 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 and so on but you can change the sequence.

“By changing that you get into different tunes and that is the simple way of starting off. Bell-ringers call the tunes



Bell-ringers at St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin

methods but basically, they are just tunes and you can go on from there and learn a lot as you go along.”

Meanwhile, caller Helen told the show she has been bell-ringing for three years since answering an ad in the paper.

She said bellringing is a fun way to get to know new people – even if it is “a little bit of a workout” at times.

“We do kind of joke that the Taney Gym is open when we are down there for a practice because it is a workout,” she said. “But I don’t think it’s as difficult as people think it is. We are not actually going up and down with the ropes.

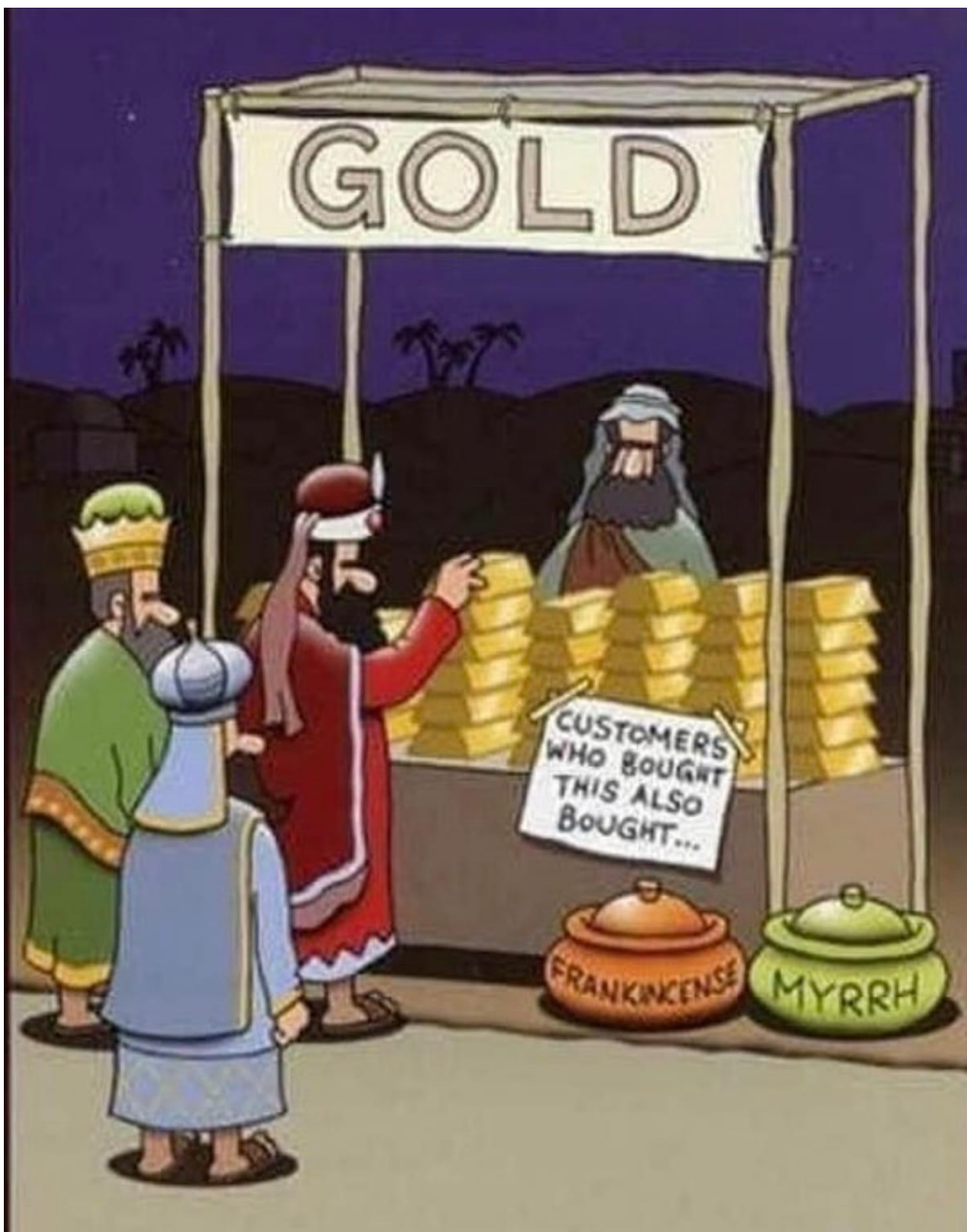
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“The first bell is the lightest one and they get heavier and heavier right up until Bell Eight but [...] when you are pulling the rope, you are just keeping that motion of the bell going so it is not as hard as people think it is.”

"Great fun"

She said the practices are “great fun” for all involved.

“You are learning new things and there is a great bunch of people down there,” she said.



“We actually get to go and visit other towers too. We have been on day trips to Kilkenny, Waterford and Limerick and we went away on a weekend a couple of years ago to Sussex and we rang about

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five towers over there so it is good fun.”

Manual bell-ringing is not taking place during COVID-19 lockdown but will return when restrictions are eased later in the year.

You can learn more about getting involved in Taney Parish by emailing taneybellringers@gmail.com and you can find out more about the country's other towers at bellringingireland.org.

Report courtesy of News Talk , 4 January 2021

Sinn Féin chairman Declan Kearney hits back at archbishop's centenary comments

The head of the Catholic Church in Ireland's criticism of nationalist and republican politicians' failure to engage with events to mark the Northern Ireland centenary has been described as a "misdirected political intervention" by Sinn Féin chairman Declan Kearney, The Irish News reports

Archbishop Eamon Martin last week told The Irish Catholic newspaper that he saw 2021 as an "opportunity for greater mutual understanding" and that he was disappointed nationalist and republican political leaders had "dismissed" the centenary.



Declan Kearney said Archbishop Eamon Martin made a 'misdirected political intervention' by criticising nationalist and republican politicians. Picture by Kelvin Boyes/Press Eye

The Catholic leader also acknowledged that partition had caused "a great amount of sadness: a sense of separation, a sense of loss".

But Mr Kearney said it was "wrongheaded" not to concede that there was much about the past 100 years which is "deeply regretted", including, he said, the "failure of institutional Church leaders to vigorously oppose the violent repression and other injustices of the state".

The Stormont junior minister said it was possible the primate had "genuinely missed the public comments from Sinn Féin on this issue".

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"There is nothing to celebrate about the violent partition of Ireland by an English government," he said.

"Institutionalised sectarianism, discrimination and state repression became the lived experience for successive generations of northern republicans, nationalists, Catholics, and others."

The South Antrim MLA said unionists have a "separate narrative" that reflects a different experience.

the nine key teachings of Jesus

radical **love**
lavish **generosity**
extravagant **forgiveness**
inclusive **hospitality**
compassionate **action**
selfless **service**
a passion for **justice**
creative **nonviolence**
simple **living**

Kurt Struckmeyer, *An Unorthodox Faith*

following **Jesus**

"That is why they choose to celebrate the foundation of the northern state," he said.

"That is their political choice – but that doesn't make it right."

Mr Kearney said 2021 must "not be about rancour or deepening the divisions".

"Instead of celebrating partition, this

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year should herald an inclusive conversation about the continued transformation of society towards reconciliation and Irish unity," he said.

Report courtesy The Irish News, January 05, 2021

‘God’ comedy sketch on RTE provokes 5,000 complaints



Almost 5,000 complaints have been made to RTÉ about a ‘comedy’ sketch broadcast by the national broadcaster depicting God as a rapist.

The leader of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin, had denounced the broadcast as ‘deeply offensive and blasphemous’, Helen Bruce writes on Extra.ie.

RTÉ confirmed that it had received 3,500 emails and 1,250 calls about the sketch by satire website Waterford Whispers in the New Year’s Eve Countdown programme on RTÉ One.

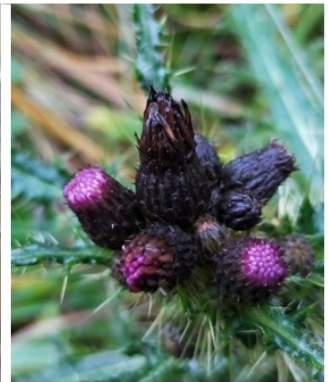
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Additional complaints have also been made to independent regulator the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.

The State broadcaster apologised at the weekend to 'those who were offended by the segment'. It followed criticism online and calls for it to be removed from the RTÉ Player.

In the fake news skit, former RTÉ presenter Aengus Mac Grianna read: 'In a shocking revelation this year, God became the latest figure to be implicated in ongoing sexual harassment scandals.

'The five billion-year-old stood accused of forcing himself on a young Middle Eastern migrant and allegedly impregnating her against her will.'



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Accompanied by pictures of an elderly man in white robes being arrested by gardaí, the report added that God had been sentenced to two years in prison, with the final 24 months suspended.

Archbishop Eamon Martin wrote: ‘This outrageous clip should be removed immediately and denounced by all people of goodwill.’

The programme remains on the RTÉ Player, but a warning says that ‘viewer discretion is advised’.

Report courtesy Extra.ie 5 January 2021

Festive TV viewing at all time low

The lowest TV ratings for a Christmas Day since records began was seen in 2020, new figures show.

The most-watched programme on December 25 last month was Call the Midwife on BBC One, with a TV audience of 8m.

This is more than half a million below the 8.7m who saw Call the Midwife in 2018, which previously held the record for the lowest ratings for a most-watched Christmas Day show.

And it was a sharp drop from the 17.1m who saw the special episode of Gavin and Stacey that was broadcast on BBC One on December 25, 2019.

The TV ratings for Christmas Day 2020— which also included 6.7m for BBC One's Strictly Come Dancing — reflect a long-term decline in audiences driven partly by a change in viewing habits, as more people access on

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demand services such as the BBC iPlayer, and via streaming services such as Netflix.

The biggest ever TV audience for a single Christmas Day broadcast remains the 21.8m who saw the film 'Crocodile Dundee' on BBC1 in 1989.

News briefs



Agherton Parish's special gift to Fields of Life -

Parishioners and friends of Agherton Parish in Portstewart had a special gift to give on Christmas morning, donating a cheque for £9,000 to Fields of Life. The money was raised after a series of online harvest broadcasts in October. In 2019, the parish raised £6,500 to build a well in Eastern

Uganda. As the coronavirus pandemic tightened its grip on life on the north coast, the parish responded to an appeal to build Agherton Well No. 2. The appeal was to bring the necessity of clean water to a village also suffering the effects of Covid-19. The rector, the Rev Malcolm Ferry, said: "The appeal was launched after parishioners saw the success of last year's well and the impact it had on the small community.

"The amount raised surprised us all and the news on Christmas morning that we could indeed build another well was celebrated by everyone. The initial appeal was to try and reach the £6,500 needed to build the second well so, when we smashed the total, there was a real sense of achievement that even with the lockdown and restrictions the generosity of the parish was evident." Locally, Agherton Select Vestry also decided to donate some additional funds to the Coleraine Food Bank in recognition of local families struggling in difficult times.

Online Alpha Course at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin

- Starting 1 February, 20.00, online via Zoom. Alpha is a video series that provides an opportunity to discuss and explore the Christian faith. To get started we've planned a 'double feature': 'Is There More To Life Than This?' on Monday, 1 February, and 'Who Is Jesus?' on Tuesday, 2 February. Video sessions will continue weekly on Mondays until 22 March, with plenty of time to think, chat and ask questions. It will all happen online via Zoom, just email Abigail (abigail@christchurch.ie) for a complete schedule or to register.

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Down Cathedral Service broadcast on BBC1 - The Very Revd Henry Hull, Dean of Down, led an ecumenical service for the second Sunday of Christmas from Down Cathedral in Downpatrick on BBC1 on Sunday morning (3rd January). The service featured hymns from the Songs of Praise archives from across Northern Ireland and the preacher was the Bishop of Down and Dromore, the Rt Revd David McClay.

Methodist World Development resources - If you're planning your annual World Development & Relief church service for 2021, visit our website to download everything you need!

- ✓ Sermon (Video)
- ✓ Kids' talk
- ✓ Prayers
- ✓ Reading

Download here [Down pointing backhand index buff.ly/2JBvTQv](https://buff.ly/2JBvTQv)

City of Derry International Choir Festival writes - Thank you to all those who have signed up for our workshop series with Lucinda Geoghegan. We are really excited to get started next week and hope you are too!

Contact our Festival Manager for registration
-email fiona.crosbie@derrychoirfest.com.
or see web site below.

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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If you haven't registered yet, there is still time! You can find all details about the workshops below and registration closes this Friday 8 January.

Please note, the link for the first zoom session (taking place next Wednesday 13 January) will be sent to all registered participants this Friday.

SOS - Sounds of Singing!

Following on from the success of our workshop with the amazing Lucinda Geoghegan in October 2020, we are thrilled to welcome Lucinda back for a brand-new series of zoom workshops for primary school teachers in 2021.

This series of six sessions will focus on different aspects of musical learning and how music can benefit the whole child. Singing will be the main focus, but over the six sessions Lucinda will also share simple, practical and fun ideas about the use of classroom percussion and development of listening skills.

Following on from the six zoom workshops, we are very excited to announce that Lucinda will lead a Big Sing Day for primary school children and teachers IN PERSON in the Millennium Forum on Thursday 21 October as part of the 2021 Choir Festival.

Wed 13 January – Beat It

Wed 10 February – I've Got Rhythm

Wed 10 March – Pitch In

Wed 14 April – Pitch and Rhythm

Wed 19 May – Listening Skills

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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Wed 22 September – Consolidate and Celebrate

All sessions are free of charge and last for one hour (11am – 12pm)

Thurs 21 October – Big Sing Day (for those based in Derry or able to travel to Derry)

Please note that the zoom sessions are open to anyone, even if you can't attend the Big Sing Day next October!

Register NOW - [<https://derrychoirfest.com/take-part/lucinda-geoghegan-workshops.php>]

The long read

Shared Island Initiative - a trojan horse for unity or a shared future based on mutual respect?

On the first of the Irish Examiner's three-day feature on the Shared Island initiative, political correspondent Aoife Moore speaks with Taoiseach Micheál Martin, a survivor of the Miami Showband Massacre and a father who lost his son in the Omagh bombing.

According to the government, the Shared Island Unit "supports the implementation of the Government's commitment to work with all communities and traditions on the island to build consensus around a shared future on the island underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement".

Overseen by Principal Officer Eoghan Duffy, the Unit is examining the political, social, economic and cultural



considerations for a "shared future in which all traditions are mutually respected".

"Fostering inclusive dialogue and commissioning research on a shared future. The unit works in close cooperation with other Government Departments and engages on an inclusive basis with civil society, North and South on the island."

A series of online meetings labelled "dialogues" are hoping to target all communities on the island, including young people, ethnic minorities, with sources keen to point out that some 1.3 million people have been born since the Good Friday Agreement.

A series of eight to 10 discussions are to be held between now and the summer.

The two core pillars are; Key social issues that would be of concern to people on the island, environment, health, education, and the whole island economy.

The other pillar is around key civic concerns addressed in the Good Friday Agreement, including identity and equality.

Irish Examiner 27 December, 2020 - More at -

[[] <https://www.irisht Examiner.com/news/spotlight/arid-40197183.html>]

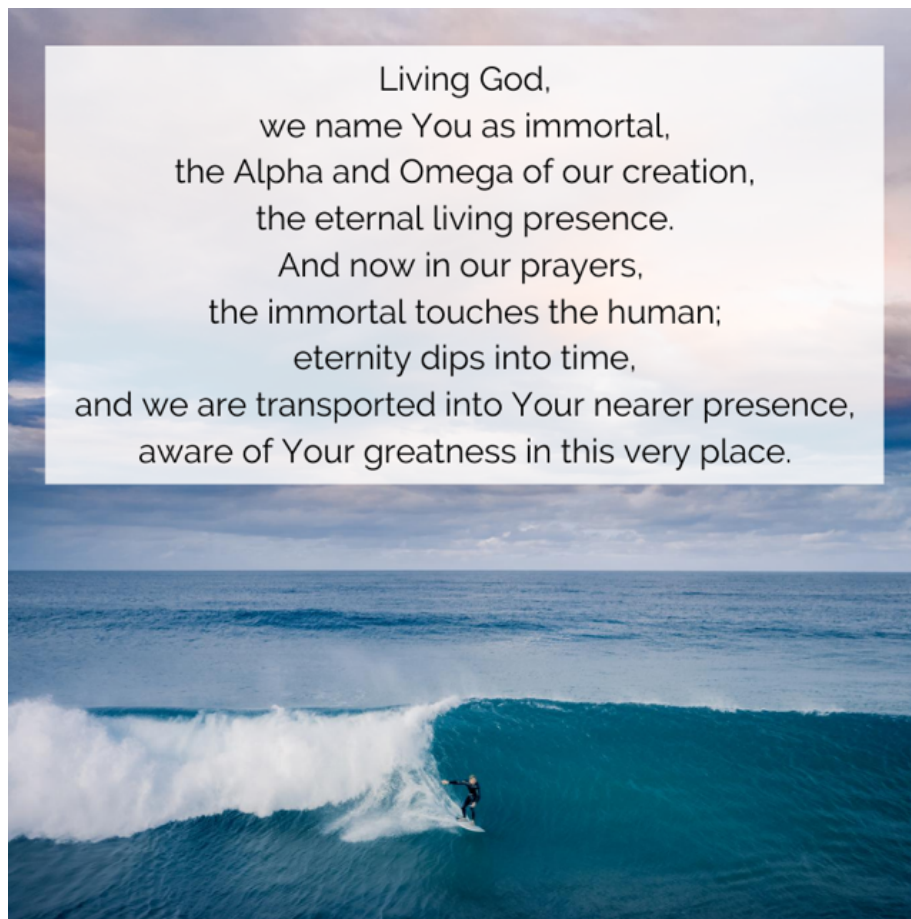
Pointers for prayer

As we begin a new year that none of us would have imagined this time last January, we pray for God to give a sense of purpose and faith that he has good plans for us, however the year unfolds.

We pray today for all who are facing the new year alone, having lost loved ones recently. We ask that God will give them hope for the future, and show us how we can come alongside them with comfort and companionship.

Uganda is preparing for general, presidential and parliamentary elections this Thursday. Pray for the elections to take place peacefully and safely in light of the continued threat of the coronavirus.

Today we pray for the UK's new financial commitments in 2021. The recent Spending Review included the aid budget being slashed to just 0.5% of GNI and didn't commit to a permanent £20 uplift in Universal Credit.



Today we pray for people who will be homeless in 2021. As we look towards the new year, people experiencing homelessness will once again be faced with a new set of distinct challenges.

Today we pray for COP26. The global climate conference, rescheduled from 2020, will be taking place in Glasgow in 2021. We pray for ambition and action from world leaders on climate change, and pray that those already affected by climate chaos would be kept safe.

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph & Mary, and the peace of the Christ-child be yours this Christmas and the blessing of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit be with you. Amen

Almighty God, you make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your Son Jesus Christ. Grant that, as we joyfully receive him as our redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our judge. Amen.

Speaking to the soul

The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord."

Luke 1:13-15 NLT

This was the greatest day in Zechariah's life. Being a male descendant of Aaron, he was a priest and that was a great privilege. However, there were a huge numbers of priests. It is suggested that there might have been up to 20,000 of them and so there were divided up into 24 groups which served in rotation. The greatest privilege of all was for a priest to be chosen to go into the temple to burn the incense at the time of the offering of the morning or evening sacrifice. Having burnt the incense, the priest would then emerge from the temple and pronounce a blessing on the people. This was such a great privilege that a priest could only do this once in his lifetime and many never had the opportunity.

The priest was chosen for this awesome responsibility by lot. Just imagine the sense of anticipation as the choice was

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made, and the overwhelming sense of privilege and responsibility when you knew it was you. And that's exactly what happened to Zechariah. The other major factor in his life was that he and his elderly wife, Elizabeth, had no children and, at the time, this was seen as a matter of great shame. It was a burden that they had lived with for many years. So when the angel met Zechariah in the temple and informed him that Elizabeth would not only have a baby but that their son would have a key role in God's purposes for the world, it is hardly surprising that he was left speechless.

This wonderful story reminds us that we should never put a limit on what God can do. The idea of Elizabeth having a baby seemed ridiculous – but not to God. We always need to leave our minds open to the new things that God might want to do in our lives.

QUESTION

What surprising things has God done in your life?

PRAYER

Lord God, help me always to be open to whatever you want to do, however surprising. Amen.



