



Church of Ireland will be ‘caught’ if hard border introduced, says Archbishop

The [Church of Ireland](#) will be “quite significantly caught” in the effects of any hard border, Archbishop of Dublin Michael Jackson has said, according to a report in the Irish Times by Patsy McGarry

“Having worked happily in one diocese that was on two sides of the border, I’d be sorry not only from the economic perspective but actually from the social interchange and the restoration of normal relationships which had come about,” he said.

Born in [Lurgan](#), Co Armagh, [Archbishop Jackson](#) served for 10 years as Bishop of the diocese of [Clogher](#) (includes parts of counties Fermanagh, Monaghan, [Tyrone Donegal](#), [Louth](#), and Leitrim), before his election to Dublin.

He said whatever the outcome of current Brexit negotiations between the EU and the UK, he wants “the Church of [Ireland](#) to continue to make a contribution to Christianity in [Europe](#), and also in both parts of Ireland”.

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“I wouldn’t want whatever jurisdictional changes may happen to cut across that,” he said.

His concern was “that the Church of Ireland is quite significantly caught in this because we are, like other churches in Ireland, a church of the whole island and we operate in two jurisdictions”.

“The other thing is that so many of the relationships we have between [England](#), Ireland, [Scotland](#) and Wales predate the European experiment and now that it’s under jeopardy I would be sad,” he said.

Black Santa

Archbishop Jackson was speaking at St Ann’s Church on Dublin’s Dawson Street at the launch of the 2018 [Black Santa](#) Sit Out, which continues between 10am and 6pm each day until Christmas Eve.

Asked about his six-month suspension of retired Church of Ireland Archdeacon of [Glendalough Edgar Swann](#) from taking part in church services for speaking out over a school admissions row in [Greystones](#) Co [Wicklow](#), Archbishop Jackson said he was “not in a position to make any comment”.

Archdeacon Swann had warned earlier this year that the Church of Ireland community in Greystones was being “torn apart” in controversy over school enrolment policies at the local St Patrick’s [National School](#) which prioritised children who regularly attend church services.

At the Black Santa Sit Out launch, Archbishop Jackson was joined by Lord Mayor of Dublin [Nial Ring](#), Canon [David](#)

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[Gillespie](#) vicar at St Ann's, and children from the choir of Kildare Place National School.

The Black Santa Sit Outs at St Ann's have to date raised over €600,000 for homeless charities such as the [Alice Leahy](#) Trust, the [Salvation Army](#), the [Simon Community](#) and the Peter McVerry Trust.

Village's 'Bethlehem' event proves a huge draw



The Bishop of Down and Dromore, Rt Rev Harold Miller, and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Rev Dr Charles McMullen, dressed as shepherds at the launch of the Bethlehem Village event

More than 1,000 tickets for a community Christmas event in a village in Co Down were snapped up in just 48 hours. The

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The young people of Waringstown Primary School Choir were in fine voice at the service

Bethlehem Village event was launched on Thursday night (December 13) at a special service in Holy Trinity Church, Waringstown.

The service was attended by the Bishop of Down & Dromore, Rt Rev Harold Miller, and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Rev Dr Charles McMullen, who gave a short address.

Waringstown Primary School Choir sang two pieces and the local Community Choir also contributed. Bethlehem Village is family friendly interactive journey through the story of the birth of Jesus, brought to life by actors, music, crafts and live animals.

According to the organisers, all 1,100 free online tickets were snapped up in just 48 hours.

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“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,” a spokesperson said.

“The tour begins at Holy Trinity Church and local charity, Love for Life, have offered their facilities to host the village itself.

“Around 200 volunteers from the village are involved in all aspects of the event making it a true community endeavour.” The Bethlehem Village event runs in Waringstown until tonight. Report courtesy News Letter.

Large crowds gather for Advent celebration in Armagh

The Market Place Theatre in Armagh was packed to capacity on Tuesday evening for a special Advent evening that was hosted by Armagh Cathedrals Partnership. Those present were treated to an evening of music and a selection of readings and prayers celebrating Advent. The music was provided by the U3A Choir and also a Choir from St Catherine’s College.



The guest speaker on the evening was Dr Francis Campbell, Vice – Chancellor of St Mary’s University, Twickenham, (centre) where he is also Professor of International Relations. Cardinal

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Seán Brady, Archbishop Emeritus of Armagh and Archbishop Richard Clarke. Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh were both present on the evening.

The theme for Dr Campbell's presentation was: Living in uncertain times, the question is "How do we live for the Kingdom in a time of turmoil and how do we get our priorities right?" After his presentation, a pupil from each of the post-primary schools in Armagh put a question to Dr Campbell.

The event was organised under the auspices of the Armagh Cathedrals Partnership.

Senior cardinal found guilty of sexually abusing altar boys

George Pell, the Australian cardinal and the Vatican's third most senior official, has been found guilty of sexually abusing altar boys, in an unprecedented blow to the Catholic Church.

A jury in Melbourne returned a unanimous verdict on all charges faced by Pell, who is the Vatican's economy minister and the highest-ranking Vatican figure to face such accusations.

The 77-year-old cardinal, who ranks behind only Pope Francis and the Vatican secretary of state, was accused of sexually abusing two boys in the late Nineties, when he was Archbishop of Melbourne. He is due to be sentenced in February and will remain at liberty until then.



The conviction comes as clerical sex abuse crises around the world continue to shake the Holy See and place into question the judgment of

Pope Francis. Critics say he has been slow to grasp the enormity of the problem, taking few concrete measures to punish priests who rape and abuse children, and bishops who cover up for them.

The Vatican will host a conference in February on how best to protect minors from predatory priests – an event that critics fear will be yet another talking shop.

Pell's conviction was subject to a strict suppression order in Australia, imposed by the court on the grounds that it could prejudice a second trial faced by the cardinal. That trial, which is expected to start early next year, involves allegations that he sexually abused boys in a public swimming pool while he was a priest in Ballarat, in the state of Victoria, in the Seventies.

The order was widely flouted outside Australia, with even Catholic news agencies and websites reporting extensively on the guilty verdict. Pell left the Vatican last year to return to Australia to fight the allegations.

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The Vatican says he is on a “leave of absence” from his role as head of the Holy See’s secretariat for the economy – effectively, its finance minister.

Earlier this week, the Vatican announced that the Pope had removed Pell from the Council of Cardinals, a hand-picked group of experts that advises Francis on how to reform the Vatican’s Byzantine bureaucracy.

The Vatican insisted the decision had been taken prior to news of Pell’s conviction and was not related to the abuse conviction.

We are in need of ‘a better story’ - Moderator’s Christmas Message

In his Christmas Message, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Rt Rev Dr Charles McMullen, has spoken of the profound uncertainty that encapsulates the times that we are living through saying that we are in need of a better story.

“So many stories in this world cause confusion, division, brokenness and pain. The different, better story of Jesus Christ reminds us of what is transcendent and replaces darkness and hatred with light and love.

“In the rush to Christmas it can sometimes pass us by. The oft heard story, familiar to all, but forgotten by many, is a wonderful, hope-filled and eternal story that God Himself wrote for you and me.”

He also talks of the simple message emblazoned on two Advent banners that hang in his own church, and how their



simple message proclaims something special, a different story to hold on to: ‘Unto us a child is born’ and “Emmanuel – God with us’.

Dr McMullen concludes his message by saying, “This Christmas I hope and pray that you too are reminded of this better story.”

Text of Moderator’s Christmas Message

We are living in days of profound uncertainty. Perhaps one word encapsulates it – Brexit - particularly in relation to its outworking on both parts of our island home. Political pundits, media commentators, all of us in our own conversations have painted various pictures of what Brexit

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will ultimately look like and what will actually happen next year – and yet it still remains an ongoing story.

A Canadian friend of mine mentioned some different kinds of pictures a few years ago - murals. He described his guided tour of this genre of Belfast artwork as a 'sobering experience'. He spoke of a deep-rooted storyline painted and repainted so that each new generation could learn it by heart. The heroes and martyrs of one side, the villains and betrayers of the other. His conclusion was the images on the walls recalled the past but also, perhaps, determined the future.

This year the retelling of stories from the First World War in a more inclusive manner culminated as we marked the centenary of the Armistice. It has been significant and healing now that the sacrifice from every part of Ireland has been highlighted and not simply airbrushed out of history. I had the privilege of speaking at a moving service which remembered the many Irish recipients of the Victoria Cross. Sadly, however, war is still an overall story of human loss and pain.

Whatever the story of the day, all sections of Irish society – north and south, east and west – are in need of a different and a better story.

Two thousand years ago the angels punctured an equally dark sky and stilled the beating hearts of terrified shepherds as they announced good news that would bring great joy for all the people: "Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10).

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Followers of Christ have not always lived out the Good News in the way that they ought, reflecting instead division, sectarianism and harsh attitudes.

However, generations of Christian pilgrims and disciples have been inspired to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ from what was once known as the 'land of saints and scholars' to the very ends of the earth. Saints have included those who have been martyred and those who have lived a life of love in quiet obedience to their Lord.

They all displayed the unconditional love and the absolute truth of the One who came into this world, died on a Cross and rose again, so that those who believe in him might have life in all its fullness.

Recently in Belfast I had the pleasure of meeting and listening to Rev Dr Yohanna Katanacho, Professor of Biblical Studies at Bethlehem College, describe his story as a Palestinian Israeli Evangelical Christian. His rich Arab Christian background and his ability to speak both Arabic and Hebrew have pushed him, he said, "to be a peacemaker and messenger of love as well as justice in a country that is full of segregation and hatred."

So many stories in this world cause confusion, division, brokenness and pain. The different, better story of Jesus Christ reminds us of what is transcendent and replaces darkness and hatred with light and love.

In the rush to Christmas it can sometimes pass us by. The oft heard story, familiar to all, but forgotten by many, is a

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wonderful, hope-filled and eternal story that God Himself wrote for you and me.

In these days there is a better story and to enable us to live out its pages, I am reminded of two banners that hang this Advent at the front of Bangor West Presbyterian Church, where I minister. Their simple message proclaims something special, something for us to hold on to: “Unto us a child is born” and “Emmanuel – God with us”.

This Christmas I hope and pray that you too are reminded of this better story. May you know his rich and abundant blessing – Happy Christmas!

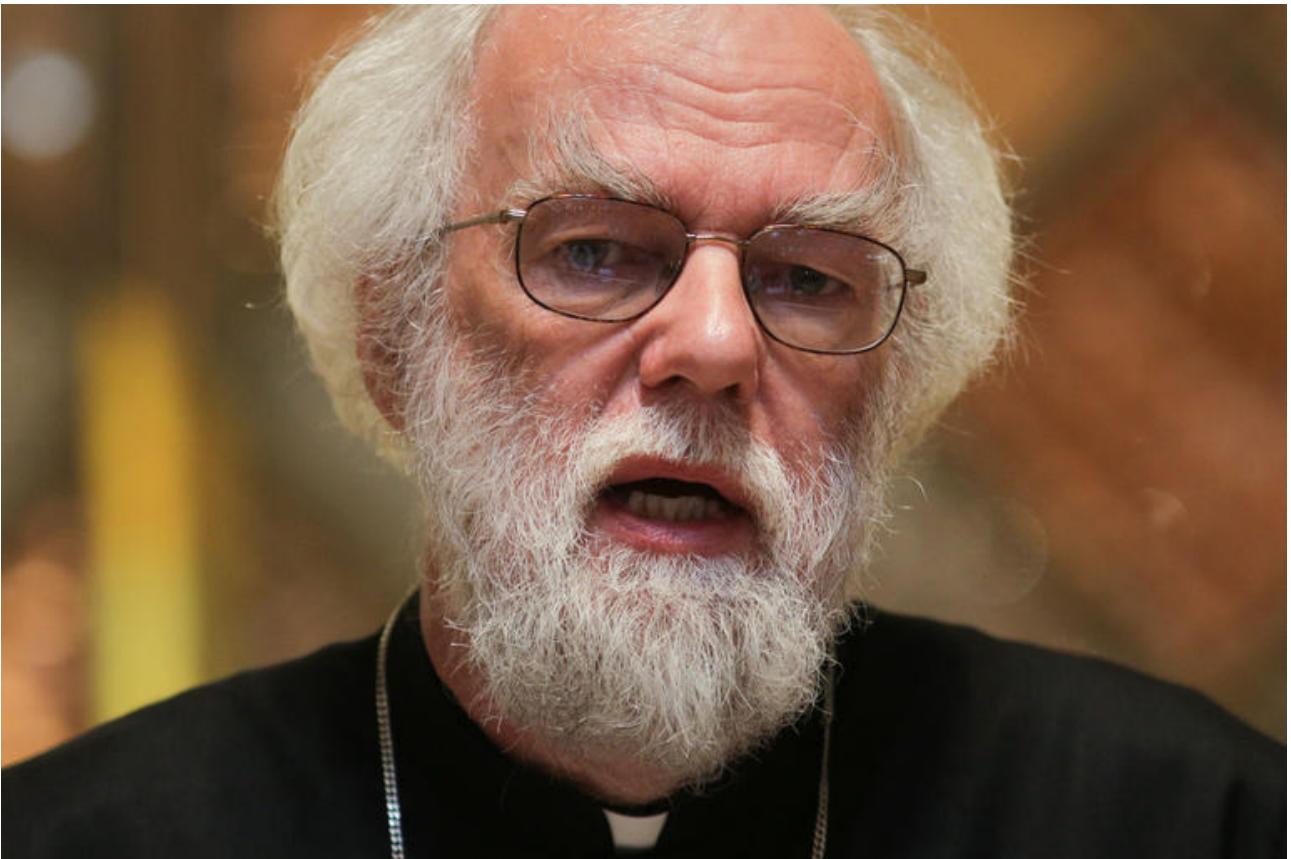
Christian Aid's Dr Rowan Williams blasts UK 'complicity' in Yemen war

The UK's peacemaker role in the ongoing Yemen civil war is being undermined by multi-billion pound arm sales to neighbouring Saudi Arabia, Christian Aid has claimed.

The humanitarian aid organisation accused the Government of "double standards" in its response to the conflict which has seen Riyadh fighting against Houthi militia across the border.

Leader of Christian Aid's global peacebuilding programme, Karol Balfe commented: "We need to see a clear change in approach.

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"The British government's putting business interests first - above the safety of people in Yemen - with absolutely devastating consequences for the civilians of Yemen." New research published by the charity on Friday found three in five British adults believe the UK should stop selling military equipment to Saudi Arabia. The poll was conducted by ComRes.

Several countries including Germany, Belgium and Sweden have already agreed not to sell arms to the Saudi-led coalition - which has been fighting rebels since 2015. According to the United Nations, as many as 14 million people in Yemen could be on the brink of famine, while it is estimated more than half of Yemenis lack enough food.

While welcoming diplomatic efforts made by the UK to resolve the conflict, Dr Rowan Williams, Christian Aid's chair

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and the former Archbishop of Canterbury, said: "This is a war in which the government of the UK is directly complicit...
"Is the UK prepared to take a new lead in peace-making by promoting and championing human rights and international law in settings of extreme and indiscriminate violence?"

News links

Joseph Haughey, who has died aged 66, was guilty of many foul deeds

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/joseph-haughey-who-has-died-aged-66-was-guilty-of-many-foul-deeds-there-is-little-reason-to-pretend-any-more-that-the-murder-of-mary-travers-was-not-one-of-them-37624832.html>

Northern Ireland pupil numbers soar by 3,000 in one year

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/northern-ireland-pupil-numbers-soar-by-3000-in-one-year-37623981.html>

Ulster University: 'Crisis point for NI student places'

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-46560222>

Lurgan Presbyterian church attack treated as hate crime

BBC News

Police are treating an attack on a **church** in Lurgan, County Armagh, as a ... He told BBC **News** NI that those involved may have "personal problems" ...

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-46550504>

Church property: the mystery of the nuns and the maternity hospital

<https://www.irishcatholic.com/church-property-the-mystery-of-the-nuns-and-the-maternity-hospital/>

Bishops plea for parishes to reach out to lapsed Catholics this Christmas

<https://www.irishcatholic.com/bishops-plea-for-parishes-to-reach-out-to-lapsed-catholics-this-christmas/>

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The Tablet

Veritas, the Irish bishops' **religious** books and gifts retail company, is to close three of its nine outlets as part of a move towards increased investment in ...

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