



Bethlehem Village in County Down sells out in 48 hours

A community Christmas event set in the village of Waringstown has sold out, well in advance of its launch on 13 December.

Bethlehem Village will be a family friendly interactive journey through the story of the birth of Jesus, brought to life by actors, music, crafts and live animals. All 1,100 free online tickets were snapped up in just 48 hours.

The event is the result of a partnership between Donaghcloney Parish and Waringstown Presbyterian Church, with the invaluable support of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council.

The tour will begin at Holy Trinity church and local charity Love for Life have offered their facilities to host another part of the event.

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Wider community groups and the primary school will also be involved, making this a true community event for the village.

Final rehearsals and set-up are well underway ahead of

a special launch service in Holy Trinity Church, Waringstown, at 7.00pm on Thursday 13 December.

The service will be attended by Bishop Harold Miller and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, the Revd Dr Charles McMullen.

Dublin City Interfaith Forum launches strategy to create cultures of welcome, hospitality and inclusion'

Dublin City Interfaith Forum has launched a new three-year strategy which will promote awareness and develop understanding of the cultural and religious differences in today's Ireland. The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Nial Ring, launched the 2018–2021 Strategy in the Mansion House yesterday morning, Human Rights Day (November 10).

The strategy is divided into five distinct areas with a number of actions outlined in each area. The five 'pillars' of the plan

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are: engagement, communications, resources, public stakeholders and funding. A work plan for each area will be developed and will form the basis of DCIF's activities for the next three years.

Commending the strategy, the Lord Mayor said he wanted to see all religions respected and said the goals contained in the DCIF plan were very important. "The Dublin that I grew up in has changed. Now, one in six of the city's residents is from a different ethnic background and this has added to the life and diversity of our city. Religious background has not always been to the fore but the Dublin City Interfaith Forum is helping to rectify that," he stated.

DCIF has called for increased funding to support its vital work in a world where there are deep divisions and greater polarisation in society and the Lord Mayor pledged his support in securing extra funds.

DCIF chairperson Hilary Abrahamson said that faith communities had a huge role to play in the challenges presented by a changing world. "We value respect, justice, mercy and peace making. We encourage everyone to engage in interfaith dialogue ... We must be prepared to challenge those who act out of prejudice," she said. "This strategy outlines key actions to progress to increased inclusion in civic society. By working together we can help reduce racism and intolerance. We can create cultures of welcome, hospitality and inclusion. We invite you to work with us to achieve these aims."

Focusing on interfaith unity in times of crisis, the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Diarmuid Martin, said there was

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growing interest around the world in the contribution of faith and faith leaders in bringing peace. Looking back to 12th Century Dublin, the Archbishop said that the city's patron saint, Laurence O'Toole, made every possible effort to bring peace to the city. He said he was an example to the church and society of today's Dublin which is wealthy but does not care for all its people and in which many people, including children, were deprived of their fundamental needs which prevented them achieving their aspirations.

Archbishop Martin highlighted the increasing culture of violence that existed in the city, in particular knife crime. "This is an area we can build up a culture of living in harmony, helping young people to find a better way," he stated. "There are growing signs of unresolved anger that effects young people and we need to find a new and refined way to deal with this."

Assistant Commissioner Pat Leahy pledged the full support of the Gardaí for the strategy. He pointed to similarities between DCIF's strategy and the Community Policing

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Strategy. “We want to create a network across the country and if we have a similar network with the interfaith forum then we will have a lot to work with ... We can do this together. It has to be about building relationships, not intelligence gathering,” he said.

Commending the strategy, he stated: “The world is so busy and people are focused on trying to achieve their goals and we forget about community. And that is what is important about this strategy. It is hugely important that we can live together and belong and that our culture and religious diversity does not stop us from belonging ... We can’t afford to fail on this. It’s about creating a single community of different attitudes and different faiths.”

Giving the DCIF youth perspective, Hajar Al Kaddo said the forum was working to enable young people to contribute to society with their religiosity intact and to increase the tolerance of young people of faith. “We need to connect with one another and we need to connect with young people of faith. We need to connect with other faith forums,” she stated.

The Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Michael Jackson, brought proceedings to a close by recalling the launch of the Dublin City Interfaith Charter two years ago which recognised the need for community cohesion and that faith was a central part of identity. “People who have come to live in Ireland bring faith and culture as part of their identity and we can learn from them. We have to ask this: ‘Do we look at people who have come to live in Ireland as benign outsiders or as Irish people?’” he said.

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Archbishop Jackson added: “It is important to grasp the contribution that faith leaders make but it is equally important to grasp the contribution of faith followers. The engagement of everyone in this context is very important. The challenge that may lie before us is to produce a glossary of interfaith understanding to help to create a new public discourse that will help us engage in every perspective. It is essential in any interfaith context not to compare the best of yourself with the caricature of the other... As Christians we have spent a long time and gone a long way to recognising that ecumenical understanding is part of our DNA. The challenge is to take that to interfaith dialogue and understanding. It is not intellectual. It is the dialogue of life, it is neighbourliness.”

DCIF works with schools, State agencies, the Garda, the HSE and the Departments of Education and Justice to help create a better understanding of different faith traditions, and to promote greater awareness of sensitivities required when dealing with a diverse range of religions in the provision of State services in contemporary Ireland.

Church of England brings in transgender celebration services

Clergy are being encouraged to hold "celebratory" services for transgender worshippers wanting to have their transition recognised within the Church of England.

Ceremonies should allow transgender people to renew the commitment they made during their baptism service - prior

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to their gender transition - the guidance released on Tuesday said.

Dr Rev Tina Beardsley, a transgender vicar who was consulted on the document, expressed hope churches would implement the guidance.

Dr Beardsley said: "I hope that most churches will respond positively.

"Many families are affected nowadays; a family member, a friend or a work colleague has undergone a transition."

But the formal incorporation of a gender transition service into the Church of England's official catalogue of services drew dismay from conservative Anglicans.

Susie Leafe from the evangelical group GAFCON told Premier News nine bishops on the House of Bishops' Delegation Committee - which oversaw work to produce the document - had bypassed the Church of England's governing body.

She explained: "The issue that we've got here is the repurposing of baptism liturgy; that is a major decision that the House of Bishops have made without the consultation of Synod and that doesn't bode well for the future."

Andrea Williams, a lay member of the Church of England's General Synod accused the Church of continuing a "devastating trajectory towards an outright denial of God and his word".

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She continued:
"There is no need for Christians to sacrifice truth in a misguided attempt to be loving.



"It is not loving to mislead people - and wider society - into the falsehoods and myths of transgender ideology."

But Chair of the House of Bishops' Delegation Committee, Rt Rev Julian Henderson, the Bishop of Blackburn said: "We are absolutely clear that everyone is made in the image of God and that all should find a welcome in their parish Church.

"This new guidance provides an opportunity, rooted in scripture, to enable trans people who have 'come to Christ as the way, the truth and the life', to mark their transition in the presence of their Church family which is the body of Christ.

"We commend it for wider use."

Oil and water could be incorporated into the services, under the guidance which asserts the clergy ought to identify transgender individuals according to their chosen name.

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The Church of England says: "The rite for the Affirmation of Baptismal Faith is not a second baptism. The Church of England teaches that the sacrament of baptism is only to be undertaken once.

"But this service enables people to renew the commitments made in baptism and in a public setting and provides space for those who have undergone a major transition to re-dedicate their life to Jesus Christ."

Dublin Black Santa Sit Out starts tomorrow

The 2018 Black Santa Sit Out at St Ann's Church, Dawson Street, Dublin, will be launched this Thursday, December 13, at 1pm by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, and the Lord Mayor of Dublin. They will be joined by the Choir of Kildare Place National School.

The appeal will run outside St Ann's right up until Christmas Eve with volunteers joining the Vicar, Canon David Gillespie, to collect funds for a wide range of charities.

This is the 18th year that the Black Santa Sit Out has been held in Dublin and in that time well over €600,000 has been raised for local good causes. All the charities supported by Black Santa do invaluable work and every cent donated to the appeal is divided among them. There are no administration charges and all the collectors give their time for free.

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The Vicar of St Ann's Dublin (left) begins his Black Santa Sitout tomorrow

Among the charities to benefit from Black Santa in the past are Alice Leahy Trust, the Salvation Army, the Simon Community and the Peter McVerry Trust, all of whom work with people who are homeless. Other charities include Protestant Aid, Barnardos, St Vincent de Paul, the Laura Lynn Foundation and Solas Project. Cheques are distributed in St Ann's in February at a special service which celebrates volunteers.

The St Ann's team will be outside the church each day from 10am to 6pm collecting donations. This year they will be joined by a huge number of choirs who will sing festive songs and carols each lunchtime. These include

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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Castleknock National School, St James Primary School, Francis Street CBS, St Stephens Church Choir, Catholic University School, Taney Parish Junior School, Alexandra College, Kildare Place National School, Cornucopia Brass Group, Irish Life Choir, Revenue Choir, AIB Choral Society, Permanent TSB Staff Choir, John Scottus School, Loretto College, Seafield Singers, Dublin Male Voice Choir, the Line Up Choir, Steadfast Band and the Brook Singers.

The Black Santa sit out is modelled on a similar appeal, which has been run by successive Deans of St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast for many years. It became known as the Black Santa appeal because of the long heavy black cloaks worn by the clergy to keep out the cold.

Presbyterians urged to pray for end to violence in Cameroon

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has encouraged its members to pray for people affected by escalating violence in the Republic of Cameroon in west Africa. Violent clashes, with increasing loss of life, is growing between Cameroon's English-speaking Anglophone community and French-speaking Francophone community, according to reports.

Rev Uel Marrs, secretary to PCI's Council for Global Mission, explained: "Through reports coming via family contacts of Cameroonians who attend Presbyterian churches in the Republic of Ireland, we understand that thousands of people have been displaced as the situation in parts of the country deteriorates, particularly in the

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**Rev Uel Marrs,
PCI's Global
Mission Secretary**

northwest region and
southwest region.

“The increasingly
violent situation has
its origins in the

division of the region during various colonial administrations and post-independence settlements. The situation is amounting to a ‘silent civil war’, as some have described it, as that has the potential to be a second Rwanda. Today we wanted to highlight the situation in the country and ask people to pray,” he said.

“Prayer is an essential and powerful part of the Christian life and we are asking people to pray specifically for peace and calm in all areas of Cameroon and for tensions to decrease. For just and fair treatment of all people by the authorities and prayer for help and support for those affected by the violence.”

Speaking about the situation, Rev Alan Boal, minister of Abbey Presbyterian Church in Dublin, said one member of his congregation recently described the escalating crisis as “a second Rwanda” – a reference to the genocide which claimed hundreds of thousands of lives in 1994.

News links...

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Over 300 alleged child abuse cases identified by Scouting Ireland

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/over-300-alleged-child-abuse-cases-identified-by-scouting-ireland-1.3727771>

Arlene Foster: Up to RHI inquiry to decide if I was in a position to do anything to avoid disastrous outcome

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/arlene-foster-up-to-rhi-inquiry-to-decide-if-i-was-in-a-position-to-do-anything-to-avoid-disastrous-outcome-37614316.html>

Jonathan Bell: I was disparaged and demonised just for telling the truth about my role in the scandal

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/jonathan-bell-i-was-disparaged-and-demonised-just-for-telling-the-truth-about-my-role-in-rhi-scandal-37613976.html>

Hark the hairy angels sing at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin

<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/watch-bark-the-hairy-angels-sing-dogs-fill-christ-church-cathedral-for-annual-carol-service-37615802.html>

No one is happy - C of E bishops react to Brexit non-vote

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/14-december/news/uk/no-one-is-happy-bishops-react-to-brexit-non-vote>

The Irish backstop can be solved - so Brexit can focus on trade

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/12/10/irish-backstop-can-solved-brexit-can-focus-trade/>

UK Government spent £100,000 on Facebook adverts to promote Brexit

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/12/10/government-spent-100000-facebook-adverts-promote-brexit-deal/>

Inter faith group in urgent call for state funding to be doubled

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/interfaith-group-in-urgent-call-for-state-funding-to-be-doubled-1.3726634>

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Ireland worst in Europe when it comes to climate change - Christian Aid

<https://www.christianaid.ie/news/ireland-worst-europe-when-it-comes-action-climate-change>

Irish midwives and nurses join doctors in abortion bill protest

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/irish-midwives-and-nurses-join-doctors-in-abortion-bill-protest-62856>

Disposal of St Vincent's property a matter for nuns and Rome – Archbishop Martin

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/disposal-of-st-vincent-s-property-a-matter-for-nuns-and-rome-archbishop-1.3726703>

'I have nothing of a saint about me,' Newman insisted. He was wrong

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/magazine/an-overdue-canonisation/>

Catholics need not obey laws contrary to faith, Archbishop says

Irish Times

It is not given to us by the Constitution of **Ireland** or by any law. ... Ms Zappone spoke to Pope Francis when he visited **Ireland** last August and ... In his brief letter, Pope Francis said he prayed “that efforts made by the Government and by the local churches and **religious** congregations will ... Irish **News**.

Pope says **religious orders should accept blame for mother and baby home horrors**

Dublin Live

The Pope has demanded Irish **religious** orders accept blame for the horrific ... your loved ones and for your important work at the service of **Ireland**.” ...

Parents to choose preferred school patrons

Irish Examiner

The **Church of Ireland** Bishop of Meath and Kildare is the fifth patron choice for parents in Maynooth, Co Kildare, in the only option that is not a ...

Kathleen Lynn: Pioneering doctor, socialist and public-health campaigner

Irish Times

A devout member of the **Church of Ireland**, she worshipped regularly at Holy Trinity Church in Rathmines, but often criticised the Christian churches for ...

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Parents urged to have their say on who will run 12 new education centres

Independent.ie

Another patron body, Lifeways Ireland, which currently runs six primary ... Meanwhile, the **Church of Ireland** has expressed an interest in becoming ...

Nenagh Christmas Tree Festival to raise funds for the homeless

TipperaryLive.ie

The Nenagh Christmas Tree Festival takes place at St Mary's **Church of Ireland** from Wednesday, December 12. Th charity partner this year is Focus ...

Church of England bishops to start inquiry into so-called 'gay cure' therapies that can involve ...

Daily Mail

Senior **Church of England** bishops will start an inquiry into 'gay cure' therapies. Bishops will take evidence from people who have gone through the ...

[Church of England bishops back inquiry into gay conversion therapy](#) - PinkNews Full Coverage

Church night shelters expand to meet demands of rising homelessness

ChristianToday

More than 2,000 **Church of England** congregations will be running or supporting night shelters this winter as homelessness projects expand to cope ...

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