



**Image of the
day -**

**All Saints'
Parish
Church,
Antrim**



UK Government defends church singing ban

The Bishop of London has said she will continue to press the Government on lifting the ban on congregational singing in churches.

The Rt Rev Sarah Mullally made the comments after the Prime Minister confirmed this week that Covid-19 restrictions were being extended for another four weeks.

Although places of worship are open, congregational singing is still not permitted, a rule the government continued to defend this week.

Bishop Mullally, who is head of the CofE's Covid Recovery Group and formerly England's Chief Nursing Officer, said she wants the singing ban appraised.

"Thankfully church buildings remain open for public worship and prayer," she said.

"While we look forward to restrictions on worship being lifted in the near future, I will continue to press for ongoing appraisal of choral and congregational singing."

Elsewhere in her statement, the bishop said that while the delay to lifting restrictions would be "a blow to many people", she could understand why the decision had been taken.

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"I am hugely thankful for the success and speed of the vaccination programme which has undoubtedly saved many lives - but we do have to take the spread of the more transmissible Delta variant very seriously and do all we can to protect each other as Christians called to love our neighbour," she said.

"I know from those on the front line that the pressures on the NHS are extreme and understand that a delay of a few more weeks in lifting restrictions could make a big difference in helping us all to get ahead in the 'race' against this virus which has caused so much death and misery."

Speaking in the Lords this week, the Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines, said that the "prolonging of inconsistencies" in Covid-19 restrictions was "a serious impediment to public adherence to the rules".

"You do not have to look very far to see where the discipline broke down a long time ago," he said.

"For example - this is not special pleading; it is just at the forefront of my mind - you can sing in a pub but not in a church. This is what brings the rules into disrepute, and therefore people do not agree with them."

He also quizzed the government on an acceptable Covid death rate.

"We have learned to live with acceptable death rates from flu and other seasonal diseases," he said.

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"Will the government do some work on what might be an acceptable death rate from Covid in future and be up-front with the country as to what that might be? I think we can take it."

Answering on behalf of the government, Lord Bethell said that the "frustration" around church singing had been heard "loud and clear", the ongoing restrictions were necessary.

"It is enormously frustrating to those who have a passion for singing," he said.

"But I would be pretending to be other than I am if I did not level with the right reverend Prelate and say that this is an airborne, aerosol disease. It is breathed into buildings at huge risk to those inside, and there is a direct correlation between infection rates, that aerosol and that kind of singing.

"The decision has been made with huge regret and not without a huge amount of scientific analysis, and those who have made their case have been heard loud and clear - but we have to fight this virus and prevent people getting sick."

Commenting further, health minister Lord Bethell rejected the bishop's view that discipline has broken down.

"Quite the opposite: I am astounded by the British public and their adherence to voluntary guidelines and arrangements," he said.

Christian Aid launches emergency Global Hunger Appeal

Christian Aid has launched an emergency appeal as more than 30 million people in 20 countries are teetering on the brink of famine. Immediate humanitarian assistance is needed to help prevent escalating numbers of deaths.

The Covid health pandemic, climate crisis, and continued conflict has exacerbated hunger and food insecurity in 20 countries. Countries like South Sudan, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Nigeria (in the North East) and Afghanistan are particularly affected.

In South Sudan, 60% of the population are struggling to get enough food to eat, and 82% are living in extreme poverty. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, six of the country's counties are already categorised as being in IPC Phase 5 Catastrophe - which means people face starvation, death, destitution and debilitating levels of acute malnutrition - and 34 states are in the emergency acute food insecurity phase as people experience very high acute malnutrition and excess deaths. The most food insecure states are Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile, Lakes, Warrap and Northern Bahr el Ghazal. 7.2 million people are now affected during this lean season, expected to be the worst on record.

James Wani, Christian Aid's South Sudan Country Director, based in Juba, said: "Floods, drought, conflict and Covid-19 have joined forces to deliver devastation and fuel the food

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crisis in South Sudan - the combined result is the destruction of crops, livelihoods, houses and dwellings, while roads have become impassable, markets have stopped, supply chains have been crippled, and food prices have soared.

“I am gravely concerned about the scale of hunger we are witnessing, now escalating well beyond that formally reported in December, claiming the lives of the most vulnerable, particularly those displaced and already in dire need. People, at this time, are dependent on our good will and compassion. We need action now, but we also need the humanitarian system to act robustly, collectively, and consistently well in advance of the level of famine - once the earlier threshold of crisis is met - and aligning this with preventative action knowing the cyclical effects of climate change.”

Salome Ntububa, Christian Aid’s Head of Global Humanitarian Response, said: “The numbers we are seeing in some of the countries where we work are alarming and they are only getting worse. Covid has obviously had a massive impact on health systems, people’s ability to earn a living or grow food, and lockdowns are collapsing economies. On top of this, UK aid cuts have meant vital funding from crucial lifesaving programmes has been pulled, leaving the most vulnerable to fend for themselves in the middle of a pandemic.”

Christian Aid and its local partner organisations in South Sudan, including SPEDP (Support for Peace and Education Development Programme), have been responding in the worst-affected areas by providing emergency cash

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distributions to enable people to buy food, fishing equipment, seeds and tools as well as delivering much needed hygiene and sanitation awareness campaigns to help in the fight against Covid.

With funds from the appeal, Christian Aid plans to expand its response with increased food and cash distributions, and nutritional support – especially to children under five and pregnant or lactating women, as well as access to water for drinking and for agriculture and livestock, and livelihood support including setting up women’s groups with initial capital to start up businesses.

The deadliest factor which stymies efforts to halt the worsening food insecurity in, for example, Afghanistan and South Sudan, is continued violence and armed conflict. In South Sudan, Christian Aid and local partners, including the South Sudan Council of Churches, have been supporting



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peacebuilding for decades, building on the country's traditions of mediation and consensus to deal with extreme violence. Despite the peace agreement in 2018, intercommunal fighting continues in parts of the country, and delays in implementation of the peace agreement are exacerbating hunger.

To give to the appeal and help communities in the worst-affected countries including South Sudan, please visit [www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/emergencies/global-hunger-emergency-appeal.]

Cardinal saddened as two Catholic papers forced to close

Following the announcement of the closure of the Catholic Universe and Catholic Times this month, Cardinal Nichols has offered his thanks to the owner and staff for their service to the mission and witness of the Catholic Church in England.

Cardinal Nichols said: "This week sees the last edition of the Catholic Universe and the Catholic Times supplement. Universe Catholic Media Ltd has stopped trading with immediate effect.

I receive this news with great sadness. It is an historic moment which comes as a 'sign of the times'. The Universe has served the Catholic community devotedly since 1860. But now no more.

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"The current publishing market is difficult and the board, management and staff of Universe Media Group have made strenuous efforts to continue their operations. I thank, with all of my heart, Clive Leach, the owner, Joe Kelly and all the staff for their unstinting service and commitment to the Catholic community in this country and beyond. For many years they have strived with every sinew to keep reporting and commenting on the Catholic Church, in full support of our mission to spread the Gospel and bear witness to our faith. I know that they have explored every avenue in trying to steer this operation through these most difficult times and circumstances. Again, on behalf of so many, I thank them for this valiant effort and commend them for their work.

"The role of communication and journalism in reporting and commenting on the life of the Catholic Church, from the perspective of our faith, is a great challenge. My hope and prayer is that professional and enthusiastic Catholics will continue in this task, exploring and developing new forms of communication and new ways of telling the story of our faith in action here in our lands."

People and places

Community Book Swap in Ballyholme

There were tables laden with literature in the grounds of St Columbanus, Ballyholme on Saturday 12 June as parishioners and locals joined in with a Community Book Swap.



The congregation were first to take part, donating books which were quarantined for 72 hours before being set out for anyone to browse and take away. Those who came along on 12th also brought books which have been put into quarantine for the next time.

Following a leaflet drop and an announcement on the 'Love Ballyholme' Facebook page, a steady stream of local people lent their support and made the afternoon a great success. £214 was raised for Macmillan Cancer Support into the bargain.

“This was one of those ideas everyone loved,” said Revd Jan Stevenson Community Pastor for Ballyholme Parish. “With the local library closed because of the pandemic, one of my neighbours was delighted to be able give away the many books they had bought and read. It was also a lovely opportunity for us as a church to meet new people and chat socially distanced outdoors.”

The folk at Ballyholme Parish have also held a popular Community Litter Picking event and will be repeating it again today Saturday 19 June.

New Media and IT Officer appointed in Cork, Cloyne and Ross

The Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, Dr Paul Colton has announced the appointment of Denise Brueckl to the post of Diocesan Media and Information Technology Officer.

Bishop Colton said: “This is a new post that we’ve taken time to consider with a view to meeting the contemporary communications and IT needs of the Diocese.

“With her wide experience in business and more recently in music, as well as her proven track record in communications, business systems and social media, among many other skills, Denise is, I believe, an ideal person to be the first one who is appointed to this post. We are all delighted that she will be on our team here in Cork, Cloyne and Ross”.

Denise lives in Cork City with her fiancé Peter, and is a regular attender of St Fin Barre’s Cathedral. She served there as Dean’s Church Warden for two years and has subsequently been singing as a Lay Vicar Choral in the Cathedral Choir for the last three years.

Denise moved to Cork from her native Bavaria five years ago and brings to the role a varied background in Industrial and Economic Sciences, Business Process Management and Musicology. She has previously worked with international businesses such as Audi, BMW and Siemens,

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but turned her attention towards music upon arriving in Ireland.

Denise says, “I am looking forward to getting to know people from across the Diocese and to attending all of the different events which make Cork, Cloyne and Ross such a vibrant and interesting place to live and work.

“I have been promoting the Cathedral Choir over the last few years on social media and by creating video footage of them. This is an opportunity to cover many more different spheres and to help put the Diocese with its people firmly on the map”.

Denise will commence her work in this new post on 3rd July.

Two centuries of a Church of Ireland parish in County Leitrim

A book titled ‘Drumlease: two centuries of a Church of Ireland parish in County Leitrim’ by Des Gillmor has been published.

The histories of many aspects of the parish and its Dromahair church from 1800 to 2020 are traced.

The lives of 28 clergy are outlined and there are historical lists of people in the parish.

Of the 175 pages, 30 are in colour.

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The book is on sale in the Centra and Gala supermarkets, price €20. The proceeds of sales go to the parish.

Further information available from dbgillmor@gmail.com

Go the Distance' on a week-long fundraiser with Glendalough parishioners

Members of a Glendalough parish are urging people to join them as they walk, run or jog to Jerusalem next week ... virtually.

Newcastle and Newtownmountkennedy with Calary are asking parishioners and friends to 'Go the Distance' with them on their 5,518 kilometre journey as they raise funds for Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza and the parishes.

The collective challenge starts this Saturday, June 19 and they plan to reach the Holy City by 8pm on June 27. They need to cover 613 kilometres a day and you and/or your team can help by signing up and adding the distance you walk to the total.

You can sign up individually or as a team. The cost of entry is €10 per person or €25 per team or family. You will receive a raffle ticket when you sign up and another ticket with every extra €5 you donate.

The Rector, the Revd Ross Styles, explained how the Go the Distance Challenge will work. "We are asking everyone to get out into our beautiful countryside and walk, run, skip or jog. Then we will tally up the total kilometres with the aim

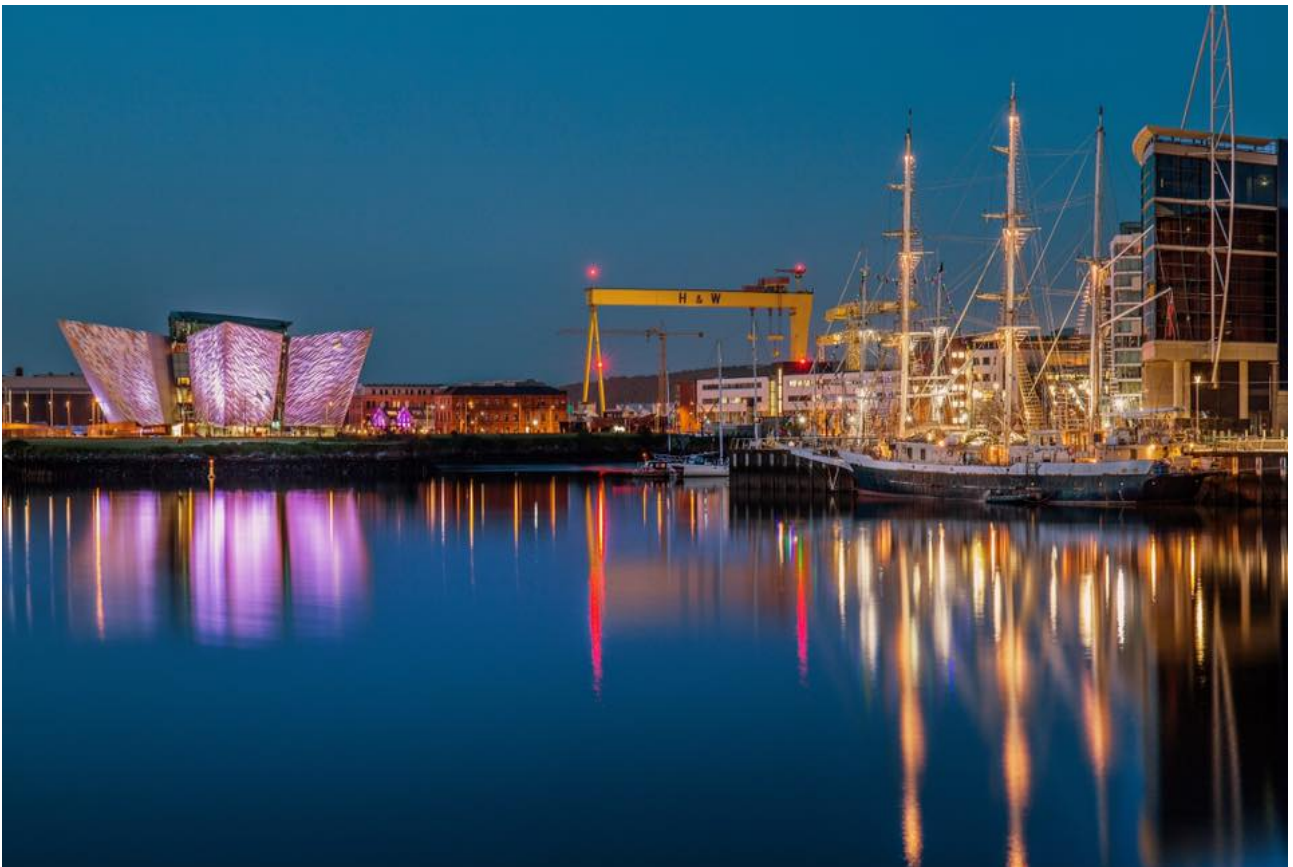
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of accumulating 5,518 kilometres. So from the 19 to 27 June we are asking everyone to get your shoes on and get out and enjoy our wonderful county from the mountains to the sea,” he said.

You can sign up for Go the Distance here:
[<https://forms.gle/BHX5yrQkABz9fyF69> .]

Then log the distance you travel each day at the link provided when you register.

There will also be a number of spot prizes for longest distance travelled by an individual, longest distance averaged by a team, best junior effort, best senior category and best photo.



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You can keep up to date on how the challenge is going on the parish Facebook page and see where Rev Ross is walking every day. He tells more about the challenge and Al Ahli Hospital, which is run by our partners in the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

You can find out more about Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza city here:

[] <https://afedj.org/institution/ahli-arab-hospital-gaza-city/>
[]

New subsidy for Down diocesan Leadership Weekend Residential



Down & Dromore Diocese states that the Leadership Weekend Residential is open for bookings at the subsidised cost of £10!

Running from 16–18 July at the Kilbroney Centre, it's for anyone aged 17–21 who wants to explore a biblical vision for leadership.

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There will be great food, time together, the option of some brilliant outdoor adventures, a BBQ and a campfire along with plenty of fun and craic!

We will also take time to get together for worship and to learn more about aspects of leadership including:

Leadership Vision: Focusing on Old Testament Leadership and how Jesus modelled leadership.



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The Character of Leadership: Exploring what various biblical characters show us about Characteristics of Leadership.

Understanding Yourself: Understanding how self awareness and emotional intelligence is key to leadership.

Leadership Styles: Discussing various leadership styles and how they relate to different personalities and contexts and how this can be seen in biblical examples.

For those who sign up there is also an opportunity to boost their CV through completing online a fully funded Level 2 Health & Hygiene Qualification (just let the organisers know when you are filling in the sign up form).

To register please visit:

[www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/157842881307]

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

Contemporary Christianity - Reflections on Northern Ireland at 100 years - 5 day series of blogs

From next Monday, 21 June for five days Contemporary Christianity will be issuing a daily ...PS...blog under the title 'Reflections on Northern Ireland at 100 years'. Each one will be from a well-known and diverse range of Christian writers.

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Contemporary Christianity states - “The views will be those of Brett Lockhart QC, Danielle Mcelhinney, Wallace Thompson , Rev Cheryl Meban, and Rev Dr Trevor Morrow. With discussion about the future of the whole island very much in the headlines, each of the contributors brings intriguing personal insight to some of the many and complex issues involved, some of which have not been aired to date. Welcome to ...PS..., an email and web discussion forum from Contemporary Christianity. Virtual and voluntary, we normally issue ...PS... once or twice each month.

“Our ...PS... blogs (and by the way ...PS... refers to PUBLIC SQUARE) seek to "provide informed, credible and practical comment and analysis, rooted in biblical reflection and theological thought" on contemporary issues about faith, church, life and the world around us.

“We aim to engage Christian minds with issues in the public square, to inject new perspectives and provoke discussion, and to engage with a wider audience interested in issues of faith and life.

“As we relaunch with this series of ...PS... blogs, with our new logo, we hope you will find them stimulating and useful. Maybe enable a conversation or two to be started!

“We always look forward to receiving comments and responses from our readers, so feel free to feedback”.

The Chair of the recently strengthened Board of Contemporary Christianity – Rev Dr Norman Hamilton - comments:” I am delighted that we are able to relaunch ...

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PS... blog at such a turbulent time in the history of Northern Ireland – and indeed of the whole island. We will be drawing on the insight of many Christian people over the coming months and years as we explore some very complex and at times contentious issues from a clear Christian perspective. This is an important subject and a great series with which to get started”.

The website is at: <https://contemporarychristianity.net>

Exploring prayer with the Archbishop of Canterbury

Over five lessons, Archbishop Justin explores different ways of praying. From asking for things and giving thanks, to expressing deep sadness and anger, Exploring Prayer helps you begin – or develop – your conversation with God.

[<https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/exploring-prayer>]

Pointers for prayer

O Lord,
we beseech thee mercifully to hear us;
and grant that we, to whom thou hast given
an hearty desire to pray,
may by thy mighty aid be defended and comforted
in all dangers and adversities;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Almighty God,
you have broken the tyranny of sin
and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts
whereby we call you Father:
Give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,
that we and all creation may be brought
to the glorious liberty of the children of God;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jesus' homecoming was attended by enthusiastic crowds
but also by dissenters, who attributed his good works to
Satan. That we might be faithful to the One who calls us his
"family", blessing his goodness and striving to follow his
example, we pray "True Son of God and Son of Man," and
respond, "Keep us faithful, keep us true."

That the Christ's church would remain faithful in its witness
to the truth of the gospel, we pray: True Son of God and Son
of Man.

Keep us faithful, keep us true.

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That where the church of Jesus Christ finds itself a minority in the midst unfaith, it may not succumb and accept defeat. True Son of God and Son of Man.
Keep us faithful, keep us true.

That homes of the church that are afflicted with violence, anger, or abuse, may find refuge and counsel in God's Word. True Son of God and Son of Man.
Keep us faithful, keep us true.

That our congregation may be enabled to embrace the lost, the fallen, and the wayward of our community. True Son of God and Son of Man.
Keep us faithful, keep us true.

That those who participated in baptismal and confirmation preparation , may be blessed with increasing faith and strengthened in continued, regular worship we pray: True Son of God and Son of Man.
Keep us faithful, keep us true.

Pardon us, O God, when we are so concerned with ourselves and those near to us that we fail to pray for others. Instill within us your compassion. True Son of God and Son of Man.
Keep us faithful, keep us true.

Let your loving Spirit, O God, announce again the "Abba" word of our divine parentage and our sure inclusion as members of your family. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink – even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk – it's all free! Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food.

Isaiah 55:1-2 NLT

Much of Isaiah's prophecy is dominated by the theme of judgement. The people had wandered away from God and had lived lives that were a complete disappointment to him. They had worshipped other gods and had neglected to care for the poor and needy. But, through it all, God's deep desire was to bring the people back to himself, and so he promised to send his servant to bring them salvation. In today's reading God's incredible offer is spelt out. He alone was able to satisfy their deepest need and he was willing to give them everything they needed freely.

The offer today is just the same. God sent his servant to us in the person of Jesus Christ and he offers his gift of forgiveness and new life to anyone who will accept him into their lives. He only looks to us to be willing to give up our own self-centred life and to live the new life that he gives us in the power of his Spirit. It is all for free. Sadly, in our cynical society, everyone gets suspicious when they hear that something is being offered for nothing. I will admit that as soon as an email or letter arrives assuring me of untold riches for nothing, I immediately switch off. If it seems too good to be true, it's probably nonsense. But here God offers

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us drink and food that can satisfy us completely and they are absolutely free. Persuading other people that this is true, and not yet another gimmick, is something that we can only do as they see the reality of salvation in our own lives. I thank God for those people whose integrity, compassion and humility persuaded me that the Christian message was nothing less than the truth.

QUESTION

In what ways has God satisfied your deepest needs?

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you for your limitless generosity. Help me to find ways of passing on your amazing invitation to those I meet day by day. Amen

